

T.C.
ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S PROGRAMME

**THE IMPACT OF ARAB SPRING ON THE RISE OF SALAFISM IN THE
MIDDLE EAST; THE UNEXPECTED EMERGENCE OF SALAFISM IN
TUNISIA AND EGYPT**

Master's Thesis

Mustafa Mert KOÇ

Ankara-2022

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ACCEPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “The Impact of the Arab Spring on The Rise of Salafism In The Middle East: Unexpected Emergence In Tunisia and Egypt” and prepared by Mustafa Mert KOÇ meets with the committee’s approval unanimously as Master’s Thesis in the field of International Relations following the successful defense conducted on 08/06/2022.



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ETHICS DECLARATION

This thesis study, which I prepared in accordance with the Atılım University Institute of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive;

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08/06/2022

Mustafa Mert KOÇ

ÖZ

Koç, Mustafa Mert. Arap Baharının Ortadoğu'da Selefizmin Yükselişine Etkisi; Tunus ve Mısır'da Selefizmin Beklenmeyen Çıkışı. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara 2022.

Arap dünyasında, özellikle Arap Bahar'ından sonra bazı "Selefi" hareketler ortaya çıktı. Arap Baharı, 17 Aralık 2010'da bir üniversite öğrencisi olan Mohamed Bouazizi'nin ekonomik, sosyal ve politik sorunlara yanıt olarak kendini yakmasıyla başladı ve sosyal medyanın etkisiyle domino etkisi ile hızla diğer Ortadoğu ülkelerine yayıldı. Bu araştırmanın amacı, dünya çapında radikal cihatçılığın arttığı Tunus ve Mısır'da devrim sonrası Selefilerin artan faaliyetlerini ve bunların demokratikleşme girişimlerine etkisini incelemektir. Bu tezin odaklandığı araştırma sorusu, Arap Baharı sonrası Mısır ve Tunus'ta Selefiliğin artmasına neden olan faktörlerdir. Bu tezin kapsamı ise 1900'lerden günümüze kadar olan dönemi kapsamaktadır. Bu tezin temel argümanı, Arap Baharı'nın Selefilik hareketinin daha siyasi bir çizgiye dönüşmesini sağladığı ve bu dönemde sadece Selefiliğin değil Müslüman Kardeşler ve Nahda Hareketi'nin de yükselişte olduğudur. Bununla birlikte, sadece siyasi İslam'da değil, aynı zamanda radikal Cihatçı İslam'da da bir artış oldu. Dolayısıyla bireylerin ideolojilerinin şekillenmesinde din ve mezhep politikaları önem arz etmektedir. Mısır ve Tunus'taki devrimlerin ardından laik-liberal partiler arasında uzun yıllardır kırılganlıklar, ekonomik sorunlar ve bölünmeler yaşanmış, bunların hepsi şeriat hukuku altında yaşamak isteyen Selefi partilerin önünü açmıştır. Bununla birlikte, radikal İslamcılarının faaliyetleri nedeniyle bölgede genel bir güvenlik tehdidi ortaya çıktı.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Selefilik, Siyasal Selefilik, Siyasal İslam, Arap Baharı, Tunus ve Mısır.

ABSTRACT

Koç, Mustafa Mert. The Impact of Arab Spring on The Rise of Salafism in The Middle East; The Unexpected Emergence of Salafism in Tunisia and Egypt.

Some "Salafi" movements emerged in the Arab world, particularly after the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring began on December 17, 2010 with the self-immolation of a university student, Mohamed Bouazizi, in response to economic, social, and political problems, and it spread rapidly to other Middle Eastern countries through the influence of social media, like the domino effect. The purpose of this research is to understand the increasing activities of Salafists after the revolution and their effects on democratization attempts in Tunisia and Egypt, where radical jihadism has increased worldwide. The research question that this thesis focuses on is the factors that led to the increase of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring. The scope of this thesis covers the period from the 1900s to the present. This thesis' main argument is that the Arab Spring enabled the Salafism movement to evolve into a more political line, and that during this period, not only Salafism but also the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement were on the rise. Along with this, there was an increase in not only political Islam, but also radical Jihadist Islam. Therefore, religion and sectarian policies matter in shaping the ideologies of individuals. For many years, there have been resentments, economic problems, and a schism between secular-liberal parties following the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, all of which paved the way for Salafist parties that wanted to live under Sharia Law. Nonetheless, it has become a general security threat due to the activities of radical Islamists in the region.

Keywords: Salafism, Political Salafism, Political Islam, The Arab Spring, Tunisia and Egypt.

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INDEX OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- ABM:** Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis
- AQIM:** Islamic Maghreb
- AST:** Ansar al-Shariah in Tunisia
- BDP:** Building and Development Party
- CPS:** Code of Personal Status
- DAESH:** Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham
- EIJ:** Egyptian Islamic Jihad
- EU:** European Union
- FDI:** Foreign Direct Investment
- FDTL:** Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties
- GDP:** Gross Domestic Product
- GI:** Al-Gama‘at al-Islamiya
- HuT:** Hizb-ut Tahrir
- IG:** Islamic Group
- IMF:** International Monetary Fund
- IS:** Islamic State
- ISIS:** Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
- JDP:** Justice and Development Party
- KUIN:** Katiba Uqba ibn Nafi
- LPR:** Protection of the Revolution
- MB:** Muslim Brotherhood
- MENA:** The Middle East and North Africa
- MTI:** Islamic Tendency Movement
- NCA:** National Constituent Assembly
- NED:** National Endowment for Democracy
- NGOs:** Non-Governmental Organizations
- OECD:** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
- PDP:** The Democratic Progressive Party
- PI:** Political Islam
- RCD:** Rassemblement Democratique Constitutionnel
- SAP:** Structural Adjustment Program

SCAF: Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

TICG: Tunisian Islamic Combatant Group

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UGTT: National Trade Union Organization

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

WB: World Bank



INTRODUCTION

In the Arab world, some movements called themselves "Salafi," which rose especially after the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring started with a university student, Mohamed Bouazizi's, self-immolation on December 17, 2010 due to economic, social, and political problems, and it spread rapidly to other Middle Eastern countries with the influence of social media, like the domino effect. However, Salafism became stronger when they formed their political parties against the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia. However, some Salafi groups have started to focus on more conservative ideas about social life by rejecting violence completely. Instead, they sought to apply the West's concept of democracy within the framework of Sharia law.

The constructivist theory is more applicable than other theories in explaining the causes of the basic dynamics in the region. The reason for this is that what the theory focuses on in its core structure is norms, culture, religion, ideologies, and interests. Therefore, due to the lack of cultural and ethnic homogeneity in the Middle East, it became open to radical ideologies. To understand what Islamist and radical groups' aims are, we need to look at both the ideologies and identities of these groups, as constructivism argued.

The main argument of this thesis is that the Arab Spring enabled the Salafism movement to evolve into a more political line, and that during this period, not only Salafism, but also the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement, were on the rise. Along with this, there was an increase in not only political Salafism, but also radical Jihadist Salafism. Therefore, religion and sectarian policies matter over shaping ideologies of individuals.

The Jihadist Salafists supported the revolution in Egypt and prepared the ground for the January 25th Revolution. These groups also collaborated with liberal opponents against the Egyptian leader, Hosni Mubarak. One of the political parties was the Al-Nour Party (Party of Divine Light), which became the second largest political party in Egypt. It also supported a military coup against Mohamed Morsi. In addition, there were two active organizations in Egypt: al-Jami'yya and al-Shar'iyya, which were formed during the 1890s and registered in 1913. In addition, Jama'atü Ansâri's-Sunnah'l-Muhammediyye was established in 1926. After the Arab Spring,

these developments led to the creation of the Construction and Development Party, the Virtue Party, the Authenticity Party, and the Homeland Party.¹ Nevertheless, Salafism in Egypt was called a front rather than a party, as it was not well organized like the Muslim Brotherhood. However, this helped Salafists to comprise different parts of Egypt. Especially after the revolution, not only theology but also personal ambitions had a significant impact on the development of the Salafi parties in Egypt. Nonetheless, as debates about Islam and sectarianism heated up ahead of the elections, the Salafists declared themselves the true protectors of Islam, gaining the support of conservatives. Therefore, the thought spread that Salafists would defend Islam better than the Muslim Brotherhood. However, in 2015, the Al-Nour party had only 11 seats in parliament because the constitution was changed after the military coup and the establishment of parties was prohibited under the religious structure. To gain power again, the Salafist party tried to stand for democratic rights under Sharia law and to present itself as the supporters of democracy in Egypt. Therefore, the election of Mohamed Morsi could not solve the political and economic problems like poverty and unemployment in the country. On the contrary, this created a conflict between religious fundamentalists and seculars in Egypt.

In Tunisia, the reason for the rise of Salafists is the attitude of the Ennahda Movement, which supported the "Salafists" and their participation in politics; therefore, three political parties were established during the Ennahda period. These are the Party of Mercy (Hizb al-Moreira), the Reclamation Front (Jibhat al-Islah), and the Reality Party (Hizb al-Asala). The most influential party is the Reclamation Front, which was founded by Mohamed Khouja. The Jihadist Salafists also refused to interfere with politics in Tunisia. After the Arab Spring, the most active Jihadist organization was Ansar al-Sharia, founded by Abu Ayyad in 2011. Interestingly, Salafists supported democracy as the main tool to enhance their political appeal and survive in the political arena of Tunisia. Tunisian Salafists supported the participation of women in politics, which is an important sign of democratization initiatives and pluralism. Therefore, a new type of Salafism emerged as "electoral Salafism." The Ennahda Movement also shows that Islamism is no longer an alternative because

¹ Jacob Høigilt and Frida Nome, "Egyptian Salafism in revolution," *Journal of Islamic Studies* no. 25(1), (2014): 37-38.

people demand democracy and liberalism. Therefore, Ennahda started to act more pragmatically and more flexible. However, there is still rivalry between Ennahda and Salafists that religion matters and is part of politics in Tunisia. Hence, Salafists in Tunisia became barriers to democracy by supporting anti-liberal policies and starting to revolt against the democratic principles of the Ennahda Movement. Furthermore, Tunisian Salafism was not imported but started to rise as a reaction against Ben Ali's regime and economic problems during the Ennahda Movement. Hereby, Jihadist Salafists targeted Tunisian youth and divided people into true Muslims and non-believers, referring to them as infidels. The main purpose of Salafi-Jihadism is to return to the golden years of Islam by using violence and takfir. Nevertheless, socio-economic problems had an impact on the shaping of the motivations of Salafists in Tunisia and Egypt. There is some criticism that the Muslim Brotherhood got along with the US and Israel to gain power. Islamist parties gained power, but they failed because political Islam was an ideological failure.² Furthermore, after the Arab Spring, the EU started to follow engagement policies with Islamist parties. Political Islam was previously seen as a threat to democracy and liberal identity. However, rising terrorist attacks by radical Salafists have fueled the EU's concerns.³

This thesis aims to analyze the rise of Salafism in Tunisia and Egypt since 2011 and will focus on how Salafism has unexpectedly increased, comparing Tunisia and Egypt, and how radical jihadist Salafism has become a threat to the newly formed democracy in these countries. This thesis mainly focuses on the question of what factors led to the increase of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring. In this regard, the purpose of this research is to uncover why and how Salafism gained power against the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement. Furthermore, as a case study, this thesis explains how socioeconomic uncertainties have impacted Salafist movements in Tunisia and Egypt. The main argument of this thesis is that the Arab Spring enabled the Salafism movement to evolve into a more political line, and that during this period, not only Salafism, but also the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement, were on the rise. Along with this, there was an increase in not

² Ibid., 331.

³ Benedetta Voltolini and Silvia Colombo, "The EU and Islamist parties in Tunisia and Egypt after the Arab uprisings: A story of selective engagement," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 23(1), (2018): 8-11.

only political Salafism, but also radical Jihadist Salafism. Therefore, religion and sectarian policies matter over shaping ideologies of individuals. There are resentments for many years, economic problems, and the gap between secular-liberal parties after the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, all of which prepared the ground for Salafist parties that wanted to live under the Quran and Sharia rules. Nevertheless, it has become a general security threat due to the activities of radical jihadist Salafists in the region.

This thesis will examine the rise of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia since 2011, after the Arab Spring. The research questions addressed in this context of the thesis are as follows: What are the aims of the Salafi groups and how did they gain power? How did the Arab Spring affect the rise of Salafism in Tunisia and Egypt? What are the reasons for the Salafists' success in competing with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia?

This thesis will provide answers to all questions directly through the qualitative research method. With qualitative methods, this thesis will focus on important historical events, and it will be a case study and further interpretation of the impact of the Arab Spring on the rise of Salafism in Tunisia and Egypt. This study will be composed of some sources such as newspapers, journals, and interviews, articles, published books, and dissertations.

In the first chapter, there will be an introduction part to explain the impact of Salafism on Egypt and Tunisia and the constructivist approach to Salafism by explaining the role of ideology, culture, identity, and religion analysis and the reasons for applying the constructivist approach.

In the second chapter, the historical background of Salafism will be examined in the context of rising Salafism by explaining different types of Salafism, such as theological, political, and radical Salafism. The origins of Salafism go back to the 19th century at al-Azhar University. Muhammed Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani were the pioneers of early Salafism. They focused on the re-interpretation of Islamic doctrines by focusing on modernity. However, as a reaction to Rida and Abduh, Wahhabism in the 20th century started to reject all kinds of interpretations and modern innovations. In terms of differences with Wahhabism, Salafism does not reject modernism, but Wahhabism entirely rejects modern ideas. Tawhid and theology are

the main features of Salafism, and there are some views that the Qur'an and Sunnah are the only religious sources of Salafist ideology. Salafism has been used in a wide range of historical processes, including the support of the Hanbali School, the school of Ibn Taymiyya, and Wahhabism. Therefore, the most distinctive feature of Salafism is the abandonment of imitation, superstition, and the emphasis on returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁴ In addition, the Wahhabi tradition comes from Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, who was the main supporter of Ibn Taymiyya's writings about religious doctrines and was co-founder of the first Saudi state in 1774 with Muhammad ibn Saud. They began to consider themselves the protectors of Islam. In religious judgment, he believes that only two sources should be considered: the Qur'an and Sunna. Although the Wahhabi tradition rejects interpretation (ijtihad), imitation (taqlid), and four legal schools, which are Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali (madhabs), al-Wahhab continued to adopt the interpretations of Hanbalism that can be considered a paradox.⁵ Since Salafi groups cannot have a homogeneous structure, they are divided into groups: "Political Salafism," "Theological Salafism," "Cultural Salafism," and "Radical Salafism." These Salafi groups had the opportunity to congregate in Egypt. The main reason for their support was the declining influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Third Chapter will focus into how the Arab Spring influenced the rise of Salafism. The main causes and consequences of rising radicalization in Tunisia and Egypt will be covered in this chapter.

The Fourth Chapter will look at the similarities and differences in terms of outcomes in both countries, despite the fact that the Arab Spring had a similar impact on both. The purpose of this section is to compare political Salafism in Tunisia and Egypt. First, the relationship between Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will be examined, followed by information on the January 25th Revolution, Egyptian Elections, Salafist Political Parties, and the decline of Political Islam. The relationship between the Salafists and the Ennahda Movement will be examined in the Tunisia case

⁴ Kamile Ünlüsoy, "Mısır Selefiliği ve İhvan-ı Müslimîn'le İlişkisi," *e-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 9(1), (2016): 40-41.

⁵ Stéphane Lacroix, "Between revolution and apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his impact on the shaping of contemporary Salafism," *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (2009): 3.

section, followed by a discussion of the Salafists' establishment of political parties, democratization efforts, and elections.

At the very beginning of the limitations that I experienced during the writing of this thesis, some academic resources were written only in Arabic, and I had a hard time finding English alternatives. Furthermore, although I had difficulty finding resources about Salafists during the thesis's initial writing process, I eventually gained access to adequate academic resource



CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Theoretical Approach and Methodology

The constructivist approach explains the reasons for the rise of radicalization by referring to some factors such as cultural weaknesses, economic and political inequalities within people, and cultural and ethnical structure. Thus, constructivism focuses on ideological structures like norms, identities, and ideologies that define the ideology of radical Salafi groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS. Therefore, there are identity-cultural aspects to analyzing Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia. The extremists have been gradually strengthened and influenced by identity, norms, and cultural and historical motives. Jihadi ideology prepares for the rise of radicalism. Their beliefs are based on the cruelty of the actions of the West; social, economic, and political unfairness. According to the constructivist approach, there is a link between the actors and the social structure that defines the reasons for relations between people in the Middle East. The Salafi groups mainly targeted changing identities under new norms and beliefs.⁶ In addition, realism could not explain radicalization because it argues that the lack of central governments is the reason for its rise. However, identity crisis and changing identities are related to norms and beliefs, and constructivism explains the reasons for its rise by referring to Salafist discourses. In addition, while examining the Middle East region, realism argues that material structures play an important role in the long run, while a constructivist approach argues that the identities of the agents determine the interests and behaviors in the short run.

There is a common idea in the literature that Salafists are divided into groups within themselves, and in this respect, they are separated from the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of their ideas and actions. The first Salafi group, known as "purists," completely rejects political participation and focuses on religious education. Due to its obedience-minded logic, it also focuses on obedience to rulers rather than involvement in politics. The second Salafi group is called "Politicos or Political Salafism", which aims to form political parties and be involved in the running of the state. The third Salafi group is called the Jihadist Salafists, who want to live under Islamic principles while establishing an "Islamic State." Modern Salafism can be said

⁶ Hamed Mohagheghnia and Ali Latifinia, "A Constructivist Approach into the Emergence of the Terrorism in the Middle-East," *International Journal of Scientific Study* no. 5.4, (2017): 193.

to be more moderate and innovative. The beliefs of different Salafi groups are almost the same, but the application methods (manhaj) are completely different from each other. Therefore, Salafism was considered traditional wisdom before the revolution, but it became a political goal after the revolution.⁷

Salafists do not have a homogeneous structure among themselves. For this reason, the groups that formed political parties after the revolution could not be gathered under a single political party. Additionally, some of them rejected democracy because it is perceived as a sin. Therefore, some of them completely reject western values, including democracy and all forms of secularity.⁸ In this regard, Salafists are more dogmatic and perceive all changes as sinful.

During the period of Hosni Mubarak, Salafi groups did not get involved in politics, but after 2011, they decided to get involved in Egyptian politics. Therefore, they participated in the elections. The Al-Nour Party (Divine Light) party took 123 seats in parliament, and it became pragmatic as it started to deal with social and economic problems. During the period of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled the country with despotism from 1987 to 2011, Salafism in Tunisia was suppressed by the authoritarian regime. However, when the revolution first started in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, it led to the rise of political Islam. The Ennahda Movement came to power through elections, which also helped the rise of Salafism in Tunisia.

In 2011, Mohamed Khouja founded the Reclamation Front Party, which focuses on pluralism and supports democracy, checks and balances without differentiating people. Therefore, electoral Salafism has become a new type, different from the extremist type.

After the Arab Spring, Salafists began to act on democratic principles and avoided revolutionary ideas. In terms of the failure of political Islam, it is clear that it mostly focused on relations between Islam and politics. However, Salafists began to gain strength either through elections or violence, but mostly focused on both Islam and democracy, putting religion ahead of politics. Sectarianist policies also started

⁷ Ramazan Yildirim, "Arab Spring and Salafism-Case of Egypt," *İlahiyat Akademi*, no. (1-2), (2015): 265.

⁸ Magnus Ranstorp, et al, "Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism: Influence and Challenges for Swedish Society," (2019): 6.

with their rise in empowerment. The sectarianist policies already started after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 in the region that created the pro-Western Sunni side (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) and the resistance side (Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah). The Arab Spring led to power vacuums which led to the rise of sectarianism.⁹

Further, uncertainties in both Egypt and Tunisia prepared the ground for Salafi groups. Although democratization initiatives appear similar in Egypt and Tunisia, there are some differences in terms of secular authoritarian regimes. In Egypt, religion was used as a tool to control politics by the military. However, the authoritarian regime in Tunisia focused on secular laws and the republic. Both Egypt and Tunisia faced transformation in the post-Arab spring. While Salafists in Egypt became the second-largest party after the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists began to act against democracy and the secular ideas of the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia.

In Tunisia, the Ennahda Movement could not establish good relations between religion and politics simply because it was dealing with political problems in the country. There are two types of Jihadi movements: the first can be associated with the Islamic State (IS), and the others are Ansar-al Sharia in Tunisia, Jabahat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in Syria. Their actions have evolved from da'wah (inviting people to embrace Islam) to violence and armed struggle with takfiri practices. The terms such as takfir (a Muslim declaring another Muslim an infidel) and al-Wala' wal-Bara' (loyalty and disavowal) became the discourse of Jihadists in Tunisia. In addition, the number of Tunisian youths fighting in the ranks of al-Qaeda and ISIS is growing steadily.¹⁰

In Egypt, there were also divisions within the Salafists that led to resistance from the army and non-Islamists. This also led to the rise of radical Salafists who sought armed insurrection. Before the Arab Spring, jihadists were either in prison or in Afghanistan. They started to become powerful in the eyes of the youth, as they published some books referring to the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to them, jihad

⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, "The sectarian surge in the Middle East and the dynamics of the regional states-system," *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning* (2019): 46 (35-61)

¹⁰ Michael Marcusa, "Radicalism on the Periphery: History, Collective Memory, and the Cultural Resonance of Jihadist Ideology in Tunisia," *Comparative Politics*, no. 51(2), (2019): 177.

is the only way and duty for individuals. However, the military coup in 2013 had a negative impact on Jihadists in Egypt.

When the Arab Spring first emerged, Islamists did not directly refer to Islam. On the contrary, the main purpose of the demonstrations can be stated as a form of expression of people who have lived under oppression for years and demand democracy, human rights, and political freedoms. In terms of agents, Islamists and Salafists both place religion at the center of national identity and have ultra-conservative views on almost everything. Despite having no effect on the democratization process, Islamists entered politics and gained influence in government as a result of the democratization process. Oliver Roy compares Islamists benefiting from democracy in Tunisia and Egypt to communist parties in Spain and Portugal in the 1970s.¹¹ Salafists in Egypt and Tunisia are the agents that are reluctant to be involved in the democratization process because it will limit their main goal of the formation of an Islamic State.

In the changing world order, it is really difficult to survive for the groups advocating political Islam, especially the Salafists. The reason is that demographics have changed rapidly, and people have started to prefer to follow individualization rather than ideologies. People became aware of the disobedient leaders as a result of social, economic, and technological advancements. Unfortunately, the establishment of an Islamic State by the Salafists cannot go beyond utopia.¹²

We should not confuse the Arab Spring with the Islamic revolution that took place in Iran in 1979, because Egypt and Tunisia are not countries that can be governed by the will of a single religious source. On the other hand, the Ennahda Movement rejected the concept of an “Islamic State” and expressed its wishes to become like the JDP in Turkey by following modern politics rather than adopting conservative policies.¹³

In foreign policy, soft power should be a desired phenomenon, especially in Middle Eastern countries. In the region, there is competition between regional actors

¹¹Olivier Roy, "The transformation of the Arab world," *Journal of Democracy* no. 23.3, (2012): 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

like Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. On the other hand, Russia, the USA, the UK, and France, as global actors, are trying to be involved in the politics of the Middle East.¹⁴ Moreover, ethnic, sectarian, and religious dimensions are very important to analyze the subsequent situation in Egypt. Copts, for example, are considered a minority despite the fact that their history predates the emergence of Islam, and they have negative feelings toward Iran and Saudi Arabia but positive feelings toward the United States. There is also a correlation between soft power and identity. Soft power could be implemented directly by promoting ideology, ideas, culture and using religiosity as an intangible source in the region.¹⁵

1.2 The Selection of Tunisia and Egypt as Case Studies

After the 2011 Arab Spring, we witnessed that political Islam gained strength and they had the right to speak in the Middle East, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. At the same time, we know that political Islam has been suppressed in these countries for years and its important figures have been imprisoned. Therefore, political Islam and Salafi leaders were under repression and followed a high-profile strategy in politics until 2011. On the other hand, the democratization process has been seen in both countries, but the results are not always the same. According to the 2020 Democracy Index, Tunisia ranks 54th as a flawed democracy, while Egypt ranks 138th as an authoritarian state.¹⁶ In both Egypt and Tunisia, Salafism became dominant through satellite channels and journals, providing necessities for the people. Thus, Salafi groups were acting like states through supporting basic goods like food and free education in urban areas of Egypt and Tunisia.¹⁷ In addition, early Salafism dates to the influence of Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin al-Afghani at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the newly formed version of Salafism was mainly centered on Wahhabism, as the former was more modernist and intellectual. In both countries, democracy is seen as an "innovation" (bidah) and a western tool that all Muslims must avoid. Nevertheless, Salafi parties started to mention equality, the rule of law, the division of powers,

¹⁴ Talha Köse, Mesut Özcan, and Ekrem Karakoç, "A comparative analysis of soft power in the MENA region: the impact of ethnic, sectarian, and religious identity on soft power in Iraq and Egypt," *Foreign Policy Analysis* no. 12.3 (2016): 2.

¹⁵ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft power," *Foreign policy* no. 80, (1990): 167.

¹⁶ [Democracy Index 2020 - Economist Intelligence Unit \(eiu.com\)](https://www.eiu.com)

¹⁷ Khalil al-Anani and Maszlee Malik, "Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *Digest of Middle East Studies* no. 22.1, (2013): 60-61.

checks and balances, etc. That is a kind of democracy. In both countries, some parties, like Al-Nour, followed pragmatism in their policies even though they had illiberal views about minorities.¹⁸

The purpose of this research is to show the impact of the Arab Spring, the main motivations of Salafists, its effects on the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement, and the failures of Political Islam. While doing this research, I will examine the increasing influence of Salafists on the youth and the poor for socio-economic reasons.

1.3 Literature Review

According to some scholars, Salafism emerged as a counter-reaction to both the Muslim Brotherhood and gained supporters in the political vacuum. Karagiannis (2019) argues in a research article that "al-Da'wa" was formed in Alexandria in the 1970s to counter Ikhwan because it was putting the interests of the party ahead of Islamic principles.¹⁹ Hence, tension arose between Salafi groups and the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, Salafi groups adopted more conservative opinions about social issues like gender issues and minority problems. However, Salafism in Tunisia did not have much influence within society and continued its existence as a clandestine movement during the 1990s. In 2011, Jabhat al-Islah (Reform Front) was established by Mohamed Khouja to support political pluralism and implement Islam and Sharia principles within a democratic context. Similarly, Merone and Cavatorta (2013) argue that Ansar Al Sharia was founded in 2011 and recognized as a terrorist organization in 2013. They stated that we have both Islamic principles and the Quran, but this does not mean that we are against the pluralism.²⁰ Thus, both Salafi parties in Egypt and Tunisia used democracy as a main tool for their political survival, even though they did not believe in it.

On the other hand, Lazreg (2021) argues that Tunisia managed to adopt both "da'wah" and political pluralism, coalitions, and consensus for "Tunisianity", whereas Egypt could not become successful in cooperating with other forces and failed

¹⁸ Ibid., 66-68.

¹⁹ Karagiannis, "The rise of electoral Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia", 7.

²⁰ Fabio Merone, and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafist movement and sheikh-ism in the Tunisian democratic transition," *Middle East Law and Governance* no. 5.3, (2013): 328.

in establishing consensus.²¹ For this reason, in the case of Egypt, the Salafists failed to implement democracy and Islamic principles together. In the post-Arab Spring, the Ennahda Movement aimed to combine both Islam and democracy altogether, and its main aim was to achieve “Tunisianity” by adopting political pluralism like the JDP in Turkey. Apart from these views, Clara-Auguste and Aakhunzzada (2019) argued that socio-economic problems had an important impact on the rise of Salafism and radicalization because both countries had similar problems such as high inflation, unemployment, unequal incomes, etc. As a result of it, people, especially the young, are joining Islamic radical groups in Egypt and Tunisia.²² In the literature, there is also a link between socio-economic problems and the rise of motivations for Salafism due to a lack of opportunities and social factors that played an important role in the strengthening of such groups in Tunisia and Egypt. However, the in the rise of Salafism stem from the “absence of a strong state” and a “lack of national identity” in those countries. This is because Salafi groups provided necessities such as goods, food, medicine, clothing, and free education to people in urban and suburban areas. Hence, we can say that there is a link between radicalization and marginalization in Tunisia and Egypt with the spread of actions of Salafi groups to the wider masses. On the other hand, Kirdis (2020) argues that even Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood could be considered “moderated” because they followed pragmatism in their policies to gain power. However, neoliberal economic policies led to the rise of corruption in those countries, and similarly to Clara-Auguste and Aakhunzzada’s argument, Kirdis claimed that Salafi groups came up with an ideological purity and strong religious ideas to overthrow the existing status quo. Therefore, Salafists aimed at solidarity to reduce uncertainty within society. Although democratization initiatives were similar, there were differences in that religion was used by the military to control politics in Egypt. Nevertheless, the secular authoritarian regime adopted republican and secular rules and laws.²³ Similarly to other authors, Browers (2014) attributes the rise of political Salafism to the failure of political Islam's policies because Islamists failed in

²¹ Houssein Ben Lazreg, "Post-Islamism in Tunisia and Egypt: Contradictory Trajectories," *Religions* no. 12.6, (2021): 16.

²² Clara-Auguste Süß, and Ahmad Noor Baheige Aakhunzzada, "The Socioeconomic Dimension of Islamist Radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia," (2019): 2.

²³ E. Kirdis, “Uncertainty and the Religious Market: The Unexpected Rise of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring,” *Journal of Church and State*, (2020): 8-9.

terms of applying the rules of politics. However, post-Islamism was the new sign and Islamist politics differed from the pursuit of state power and the application of Sharia law. Another reason was that Salafists stayed away from revolutionary ideas and began to gain power either through elections or violence.²⁴ According to Çakmaktaş (2015), Salafism could be regarded as a front rather than a party because it is not well-organized like the Muslim Brothers or the Ennahda Movement, which helped them to comprise different parts, especially in Egypt and Tunisia. Even though they do not have a well-organized structure, some important figures, like the sheikhs who had rhetorical power, played an important role in the spread and adoption of the Salafi ideology among the people.²⁵

1.4 Theoretical Approach: Constructivist Approach To The Salafism

The Middle East can be interpreted as a region that has always been turbulent and had problems throughout its history. What we see constantly in the region is that individuals react to change and innovation. Constructivism explains the reasons for the rise of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia with some factors such as socio-economic inequalities, political and cultural weaknesses, and ethnical and religious problems. Therefore, it mainly focuses on the ideologies, norms, ideas, and interests of different groups. Hence, it is possible to say that there are identity-cultural aspects to analyzing Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia. While explaining Salafism, we should not forget that Salafism is divided into more than one branch; the most well-known is radical and political Salafism. However, theological Salafism (Scholastic or Quietist) and modern Salafism will also be discussed in detail in the following sections. The Theological Salafi group completely rejects participation in politics and focuses on religious education. The Cultural Salafi group focuses on obedience to rulers rather than involvement in politics. Another Salafi group is Radical Salafism, which wants to live under Islamic principles. Modern Salafism can be said to be more moderate and innovative.

Radicalization theory best explains the radicalization of society because radical groups are against change in political and social life by using violence. It also

²⁴ Michaëlle Browers, "Rethinking post-Islamism and the study of changes in Islamist ideology," *Project of Middle East Political Science, Briefings* no. (24), (2014): 16-19.

²⁵ Nurullah Çakmaktaş, "Mısır'da selefilige toplumsal tercih ve nedenleri," (2015): 50.

contends that there are distinctions between legitimate and illegal uses of power and violence. To give an example, there was a transition from revolution to radicalization, and radicalization evolved into terrorism. Therefore, radical Jihadi Salafism started to focus on “Jihad” by replacing violence and revolution with Admittedly, the most important impact on Radical Jihadi Salafism was the rising revolutionary ideas, with the Arab Spring and nihilism as its effect. In evaluating ideology and actions, these are connected, and radicalization is the concomitant of individual, ideological, psychological, and socio-political determinants.²⁶

Moreover, sectarianism should be examined in the context of identity because both realism and constructivism focus on ideational elements like identity and material factors, which is why realism mostly deals with regional power struggles. According to realism, security problems are created by anarchy of states and lead to competition among actors through increasing military capabilities, which eventually leads to the security dilemma as a vicious circle and focusing alliances, but they will be short alliances. Thus, it mostly depends on the balance of power in material conditions. In addition, there was a struggle for power over military capabilities and competitive identities that had an important impact on this struggle.²⁷ The pioneer of the constructivist approach, Alexander Wendt, argued that identity is the main determining factor because it has relations with norms and interests. Each state has its own identity, which creates conflict and has different norms, which also leads to different kinds of anarchy in the region. In the struggle between states, interests played a role when defining “other” as a threat to the forming identity of states. Also, states need both ideational and material capabilities to become powerful in the international and domestic arena.²⁸ If states do not have such kinds of capabilities, then they will be open to both non-state actors and state actors with proxy wars, as in the case of Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and Syria. In terms of agents and structure, realism argues that structure could be created with the distribution of power. Constructivism contends that state behaviors play a role in various types of anarchy and that both cooperation and struggle

²⁶ Hilmi Demir, “Radical Salafi Movements And Terrorist Organizations: Conceptual And Theoretical Framework,” Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey, (2016): 3-5.

²⁷ Hinnebusch, "The sectarian surge in the Middle East", 36-37.

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics," *International organization* 46(2), (1992): 422-423. 391-425.

can be applied to norms and identities.²⁹ In the region, artificial boundaries established territorial states, but we cannot talk about sub and supra-state identities due to the western imposition of a Westphalian-based system that aimed to diminish the identity of the region. Therefore, it resulted in the lack of nation-states. It also caused sub and supra-identity divisions between the public and states that started to become paranoid due to threats coming from their own populations. This threat perception situation could be changed when a state becomes more powerful economically and militarily. We can cite the 1950s–60s as a weak period, and the 1980s could be regarded as much more powerful times. Weaknesses were also observed until 2011, leading to the rise of sectarianism discourses and the region becoming a staging ground for proxy wars; thus, a lack of material and normative factors prepared the ground for the rise of Islamists and Salafism on the basis of "pan" Islam or Arabism to reunite society. Furthermore, pan Arabism was dominant during the period between the 1940s and 1970s. After the Iranian revolution, pan Islamism became dominant in the Middle East.³⁰

1.5 Constructivism: Role of Ideology, Culture, Identity Analysis

Identity, religion and politics

Since the 1990s, there has been a lot of talk about "identity" in the field of international relations. Individuals with different identities often compare themselves with those who do not have the same identity as their own. The constructivist approach of critical theory draws attention to the fact that Islamic identity has an important role in the political development in the Middle East. After the events of September 11, the influence of religion on Islamic identity gradually increased, and the importance of religion in international politics began to become more and more effective. To explain the influence of religion on politics, it would be correct to examine the constructivist approach because, unlike other theories, it argues that ideas, norms, culture (Islamic culture) and identity have an impact on religion and that they should all be considered

²⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁰ Ibid., 40-41.

as puzzle pieces that complement each other.³¹ On this occasion, economic and geographical factors as well as political and technological developments prepare the ground for an Islamic identity that can gather followers in the region. According to the constructivist approach, all reality is constructed, and states are in social interaction with each other such that each state has a social identity thanks to this interaction.³²

At the same time, religion and politics have become inseparable pairs in the region, and politics has permeated every stage of religion.³³ In other words, religion and politics have always become intertwined in the Middle East. Hence, ethnic conflicts in the Middle East become indistinguishable when compared to ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world. The obvious factor is the role of Islam and autocratic management systems.³⁴ There is an important link between religion and violence. The reason for this is that religion, when appropriate, advocates non-violent actions and sometimes justifies violence. As seen in the example of Salafism, Jihadist Salafis have justified violence based on justified reasons.(such as establishing an Islamic State or declaring war against infidels)³⁵ In fact, political Islam is an effective actor that shapes the politics of the Middle East and also connects the triangle of religion, politics, and violence.

The explanation for this is that it is difficult to apply concepts such as the understanding of administration, democracy, and the principle of separation of powers to the Middle East, as in the West, and at the same time, such a form of government did not exist until the Arab Spring. As in the examples of Tunisia and Egypt, which the thesis will focus on, the people were ruled by dictatorships for years, and before that, under the new colonization of the West under the name of mandate, they could not find the opportunity to make their ideologies more pragmatic. Therefore, religion

³¹ Mohammadreza Hasanian Mamedel, and Davoud Sirous, "The role of Islamic identity on political development in Middle East," *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)* ISSN 2356-5926 no. 1.1, (2016): 1746.

³² Maxym Alexandrov, "The concept of state identity in international relations: A theoretical analysis," *Journal of International Development and Cooperation* 10(1), (2003): 33-34.

³³ Robert D. Lee, *Religion and politics in the Middle East: Identity, ideology, institutions, and attitudes*. Routledge, 2018, 37.

³⁴ Jonathan Fox, "The Unique Role of Religion in Middle Eastern Ethnic Conflict: a Large N-study," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* no. 3.1, (2004): 2.

³⁵ David C. Rapoport, "Some general observations on religion and violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence* no. 3.3, (1991): 126.

and politics are not separate in Islam, which brought about religious radicalization, which is the biggest problem today.³⁶ Inevitably, there is a connection between the role of religion and violence such that radical Islam has become the main factor in the Middle East. According to the views of radical Salafism, they argue that they implement jihad for defensive purposes, like Al-Qaeda.³⁷ Yet, the purpose and discourse of extremist groups have changed to offensive under the actions of ISIS, and all organizations have planned their activities as a reaction to “modernity.”

Democracy and Islam

The meaning of democracy and freedom is different from the perspective of the Western world. Democracy is not viewed as a positive term in the Middle East region. This was related to historical problems. Western powers have always backed dictators in the region who were anti-democracy in order to further their interests through colonialism. Therefore, the West was very afraid when the Arab Spring started because of the rise of political Islam in the region. According to Jurgen Habermas, modernity is an unfinished project that had two promises: progress and freedom. Actually, we have achieved scientific progress, but it did not result in democracy and freedom in the region. Hence, the project of modernity is not finished yet. Habermas argues that Marxism neglects the dimensions of symbolic reproduction in social life. He developed socially grounded cognitive interests as well as technical, practical, and emancipatory interests.³⁸ In short, the modernization theory is inadequate to explain the events in Egypt. At the beginning of the 20th century, Egypt under Muhammad Ali was against Islamic identity. To rescue Egypt from Ottoman control, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a reaction against British imperialism. In the second period, which started with the 1967 Arab-Israel war and the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, the importance of religious identity in Egypt changed. With the death of Nasir, Islamic identity has become a defense mechanism in both domestic and foreign politics.³⁹ In addition, there was a lack of ethnic homogeneity in most of the Arab countries, and

³⁶ Fox, “The Unique Role of Religion”, 3.

³⁷ Martin E. Marty, and R. Scott Appleby, eds. *Accounting for fundamentalisms: The dynamic character of movements*. Vol. 4. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—an incomplete project," *Contemporary Sociological Thought* (1980): 163-173.

³⁹ Lee, “Religion and Politics in the Middle East”, 49.

leaders thought that democracy would lead to chaos and new problems due to a lack of nation-state building processes. According to Bernard Lewis, Islam is not compatible with democracy because secularism is not accepted by Islam. He added that only Turkey could be regarded as a secular-democratic Muslim country.⁴⁰ In the article written by Mamedel and Sirous, they argued that there are four types of groups: the first group consists of non-Muslims, and Islam is autocratic and despotic; the second group consists of people with western phobia; and they see Islam and democracy as incompatible because Islam acknowledges the authority and intellectual conformity that democracy could be regarded as a threat to Islamic identity.⁴¹ Those in the third and fourth groups, consisting of both Muslims and non-Muslims, think that democracy and Islam are inseparable.⁴² Indeed, there is no cultural, economic, or political environment necessary for democracy to exist in the Middle East. Undeniably, there is no obstacle that prevents the establishment of democracy on the basis of Islam.⁴³

Culture, ideology and identity

Constructivism states that identity has an inter-mental structure. The formation and development of Islamic identity can be associated with a reaction against post-colonialism, which is part of Critical Theory and draws from Marxism. It can be defined as “European culture” awareness, which is no longer dominant at the center of the world.⁴⁴ Although Anwar Said influenced by Foucault, he wanted to develop knowledge not affected by power relationships. He primarily sought to advance a more engaged and emancipatory politics. In his book, *Orientalism*, that was published in 1978, he argues that Orientalism is a discourse about the non-west and the study of someplace called “Orient” and some people known as Arabs fails to

⁴⁰ Bernard Lewis, “Why Turkey is the only Muslim Democracy,” *Middle East Quarterly*, (1994).

⁴¹ Mark Tessler, "Islam and democracy in the Middle East: The impact of religious orientations on attitudes toward democracy in four Arab countries," *Comparative Politics* (2002): 342.

⁴² Mamedel and Sirous, "The role of Islamic identity", 1750.

⁴³ Bican Sahin, "Is Islam an obstacle to democratization in the Muslim world? The debate of the compatibility of Islam and democracy revisited," *Bilig Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* no. 37, (2006): 201,202.

⁴⁴ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity," *Callaloo* 16(4), (1993): 751.

consider the reality of the area as being the same place as the West.⁴⁵ According to Said, Westerners created the term "Orient" to define the Middle East as backward. He claims that Orientalism made Western occupation in the region easier because the region was seen as weak, so the West should establish rule in the region. On the other hand, in the Arab world, "Islam is the only solution" has become the new slogan of the political Islamists, and their ideology is based on good governance in the Islamist world by returning to Islamic principles.⁴⁶ Together with the failure of political Islam in Egypt and Tunisia, its failure caused the rise of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia because Islamists began to lose their power and monopoly in politics. Salafism has begun to rise, and its ideology is different from MBs.⁴⁷ In their ideology, theology and tawhid shape their features, and the Qur'an and Sunnah are the only religious sources. According to the constructivist approach, interests and ideologies can change over time, because those ideologies only "exist" as long as people believe them. Ideologies can also be shaped by the impact of social media, educated young people, awareness of western values etc. All these factors prepared the ground for the outbreak of the Arab Spring in the Middle East.⁴⁸ Together with the failures of Islamist parties, ideologies such as Salafism and radicalization have become more common. However, terrorism has increased even more, has become the biggest security problem in the region, and has affected other parts of the world. Therefore, PI rejects or ignores democratic principles like checks and balances, political agendas, and open discussions. It argues that politics is only limited to virtue, and the rest are considered "sin or illusion."⁴⁹ Consequently, it created a new culture, which is the Salafi Jihadist ideology, that began to use violence and became a new phenomenon as a result of the failures of political Islam. Hence, identity is a social phenomenon that also creates its

⁴⁵ Edward Said, "Orientalism" Routledge and Kegan Paul, "London Said Orientalism 1978 (1978), 13.

⁴⁶ Aram Ali Majeed, "The Main Causes of the Rise of Political Islam," *Lark Journal for PHILOSOPHY, Linguistics And Social Sciences*, no. 3(38), (2020): 26,27.

⁴⁷ Olivier Roy, "The Failure of Political Islam Revisited," *Pathways to Contemporary Islam: New Trends in Critical Engagement*, (2020): 175.

⁴⁸ Abdeslam Badre, "Deconstructing the "Arab Spring": A Constructivist Analysis." *Conference Globalization and the New Economies, Babes-Bolyai University*, (2013), 11.

⁴⁹ Roel Meijer, *Towards a Political Islam*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations' Clingendael', (2009): 4.

own borders by way of a distinction between “self” and “other.” This view includes Sufis, Shias, seculars, and non-Muslims in the category of other.

The influence of religion on culture is indisputable, but it can also fuel ethnic conflicts. The autocratic structure dominates the administrations in the Middle East. Therefore, in Western countries, people express their wishes under democratic regimes through protests, but in the Middle East, as a result of the pressures of autocratic administrations, riots occur by the people.⁵⁰

Likewise, Samuel Huntington's argument in his article "Clash of Civilizations" is that with the end of the Cold War, cultural and religious identities will be the main source of conflicts. While there used to be a world that revolved only on the axis of the "West" (West vs. the Rest), it now signified the entrance to a world system in which non-Western actors would also play a role. Conflicts such as the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999 can be expressed as civilizational wars in this context. It can be said that as a result of economic modernization and social changes, identities and the concept of nation-state have played a more active role in the Middle East. In the religious sense, movements that define themselves as "extremists" are common in religions such as Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam.⁵¹ The reason for these groups' gaining power rapidly is that, as a result of the failure of the Western ideas that the West tried to establish in the Middle East during and after the Cold War by imposing its Westphalian-based logic, the idea of reviving Islam emerged, which motivated the Salafi groups to continue their activities as a clandestine movement. During the Gulf War, rather than supporting Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Islamist extremists preferred to support Iraq. Because this was not just a war launched against Iraq, but also a war waged by the West against Islamic culture and identity, as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei frequently mentions in his speeches. Under these conditions, the extremists began to act with the understanding of jihad..⁵²

⁵⁰ Ted Robert Gurr, and Will H. Moore, "Ethnopolitical rebellion: A cross-sectional analysis of the 1980s with risk assessments for the 1990s," *American Journal of Political Science* (1997): 1082-1083.

⁵¹ S. P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, no. 72(3), (1993): 26

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

Consequently, with the end of the Cold War, concepts such as culture, identity, and religion became even more important and the main cause of international and local conflicts. In this regard, Islam and democracy are incompatible because democracy is not accepted due to its being a Western product. The conflict between Islamic culture and the West at present has led to the rejection of Western concepts by the Salafists. For whatever reason, they believed that it would harm Islamic culture and identity.

1.6 The reasons for applying Constructivist Approach

Nicholas Onuf's 1989 book "World of Our Making: Rules and Rules in Social Theory and International Relations" introduced constructivism theory to the discipline of international relations. In addition to Onuf, Alexander Wendt also made contributions to the theory. According to him, behaviors are more important than acts of speech. On the other hand, the constructivist approach criticizes the assumptions made by realists and liberals about human nature and state interests by claiming that they are too "essentialist."⁵³ In this context, we can say that the constructivists also have ideas against rationalism. While investigating the main causes of increasing Salafism and radicalization in the Middle East, we argue that there are ethnic, cultural, and religious factors. The main focus of realism or rationalism is the explanation that the state or people are maximizing their own interests, which cannot directly explain the increasing Salafism in the Middle East. Constructivism theory states that, beyond material interests, the cultural approach helps to find more realistic answers.⁵⁴

In history, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire triggered an identity vacuum that led to the rise of Arab nationalism. According to some, they argue that it is difficult to find a single identity in the region. However, there are some concepts that create community, such as religion, language, and history. In Egypt, there is ethnic homogeneity, but in Iraq, it is not possible to talk about ethnic homogeneity due to

⁵³ Murat BAYAR, "Türk Dış Politikası Analizinde İnşa Kuramı ve Kültür: Kerkük Referandumunu Örneği." *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları (HÜTAD)* 29 (2018): 129.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

three communities: Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish people.⁵⁵ In Tunisia, the population is composed of %98–99 Sunni Arab Muslims, who have ethnic homogeneity.⁵⁶

By contrast, material theories argue that the system level is created by the distribution of military capabilities. In Marxist structuralism, in the economic division of labor forces, periphery states are dependent on core states, and norms can be manipulated to satisfy core interests. However, constructivism explains the structure created by shared norms that helps to create identities. While shaping the norms, structures may solve the security dilemma problem that realism is constantly arguing about. In addition, rationalists claim that interests can be shaped by material structures and that identity must comply with interests. Nevertheless, constructivism opposes this idea and argues that interests are constructed and can be shaped by identity.⁵⁷ Constructivism focuses on actors rather than objective reality in identity discourses, and by doing so, identity reshapes perceptions of actors in regional interactions. There are two identity structures; one can be region-based normative structures such as Arabism, Salafism, Islam, and the Middle East, and the other can be an individual-country-based structure.⁵⁸ In the academic world, a realist approach places emphasis on power and security issues while analyzing the region by offering explanatory power rather than a constructivist view of identity.

By comparison, the state-centric realism theory falls short of answering the question of why the Arab Spring emerged in the Middle East. At the same time, this theory falls short of explaining the rise of non-state actors, identity-based conflicts, and the rise of sectarianism in the region. As Barry Buzan argues, security threat perceptions might be real or constructed when they are politicized. In the case of the religious and ideological identity context, it could be regarded as a security threat that actors need to take immediate action against, as Al-Nour party sees the Shi'a as a

⁵⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, "Identity in international relations: Constructivism versus materialism, and the case of the Middle East," *The Review of International Affairs* no. 3.2, (2003): 358-359.

⁵⁶ [Tunisia - World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples \(minorityrights.org\)](http://minorityrights.org)

⁵⁷ Hinnebusch, "Identity in international relations: Constructivism versus materialism", 359,360.

⁵⁸ Brent E. Sasley, "Studying Middle Eastern International Relations Through IR Theory," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* no. 2.2, (2011): 22-23.

security threat that wants to take emergency measures against them.⁵⁹ While doing this, the most effective motivation is to politicize religious identity. Acts of speech have had a great influence on shaping securitization, de-securitization, and politicization.

Distribution of ideas and views is more important than capabilities, and constructivism has three main bids in its ontology perspective: material structures are important but should not be overlooked; identity constitutes interests and responses; and both actors and structures constitute each other.⁶⁰ Thus, it mostly focuses on normative-mental structures and cultural-identity aspects. Material findings (such as poverty and a low literacy rate) may not always be sufficient to explain the rise of phenomena such as Salafism, terrorism, and radicalization in the Middle East. This is how the constructivist theory explains the rise of the Islamists, as it emphasizes that the ideologies, norms, culture, and mental-identity structures that it overemphasizes are more important than material findings.

⁵⁹ Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War," *Cooperation and Conflicts* Vol. 32, No. 1, (1997): 17.

⁶⁰ Mohagheghnia and Latifinia, "A Constructivist Approach into the Emergence of the Terrorism in the Middle-East", 187.

CHAPTER 2: THE RISE OF SALAFISM

2.1 Historical Background of Salafism

To define Salafism, it can be said that it emerged as a political movement and reinterpreted the religion of Islam. The origin of Salafism comes from the 19th century at al-Azhar University. Muhammed Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani were the pioneers of early Salafism. Salafism in the Middle East transforms the general philosophy of Arab culture and customs into a religious discourse based on a hadith-centered understanding of religion. Although Salafism does not have a homogeneous structure in itself, it is divided into two groups: "Soft Salafism" and "Hard Salafism". To the first group, we can add theological and cultural Salafism. In contrast, we can add radical and jihadist Salafism to the second group. It is composed of Hanbali and Maliki, among those in the first group. The Radical Salafists, who form the second group, are under the influence of Hanbali-Wahhabi, today's executive cadres of terrorist organizations that claim to be Islamic. The most obvious effect of Salafism is that it makes decisions beyond the human mind and logic. Although it did not allow the development of positive sciences, arts such as music, painting, and theater, and in the geography that dominated, it legitimized violence with a takfiri approach.⁶¹ It is seen that there are uncertainties and divergences in the evolution process of the Salafist ideology. Through da'wah, the Salafist movement includes the idea of changing the people and society that have been exploited and oppressed for years. This movement, which has a heterogeneous structure, has different opinions and thoughts within itself, which predicts that this change will only occur with "violence," as in the case of Radical Salafi ideology.

In terms of differences with Wahhabism, Salafism does not reject modernism in Islam, but Wahhabism rejects modern ideas. Together with the toppled administrations of Middle Eastern countries, the Salafi movement started to rise rapidly in Egypt and Tunisia in the spirit of the Arab Spring. Salafism, which was more influential in Tunisia and Egypt, operated as a clandestine movement in the past. Due to high repression, the movement had to follow a key-profile strategy in the political arena until 2011-2012.

⁶¹ M. İlyas Bozkurt, "Selefilğin Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Felsefi Altyapısı," *Tesam Akademi Dergisi*,(2016/1) (2016): 44-45.

It is really hard to get precise information about Salafists in society in general. The main reason is that people do not know exactly what it looks like when they define Salafism. According to Bin Ali and Sudiman, Salafism is a term with a broader perspective than Wahhabism, and, ideologically, Salafism and Wahhabism are not the same.⁶² They do not know exactly how it differs from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Wahhabi ideology in Saudi Arabia. In Tunisia and Egypt, Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood can be thought of as two similar institutions, but they differ in terms of ideas and ideology. In Egypt, the Freedom and Justice party, another branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, competed in the parliamentary elections with the Political Salafi Al-Nour Party. Similarly, in the 2012 elections in Tunisia, the Ennahda movement was in conflict and competition with the Reform Front party.⁶³ On the other hand, according to some, they see today's modern Salafi ideology as a continuation of Wahhabism (Arabic: Wahhabiyyah) in Saudi Arabia and the teachings of Muhammed Bin Abdul Wahhab. In the 1990s, some Wahhabis began to call themselves Salafis. The views and works of Ibn Taymiyya laid the groundwork for the emergence of the Wahhabism movement in Saudi Arabia, where the Hanbali School was widespread, as Salafism expressed itself by seeing itself close to the Hanbali Sect. In the contemporary world, Wahhabism can be regarded as the official sect of Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and British military and political aid helped to establish Wahhabism.

When we look at the basis of Wahhabi ideology, there is harshness and accusing someone of blasphemy who is not thinking the same way as them. Indeed, democracy is bid 'a in Salafi ideology, which means innovation and a western project to protect Islamic identity, norms, and values from distorted European values. In an ideological term, Salafists were against protests towards the ruler, even if he was unjust. After the revolution in 2011, they had no choice but to support the current authoritarian leaders and started to change their views, even though al-Da'wa al-

⁶²Mohamed Ali and M. S. A. S. Sudiman, "Salafis and Wahhabis: Two Sides of the Same Coin?," *RSIS Commentary* (2016): 3.

⁶³Sadashi Fukuda, "Wahhabis and the Development of Salafism: The Nature and Policy Trend of Salafis," *Institute of Developing Economies IDE-JETRO: Specific Issues-Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)*, (2013): 3-4.

Salafiyya criticized the protesters.⁶⁴ On the other hand, to understand the impact of Salafism today, we need to learn how it spread in the past. Print culture had an important impact on the construction of Salafism in the early 20th century. Salafiyya Bookstore was founded in 1909, which made Salafism popular in the West and East in the 1920s. The first original bookstore was established in 1909 in Cairo and became a symbol for the Salafists.⁶⁵ After the impact of the Arab Spring, Salafists managed to attract the attention of the public not only by writing books, but also by using social media effectively. Instead of trying to influence the government like the Islamists did, they sought to influence other Muslims, whom they rejected as heretics. Although Salafis resemble traditional Islamists in terms of their ideas, they differ from them in terms of their aims and discourse. They were considered traditional but turned into political goals after the revolution happened in Tunisia and Egypt. Even though there are three main sub-groups of Salafism, which will be discussed in the next section, all of them want to live under Sharia laws and principles. For some people, Salafism is not a way of dressing or a trend/ideology, but it is much more methodology (manhaj) and regarding Wahhabism with Salafism would be a mistake.

2.2 Origins of Salafism: Evolution of Salafi Ideology

Islamic fundamentalists wanted to re-build Muslim society in a way that resembled the period of the Prophet Muhammed. Those are called “Salafis.”⁶⁶ The term “Salaf” means “al-salaf al-salih”, “virtuous ancestors/pious ancestors” and “the past,” which refers to the first three generations of the Islamic period. “Salafists” means “the ancestors”, which is a type of group who is willing to follow the rules of Sharia and the Qur'an, which is turning back to the golden years of Islam. Furthermore, some scholars used the term "fundamentalist" instead of "Salafism." In the Salafi groups, they do not want to be called Takfiri, but want to be called Salafi. That term comes from al-Salaf al-Salih, which means virtue ancestors. The Qur'an, Sunnah, and Hadith are the only legitimate sources for them. Thus, the Salafi term can also be

⁶⁴ Francesco Cavatorta and Valeria Resta, "Beyond Quietism: Party Institutionalisation, Salafism, and the Economy," *Politics and Religion* no. 13.4, (2020): 797.

⁶⁵ Henri Lauzière, "The construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the perspective of conceptual history," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* no. 42.3 (2010): 376,385.

⁶⁶ Kathrin Lenz-Raymann, “Salafi Islam: Social Transformation and Political Islam,” In *Securitization of Islam: A Vicious Circle: Counter-Terrorism and Freedom of Religion in Central Asia*, 69–108. Transcript Verlag, (2014): 69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1fxgjp.7>.

regarded as a synonym for "authentic," because the term Salafi has both political and religious authorities.⁶⁷ Salafists, who have to adopt the indispensable tools of democracy in order to implement Islamic Sharia, still regard popular sovereignty, political equality, women's rights, and all of them as illicit (haram) because democracy is a western product. This ideological conflict sets Salafists against the liberal democracy that the West has successfully built.⁶⁸ In the past, traditional Salafists' main rivals were the Shi'a and Sufis, supporters of Ash'ari theology. Interestingly, they also added a group of people who visit graveyards, and they also displayed a hostile attitude towards Muslims who adopted concepts such as democracy and secularism and ignored the rules of Sharia, even claiming that they were unbelievers or infidels. Their main discourses are shaped within the framework of tawhid that glorifies "the oneness of God", going back as an idea and ideology to the golden age of Islam, that is, to the first three generations after the emergence of Islam (the Salaf al-Salih), where the root of the word Salafism also means the same thing. On the contrary, they agreed that only the Qur'an and the Sunnah should be taken into account in the management of the state.⁶⁹ In fact, classical Salafism emerged in the 8th and 9th centuries, and the ideas of Ibn Hanbal shaped Salafist thought. However, independent and analogical reasoning were restricted by the influence of Ibn Hanbal. Afterwards, another important figure who shaped the ideology of Salafism was Ibn Taymiyya. The effect of Taymiyya on Salafism is the complete rejection of philosophy by limiting free reasoning, to prevent the negative effect of a Western-originated Greek influence on Islamic identity. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab aspired to establish an Islamic kingdom in the 18th century, rejecting all forms of modernity.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia became a supporter of Salafism by using its funds to assist the spread of Salafi beliefs and publishing operations. Salafism began to evolve into a contemporary framework in the twentieth century. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, and Muhammad 'Abduh were its most notable representatives. While today's Salafism is a Wahhabi-centered organization with populist discourses, Salafism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was more modernist and intellectual.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁸ Ashraf El-Sherif, *Egypt's Salafists at a Crossroads*. Vol. 29. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015, 3.

⁶⁹ Lenz-Raymann, "Salafi Islam: Social Transformation and Political Islam", 76-77.

The most apparent rationale was that authoritarian regimes, according to Modern Salafism, might provide significant barriers to the formation of Islamic identity inside Islamic nations.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that all Salafis appear to share the same goal at first look, their differing viewpoints have led to numerous categories. Sharia is a term used by traditional Islamists to refer to Islamic legal principles. These regulations, they insist, will never alter. Progressive Islamists, on the other hand, acknowledge that Sharia rules will not change, but they highlight those Islamic rules should be revised on a regular basis through *ijtihad* (free reasoning) in order to keep up with the world's ongoing evolution and renewal. Later, as supporters of "da'wah" and proponents of "jihad," this differentiation between Islamists was maintained.⁷¹

It is necessary to concentrate on the fundamental components that built the Salafi movement's intellectual framework in order to comprehend it. To begin with, it is theology based on the notion of law, which alludes to the *tawhid* ideology, which is God's oneness. In Islamic vocabulary, it is the same as the notion of monotheism. Salafists also think that "ijtihad," or independent reasoning based on *fqih* principles, is not required to address societal issues if the solution is not found in the Qur'an or primary sources. In addition, *taqlid*, or imitation, should be avoided in order to preserve Islamic culture's individuality.⁷² In other words, Ibn Taymiyya created the roots for Salafism, which eventually evolved into an Islamic religious movement. It is impossible for members in the Salafi group to commit religious blunders if we pay attention to the movement's essential ideas, and they think that the practices they propose would preserve the Islamic world from evil. Due to the Jihad concept, Salafist movements, both western and other Islamic organizations, have been labeled as terrorist organizations in today's globe. Salafis, although being heavily influenced by Sunni sects, do not consider themselves fully linked with any of them and instead follow Hanbali principles for practical reasons. The fact that Wahhabi and Salafi groups use a takfirist approach to designate another Muslim an infidel is also seen unfavorably by other Islamic groups and sects. Muslims who were like the companions

⁷⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁷¹ Tamara Sonn, "Islamic fundamentalism and political Islam," *History Compass* no. 4.1, (2006): 183.

⁷² Ibid., 50-51.

(Sahabah), who were accepted as Salafists in the Muslim world, were called people who lived before the 8th and 9th centuries. The first person who contributed to the development of Salafism was Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, the founder of Hanbali School. Later, Salafism was developed and evolved by Ibn Taymiyya. Likewise, the Salafi term had been used to refer theological school of Ahl al-Hadith.⁷³ The rise of Salafism between the 18th and 20th centuries and the gradual colonization of the West in Islamic geography led to the formation of Jihadists and harsh attitudes towards Salafist thought. The Salafist movement spread rapidly in the Middle East, and they believed that the Qur'an and Sunnah, as the understanding of thought, were the only main sources to be dealt with within the Sharia rules. However, this idea was not actually a new idea; it was a "hadith thesis" put forward by the Hanbali school.

With the impact of colonialism in the Middle East, Islamic fundamentalism, or Salafism, developed as a reaction to the emergence of colonial Western powers in the Islamic world. The first stage of this development started with the Ahl-I Hadith movement. The second stage of the Salafi movement emerged with the impact of the First World War, with some important figures like Hassan al-Banna, Rashid Rida, and Mawdudi. Besides, the third stage, in which Salafism gained much importance and strength, began with the end of the Second World War. For instance, Sayyid Qutb, who had radical views, made great contributions to the maturation and development of the understanding of Salafism in this period.⁷⁴ The foundations of the jihadist Salafist ideology were laid by Sayyid Qutb. According to him, society is divided into two categories: Muslim society and ignorance society. A Muslim society is a society made up of people who only serve God and organize their lives within that framework. Ignorance society, on the other hand, is a society in which the beliefs, thoughts, and laws of Islam are not practiced. He came up with the thought that modernity had anything to do with moral degeneration as a result of his trip to America. Qutb, like other Muslim Brotherhood members, was imprisoned after returning to Egypt in the

⁷³ Roel Meijer, Stéphane Lacroix, *"Between Revolution and Apoliticism: On the Nature of Salafi thought and Action," Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement. New York: Oxford University Press. 2013, 38.*

⁷⁴ Lloyd Ridgeon, *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age.* 50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK: Bloomsbury Academic. (2015): 2-4

1950s. While Hasan al-Banna was discussing the necessity of establishing an Islamic state, Qutb was discussing the grounds for the Islamic State's foundation. He considered their time as the present "Jahiliya" era of ignorance, and maintained that jihad should be carried out with the same weapons and means as in the past to support God's rule (early years of Islam).⁷⁵ Without doubt, when we compare the people who belong to Salafist thought with the people who are traditional Muslims, we will come to the conclusion that there are striking differences. As a matter of fact, they completely reject the information obtained from the sheikhs, and at the same time, they prohibit the interpretation of the Qur'an and free thought and reasoning, as the only answer to the existing problems is included in the Qur'an due to their truth, which is based on tawhid, the oneness of God. On the other hand, these differences of opinion, which Salafis initiated against a broad Islamic tradition, confront Salafism with four law schools: Hanbali, Shafi'i, Hanafi, and Maliki. The reason behind the rejection of these schools by the Salafists is that they claim that they emerged after the period of the "virtuous predecessors."⁷⁶

From my point of view, Salafism could be regarded as a more reformist movement due to its efforts to establish its own hegemony. The most striking ideas of Salafism are that it is against religious innovations and interpretations as well as liquidating the practices of Muslim society like desecration and polytheism. On the contrary, some scholars argue that Salafism emerged as a protest movement against innovations that could disrupt the religion and identity of Islam and developments that could negatively affect the way of worship.⁷⁷ Therefore, Salafism rejects free reasoning and considers Muslim schools like Sufis as religious innovations that should be rejected because Salafists refer to them as religious innovation. Besides, the response of "Salafiyya" in social life, that is, the existence of people who felt that they belonged to a community called "Salafiyya," started at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Later, Wahhabis started to use the names of Salafi and Salafism in order to get rid of the negative perception attributed to the name

⁷⁵ Lee, "Religion and Politics in the Middle East", 53.

⁷⁶ Jacob Olidort, *The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism*. Brookings, 2015: 7.

⁷⁷ Mohammad Abu-Rumman, "I am a Salafi," (2014): 44.

"Wahhabism".⁷⁸ Finally, the most remarkable feature of Salafism, whose historical process we have examined, is that it never gives a role to reason and logic in the principles of belief and worship. According to Salafi thought, only the verses and hadiths in the Qur'an are sufficient to understand the issues and problems encountered. However, Salafists do not interpret the verses and hadiths they do not understand and step aside, saying that only God will know them. In this situation, we can observe that Salafism is likewise opposed to the interpretations of Muslims and their contributions to Islamic civilization in terms of science and art. The most visible example is when terrorists affiliated with the DAESH group destroy the minarets, decorations, and domes of mosques in areas they have taken control of.⁷⁹ Al-Qaeda also attacks all secular Arab governments for being secular, deems them unbelievers, and promotes change through extreme movements. In these conditions, we may conclude that Salafi ideology lacks unanimity in terms of regional and universal dimensions. In terms of politics, some Salafists thought that full allegiance to rulers was required, and that any uprising against the state may be considered an infidel act. Jihadi Salafists seek total monotheism everywhere. In addition, Salafism can be named differently in countries where it differs from country to country. For instance, it is called academic or Haraki Salafism in Egypt, whereas in Morocco it can be named Jihadi or academic in Morocco, and academic Salafism in Algeria.⁸⁰ The following are the key topics that Salafis share: They all agreed that God exists in heaven; monotheism influences Salafists' positions not just against non-Muslims but also against other Islamic organizations; and they all desired to resuscitate Hadith and the Prophet's Sunnah.

2.2.1 Traditional / Quietist / Purist Salafism

It is extremely difficult to assess today's Salafism in a specific criterion, the most important reason being that the Salafist movement lacks a homogenous framework. In terms of core ideas, this group, which we call the traditional Salafi, argues for "da'wah," or calling people to Islam, giving religious instruction, and

⁷⁸ Hasan Onat, "İslâm Ortak Paydasını Kaybetmiş Müslümanların Açmazı: Şi'î-Selefi Kutuplaşması," *Tarihte ve Günümüzde Selefilik Sempozyumu, İstanbul, Kasım* (2013): 549.

⁷⁹ Ortadoğu'da Selefilik Geleneği: Daesh Terörünün Fikri Temelleri - Beyaz Tarih

⁸⁰ Abu-Rumman, "I am a Salafi", 47.

renouncing political activity.⁸¹ The divide between Sunna, an Islamic term that indicates the path and acts of the Prophet Muhammed, and bid 'a, which is innovation, became increasingly obvious with the direct influence of Nasir al-Din al-Albani, who favored spiritual jihad in Afghanistan and opposed violent combat with Israel. Hence, traditional and theological Salafists argue that terms like nation-state, nationalism, secularism, democracy, and political parties did not emerge during the time of Prophet Muhammed, and therefore, these terms cannot be recognized as Sunnah; that all Muslims should not deal with them.⁸² As we understand from these views, traditional Salafists still defend ideas that are far behind our times. Thus, their desire to turn a blind eye to all the innovations and democratic steps taking place in today's world and return to the first three generations, from which only Islam emerged and to which the term Salafism refers, is very utopian. From my point of view, I do not think that complying with the requirements of the age and being open to innovations have nothing to do with religion. In any case, Albani's slogan of "religious education and purification" is both supported and criticized by some groups. That purification not only includes purifying Islam from innovations but also from false views and corruptions. Within the context of traditional Salafism, it also has very harsh attitudes towards international politics and the formation of political parties as well. In the essence of its ideology, there is an eternal loyalty to the rulers, and they oppose the establishment of political parties and their election to power because they think this belief in loyalty to the rulers is necessary. However, as a result of the revolutionary movement that started after 2011, this idea gradually lost its power in Arab society. This group of Salafism can also be named "Scholastic Salafism" in that sometimes-educating people about the issues of Salafism and Islam constitutes its basic objectives. The main reason why the Salafis in this group display a quietist image is that they think that a political movement can cause strife (fitnah) among Muslims. When we look at the literature, most scholars refer to quietist Salafists as pacifists. The reason why they describe them as pacifists is related to the apolitical attitude of Salafis in this group. In fact, it would not be right to call them pacifists because they are more dependent on their rulers and they are at a level that can enter into an armed conflict if permission

⁸¹ Ramazan Yildirim, "Politicization of Salafism in Egypt," *SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research* no. 6 (2014): 8.

⁸² Jacob Olidort, *The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism*. Brookings, 2015: 8.

and opportunity are given by their rulers. Therefore, they are more submissive-minded people. By contrast, we can say that the Salafists in this group participated in the war during the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 and then played an active role in the civil war that took place between the pro-unionists in the north and the separatists in the south in 1994.⁸³ In the traditional Salafism, they mainly concern themselves with adopting virtues practice, religious and moral integrity in the basis of da'wa. For instances, Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah supported creation of an Islamic state that establishment would trigger the subsequent formation of a devout Islamic society.⁸⁴ This organization also claimed that the practices and commitments of people through the purification process would prepare the ground and perquisites for the establishment of an Islamic state. In this group, the concept of tawhid is related to the doctrinal iconoclasm that all Muslims have to take a stance towards it and support the destruction of all faiths that deny the sovereignty of God over the world and the hereafter.⁸⁵ On the other hand, as a reaction against quietist Salafism, they argued that since quietist Salafists do not participate in party-supported politics, they have excuses like there is no example of a political initiative in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, therefore this political initiative will consist only of cooperation with infidels. However, political Salafists opposed this idea and argued that they will be able to apply the da'wa (inviting people to Islam) principle more effectively when they enter politics as activists.⁸⁶ They are also known as "purists", and their main emphasis is based on fighting against shirk, human desires, and all heretical behaviors. The issue that forms the basis of their ideas is that when they enter the political arena without completely purifying the religion of Islam, they believe that they can do anything that is contrary to the religion of Islam, such as corruption, injustice, and nepotism. For this reason, unlike the political and Jihadist Salafists, there are terms like in their propaganda like "da'wa" (spreading Islam), "tazkiyya"

⁸³ Bernard Haykel, and Meijer Roel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," *Global Salafism—Islam's new religious movement*, (2009): 12.

⁸⁴ Noah Salomon, "The Salafi critique of Islamism: doctrine, difference and the problem of Islamic political action in contemporary Sudan," *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (2009): 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

(purification of Islam) and “tarbiyya” (religious education).⁸⁷ Another issue that should be emphasized is that those in this group avoid seeing themselves as a "movement", the underlying reason being that when they call themselves the Salafi Movement, they think that it carries a political overtone. Instead, they call themselves the spearhead community that tries to purify Islam from all kinds of evil and at the same time completely preserves the belief in tawhid. Those who consider the West as the main danger believe not only that the West is an enemy, but also that Jews and Christians want to destroy Islam and will expand their religion by imposing it on the Middle East. As a result, they reject all Western principles. To put it another way, the most crucial characteristic that sets this movement apart from other Islamic groups is that they are both "apolitical" and "quiet." Despite this, they are opposed to party politics, elections, democracy, and other such structures. They supported the absence of political interference or opposition to governments in Muslim countries because they lived in fear that opposition could cause divisions in the Islamic world. Additionally, purist Salafists claim that the independence of Yemen from the British in 1967 did not come with peace; on the contrary, more divisions took place among Muslims because of this independence from the British, which only caused a Socialist government to come to power, and deaths occurred as a result of conflicts between Muslims. For this reason, they stated that they preferred living under the British mandate to independence.⁸⁸ They even reinforce their thoughts with the aphorism of Ibn Taymiyya, who asserted that "I prefer sixty years with an unjust sultan to a state without a ruler overnight."⁸⁹

On the other hand, purists in this group argue that they apply the strategy, which is the appropriate method of implementation, but political and Jihadist Salafists do not apply these methods correctly. Moreover, Salafis in this group make a distinction between Salafi faith (aqida) and method (manhaj), revealing that they are different from political and jihadist Salafists. However, purist Salafists argue that the prerequisite for

⁸⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* no. 29.3, (2006): 217.

⁸⁸ Laurent Bonnefoy, "How transnational is Salafism in Yemen?," *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (2009): 323.

⁸⁹ Mehdi Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya: between Praise and Criticism." *Arabian Humanities. Revue internationale d'archéologie et de sciences sociales sur la péninsule Arabique/International Journal of Archaeology and Social Sciences in the Arabian Peninsula* 14 (2020).

a Muslim to be a Salafi is that they must believe in the right belief, which is the Islamic creed, and adhere to the correct method.⁹⁰ The Purists, who seem more peaceful with these views than the political and Jihadist Salafists, criticize and reject the methods of the Jihadists and political Salafists because they emphasize that none of the religious innovations they put forward had precedent in the lifetime of the Prophet and his companions. As a criticism, the driving force behind the desire to realize the ideas advocated by Jihadists and political Salafists through protests or revolutions stems from Western pretension, which actually points to the existence of a paradox in a different dimension, as we mentioned before. The idea that Salafists had in common was to reject the West and its ideas altogether, but they could not save themselves from applying the concept of nationalism that they rejected and some western models like the revolutionary model that emerged as a result of the Franco-American revolution. Strategy is more important than belief for purist Salafists. However, according to purists, they see both the Jihadists and the political Salafists as the main obstacles and threats to Islam and its purification. The reason was that jihadis and politicians are seen as rationalists who can be easily manipulated by human desire. These Salafi groups also adopted strategies according to their own interests rather than the interests of Islam, as opposed to the rules of the Qur'an and Sunnah. For this reason, they began to see Jihadist and political Salafis in the same category as schools such as the Mu'tazila, Maturidis, and Ash'arites, which were rejected by other Salafi communities.⁹¹ In other words, politicians were more concerned with being more active in the political arena in order to more successfully imply Sharia norms, whilst purist Salafists were more concerned with teaching people and implementing "da'wah" to alter Islamic society. Jihadi Salafists, on the other hand, reject to be merely dedicated to "da'wah" and political engagement through the formation of Islamic political parties, claiming that war should be waged against unbelievers or infidels (kuffar). Jihadist Salafism's core thesis is that by battling, they would make Islam supreme. That is, the governments they would erect will be founded on Sharia law and tawhid ideas.⁹² In

⁹⁰ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", 219.

⁹¹ Ibid., 220.

⁹² Joas Wagemakers, "A purist Jihadi-Salafi: the ideology of Abu Muhammad al-", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* no. 36.2, (2009): 284.

fact, despite having the same or similar discourses, these three groups compete with one another.

2.2.2 Political Salafism

When we look at Salafism's politics, we can see that it has a relatively complicated structure. The reason is that Salafists are currently debating several concerns and uncertainties. There were disagreements among Salafis in the run-up to the Arab Spring regarding how they should engage in international affairs without getting involved in politics. Because of the dominant media in the West, the Salafist movement came to be perceived as a terrorist movement while all of this was going on. On the one hand, we may claim that Wahhabism's policies have an organization that provides behind-the-scenes assistance to the leader, and that this structure is still operational today, despite changes.⁹³ Political Salafists, on the other hand, unlike the Purest and Madkhalism branches, are extremely engaged in political organizations while condemning violence and extremist branches like Qutbism, which had a significant effect on the founding of al-Qaeda and ISIS, as opposed to Jihadi Salafism.⁹⁴ To address the complex issues, older Saudi scholars began to seek religious authority by claiming that the purists have experience with religious knowledge and education. However, the emergence of a group of young people in the 1980s and 1990s calling themselves "politicos" weakened the purists' influence on Salafism. This new political group stated that they had more experience handling issues in today's society than the quietist Salafis, and that by participating in politics, they would be able to apply Sharia rules to the modern world more readily and efficiently. On the other side, they tended to choose to act against jihadist beliefs and the concept of revolution. They avoided events that might bring their reputation into disrepute, but they did not hesitate to condemn regimes that they considered as problematic.

Furthermore, the Harakis, also known as political activists, repudiated violence and encouraged political participation, as opposed to the jihadists. They followed the political reforms of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was formed in 1928 by Hasan al-

⁹³ Roel Meijer, ed. "Introduction." In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. Oxford University Press, 2014: 13.

⁹⁴ Vladimir Sazonov and Illimar Ploom, "Some Remarks On The Ideological Core And Political Pillars Of The So-Called Islamic State." *Modern Management Review* no. 26.1, (2021): 65.

Banna and engaged in both political action and Islamic charitable work. Harakis also thought that peaceful tactics should be used instead of collective action. The quietest Salafism, also known as "Scholastic Salafism" (al-Salafiyya al-Ilmiyya), is the third type of Salafism, on which al-Albani had a significant effect through his works and teachings. They believe that the only way for Islam to restore to its former glory is via "education and purification." They emphasize the importance of religious education while denying religious innovations. Hence, they advocate being loyal to the rulers, even if they are unjust, and we understand that they are apolitical but cannot be regarded as pacifists.⁹⁵ Thus, they do not believe in the effectiveness of political engagement and focusing on proselytizing. Traditional Salafist organizations such as Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah and al-Jamiyya al-Sharia, for example, focused on religious aid and religious education for children without demanding a political voice in state administration.

Moreover, this group, which is accepted within mainstream Salafism, did not accept the Sharia rules to remain only in the texts, but also aimed to apply them in the economy, politics, and judicial system, within the borders of the country that they ruled and in foreign policy making. The Muslim Brotherhood took part in the Islamic movement and contributed to the evolution and development of Political Islam, both influenced and affected by this movement. Salafists in this group believe that while purification and education in Islam are necessary, they also believe that they must be politically engaged in order to safeguard Islam and the tawhid, since rulers might do immense harm to Islam and its identity if they do not. For example, in the Gulf War, which erupted in 1990 as a result of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, America's military deployment in Saudi Arabia and support of the Purist Salafists through fatwas were harshly criticized by those who defended the Political Salafists, and in fact formed the basis for the Political Salafists' rapid faction. They also stated that these fatwas were not only made for help, but they also initiated the colonization of the Muslim world by the Western powers.⁹⁶ Furthermore, they criticized the quietists by saying that they isolate themselves from the world and that they are still living in ancient times as a mentality.

⁹⁵ Bernard Haykel, "On the nature of Salafi thought and action," *Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement*, (2009): 48-49.

⁹⁶ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", 222-223.

However, the activities of these groups, which have dominance in many Arab countries, especially in Saudi and Gulf countries, started to decrease in their processes with the impact of the Arab revolution after 2010–11. Moreover, political Salafist movements found an opportunity to gather in Egypt. The growing influence of Salafism on society in Egypt began in the 20th century. Although Al-Azhar University has made a name for itself in the Islamic world in terms of religious education, the people who teach have tried for a different structure. Some of the formations that emerged as Salafi movements as a result of these are as follows; “*Cem’iyyetu’ş-Şer’iyye, Medresetu’s-Selefiyye, Cemaatu Ensari’s-Sünneti’l Muhammediyye.*”⁹⁷ These organizations prepared the ground for the rise of political Salafism in Egypt with the trigger effect of the Arab Spring. Although purists, political and jihadists are divided into three main groups as branches of Salafism, they have common points of faith but have different views when interpreting the modern world. On the other hand, we see in the literature that the Salafis in this group are given the following names: "politicos," "Salafist Ikhwan," "Scientific Salafists," "Qutubis," "Harakis," and "Sururis."⁹⁸ According to some authors in the literature, Salafism is no different from fascism and basically has a totalitarian ideology. However, the reason why political Salafism has become so widespread and popular in the Middle East is that the concept of a nation-state is weak and even artificial in most Arab countries. Another reason could be related to the de-territorialized condition of Muslims, as Oliver Roy argued.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the most important factor in forming the Salafi identity is the religion itself. Since Salafism is basically divided into three groups, it will be very difficult for us to talk about the existence of a single Salafi identity. However, if we look at what they have in common with Jihadists and traditional Salafists, they all prohibit social activities such as music and games and support the separation of men and women in universities and workplaces. They argue that growing a beard is not only a Sunnah but a duty as well. Political Salafists and purists disagree on whether Sharia rules should be followed in the long run or in the short run. Jihadi Salafists, on the other hand, think that Sharia regulations should be applied

⁹⁷ Yildirim, "Politicization of Salafism in Egypt", 8-11.

⁹⁸Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism: Generalisation, Conceptualisation and Categorisation," Contextualising Salafism and Salafi Jihadism (2020): 37.

⁹⁹ Oliver Roy, "The crises of the Secular State and the New Forms of Religious Expression," (2005): 3. (1-15.)

immediately, unlike the other two Salafi factions. Furthermore, others argue that backing political Salafism will result in a decrease in the Middle East's rising terror and violence. This argument might be explained as follows: before to the Arab Spring of 2011, these Salafi groups had a political context in which to convey their message, but after 2011, they began to enter the political arena by forming parties. Despite the fact that Salafist engagement in politics was banned in Egypt as a result of a military coup, Salafist and other groups participated in politics in Morocco, Kuwait, Tunisia, Syria, Kuwait, Mauritania, and other countries.

Furthermore, given the fundamental challenges that the political Salafists have encountered, they have inadequacies in areas such as how to negotiate, alliances, and the management program that they would execute since they joined politics as a consequence of a revolution. As a result, the first challenge that the Salafist movement must address is gaining the trust of other political parties as well as the general public. They may acquire this trust by using the appropriate language and working together to solve shared challenges. These common issues can be humanitarian, social, or cultural issues. On the contrary, the main feature that distinguishes political Salafists from Jihadist Radical Salafists is their refusal to legitimize violence. Salafists can adopt a confident stance in this regard by rejecting Jihadist Salafist discourse since they find an atmosphere in which they can express themselves more clearly through political engagement.¹⁰⁰ However, while rejecting the concept of the "Civil State," they also aimed to maintain and establish the concept of the "Islamic State." They were also subjected to great criticism for the implementation of a secular constitution and Sharia. This also led to a great polarization over both the relationship between religion and state and the identity problem, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. Moreover, another factor in the spread and effectiveness of political Salafism is the effective use of communication networks and discourses on social media. Political Salafists developed their communication network via Twitter, but they did not have a common agenda. Those with revisionist rhetoric made calls to support the popular uprising, and their aim was to trigger political change within the Arab states in the region. Political Salafists, on the other hand, adopted a more sectarian language and focused on the interpretation of status-quo-oriented regional politics. The

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

communication network, which had a revisionist discourse, called for political change and independence from the West. Later, they began to share the discourses of Islamists who had supported the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt but had been disappointed. This revisionist discourse became even more popular after 2011 by sharing on social media that authoritarian regimes can pose great threats to the Islamic identity and that these regimes act together with the Western world, as opposed to some Salafists and Islamists, who see the establishment of an authoritarian state as a prerequisite for the prevention of threats that may arise. It also caused the increase of political Salafism in the Middle East, especially in Tunisia and Egypt.¹⁰¹

2.2.3 Radical jihadist Salafi ideology

According to George Kelly's "personal construct theory," it explains the main stages of radicalization. To understand another person's worldview, one must have a view that suggests looking at the world through his or her eyes. It starts with radicalization, which is the invalidation of the identity process that could be related to humiliation and rejection that lead to the first step of radicalization of individuals. Second, it leads to the rise of radical and extreme ideas about the world that result in the realization of radical identity. In the third stage, radical structures come into contact with individuals with similar views, and that is an experimentation of radical identity. Later, these radical groups are supported by hostility.¹⁰² In an interview with Winter and Muhanna-Matar, a Salafist person in Tunisia explained that the reasons behind the rise of radical Salafism are mostly not related to poverty, but the lack of free reasoning in Islam that people who have radical views only submit to Sheikhs and TV channels rather than God.¹⁰³

In describing Jihadi-Salafism, it is an extremely conservative and fundamentalist movement. The desire of the Modernist Salafists to create an Islamic community within the rules of sharia and the criticism of the imitated policies of the

¹⁰¹Annette Ranko, Justyna Nedza, and Nikolai Röhl. "A common transnational agenda? Communication network and discourse of political-Salafists on Twitter," *Mediterranean Politics* no.23.2, (2018): 298-299.

¹⁰²David A. Winter, and Aitemad Muhanna-Matar, "Cycles of construing in radicalization and deradicalization: a study of Salafist Muslims," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* no. 33.1, (2020): 2-3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Arab regimes quickly shaped this movement during the leadership of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Jihadist Salafism, on the other hand, does not want to be connected with the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi heritage because they believe it will embarrass them.¹⁰⁴ However, in the eyes of the West, Jihadist Salafism is synonymous with terrorism. Whereas the origin of the word Jihadi or Jihadist comes from Arabic, that meaning is the struggle for the holy war. Jihadists also use some terms like takfir, which is an excommunicational term, especially in some situations like when the opposing Islamic groups want to overthrow Muslim regimes, or when Jihadi Salafists see that the Muslims who live around them are morally corrupt, they declare them as infidels. However, the term "jihadist" is very similar to the term "terrorist," which the West has used to eliminate its political enemies.¹⁰⁵ The Salafi Jihadists formed the ideological basis of their movement by looking at the writings of Sayyid Qutb and calling their ideologies a return to "true Islam". They have been influenced by some of the concepts put forward by Sayyid Qutb. These concepts are as follows: "jahiliya", meaning the age of ignorance, "takfir," which is excommunication, and "hakimiyya," which is the sovereignty of God.¹⁰⁶ Jihadist Salafism, on the other hand, is a hybrid creation that has diverged from Salafi thought and is far from Salafi orthodoxy, according to conventional Salafist beliefs. Furthermore, since the 1970s, Jihadist Salafism has been anchored in these periods of political and cultural divides, and has evolved into a product of both modernity and tradition. On the other hand, within the Salafi context, since it is very difficult to analyze in a homogenous structure, it can be reduced to the literalist, anti-rationalist, or the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ahmad Bin Hanbal, and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. However, it is stated in the academic literature that the first examples of the concept of "Salafist Jihadist" emerged in 1998 thanks to a study by Gilles Kepel. Moreover, Jihadism is more closely related to political and religious ideology than physical jihad. Kepel used the term "Salafist Jihadist" to explain the ideology of radical Islam. That ideology came from the Soviet-

¹⁰⁴ Roy, "The Failure of Political Islam Revisited", 116.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries: On Religion and Politics in the Study of Islamist Militancy," dalam R Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* London/New York: Hurst." (2009): 4.

¹⁰⁶ Sajid Farid Shapoo, "Salafi Jihadism-An Ideological Misnomer," *Journal Article*, (2017): 3. (1-6)

Afghanistan war, when “Jihad” was declared against the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ According to some, the concept of Jihadist Salafism emerged as a mixture of Salafism and Qutbism. They argue that the Muslim Brotherhood is in the political and ideological background of their structure. However, according to other opinions, they claim that these Jihadi groups are extreme groups, that their ideas developed within the framework of Salafist ideology, and that the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb did not have an influence on the basis of their structuring.¹⁰⁸ Further, in the concepts that Salafists use a lot today, they are not only influenced by Sayyid Qutb's three basic concepts, but also by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada al Filistini, who adopted the "al-wala wal-bara" concept, which is loyalty and disavowal. This view, which differed from traditional Salafists, supported the Jihadist Salafist idea of violently overthrowing the political order by applying the principles of takfir. Also, Jihadists reject democracy, as seen in other Salafist groups, because they think that democracy will limit the sovereignty of God, which is related to the Hakimiyya concept. Thomas Hegghammer has examined Jihadist Salafism under the category of Umma-Oriented and Pan-Islamists as Classical Jihadists and Global Jihadists. Classical Jihadist Salafism fights in local areas, and more importantly, this group is mainly based on struggle against Arab regimes rather than the West to implement monotheism through introducing Jihad, while Global Jihadist Salafism targets Western targets (especially America) in any location.¹⁰⁹ In order to understand its origins, we need to emphasize the importance of the doctrine as “al-wala’ wa-l bara’,” which is translated as “loyalty and disavowal.” This doctrine underlies the growing extremism. All Muslims should be respected for God, Islam, and other Muslims' loyalty, which can be explained as the rejection of everything else as disavowal. The main ideas of this doctrine by Muhammad al-Maqdisi naturally divide the world into good or evil. On the one hand, it instilled integrity and allegiance in the Muslim world, while on the other, it sparked radicalization by Jihadi Salafists seeking authority inside the Muslim community.¹¹⁰ The core principle of this doctrine can be summarized as doing

¹⁰⁷ B. Livesey, (2005). The Salafist Movements. “Frontline” [Access: 11.05.2020]. Access on the internet: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/special/sala.html>

¹⁰⁸ Hegghammer, "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries", 6.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 10-12.

¹¹⁰ David Cook, *Understanding jihad*. University of California Press, 2015, 141.

what pleases God and avoiding what does not. Believing God and following his instructions in direct proportion to completing the Qur'an and Sunnah can be explained as dividing the world into two categories of good and evil. "Hate for God" is an expression against those who do not follow the rules and ignore the rules of the Qur'an and Sharia. This divisive approach has split the Islamic world in two, resulting in instability, intolerance, and, most importantly, the idea of Jihadist Salafism, which has become radicalized by claiming that their actions are for the sake of God, and is causing the rapid spread of anti-Islamism throughout the world.

In terms of politics, Salafists are evaluated in three basic categories. We can say that jihadist Salafism first emerged during the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, which was one of the most important factors in the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Iranian Islamic revolution also had an impact on the formation of Jihadist ideology. According to Oliver Roy, these jihadists do not have a desire for state administration or institutionalization like other fundamentalists; all they want is the implementation of Sharia wherever they dominate, like Al-Qaeda or ISIS.¹¹¹ The ideas of Sayyid Qutb played an important role in shaping Jihadist Salafism. One of the most important concepts that he has come up with is "hakimiyya", that is, the sovereignty of God, and "jahiliya," which is the heathen condition. By endorsing these ideas, Al-Qaeda and ISIS attempted to legitimize their actions.

When we look at the historical roots of the jihadist Salafists, it can be said that they have a connection with the Muslim Brotherhood. After Jamal Abdul Nasser's execution of Sayyid Qutb in Egypt in 1966, the Jihadists also cut their ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. This is because they came to the conclusion that a secular state would be harmful to both Islam and the Islamic identity. The clear fact is that Israel's great victory in 1967 in the Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza Strip caused the Jihadist Salafist movement to become more radical and fundamentalist.¹¹² Further, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.855), Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (d.1328), and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (b.1792) are respected by Jihadist Salafists, even though they lived long before the present. For example, Ibn Hanbal provoked opposition towards Mu'tazilite schools that had rationalist views. Ibn Taymiyya similarly proclaimed the

¹¹¹ (Roy 2007: 68; 107).

¹¹² Ibid., 183.

excommunication of the Mongols with his fatwa. The reason was that the Mongols still used the Mongolian Laws (Yasa), which meant they did not apply the Sharia rules. Similar conservative propaganda was created by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century, and enmity toward Shiites grew during this time due to their weakening of tawhid.¹¹³ Indeed, Jihadists used tawhid from Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa; for this purpose, they supported both local and global insurgencies, as in the case of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Jihadist Salafists developed the understanding of tawhid further and added the fourth to the three types of tawhid belief. The first three principles of tawhid are: tawhid al-uluhiyya, which means unity of God's divinity; tawfid fil-asma wa-l-sifat, which refers to the unity of God's name and attributes; and tawhid al-rubuiyya, which is the unity of God's Lords. In addition, Jihadists added fourth element as tawhid al-hakimiyya that means unity of God's sovereignty.¹¹⁴ For this reason, Jihadists seek to intervene by justifying the physical jihad if the Sharia rules are ignored and not enforced by the state.

Without a doubt, Al-Qaeda used similar techniques, but it had a different goal and declared war on the United States in order to construct the so-called "Islamic State." Due to Iran's objective of turning Iraq into a Shia state, it had both defensive and offensive Jihad goals, particularly against Shia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which emerged as a branch of al-Qaeda in 1999, or the "Islamic State" officially used since 2014, is a Salafi Jihadist organization. In the ideological foundations of ISIS, extreme Islamic ideas, ideas of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism are found. Despite the fact that ISIS lost military control in Iraq and Syria by the end of 2020, its ideologies and the leaders that represent them continue to spread propaganda across the world, and it is likely that it can regain strength.

Indeed, the most important event that caused radical Islam and Jihadist Salafism to rapidly increase and gain power in the Middle East began with the US

¹¹³ Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, "Salafism, Jihadism and Radicalisation: Between A Common Doctrinal Heritage and The Logics of Empowerment," *Militant Jihadism: Today and Tomorrow* 6 (2019): 24.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

invasion of Iraq in 2003. Actually, when the war on terrorism was declared with the Bush doctrine, America's most well-known rhetoric was to spread democracy and end terrorism in the Middle East. According to Sunnis, they thought that the Islamic world was under the threat of the West, especially the United States, and that the only way to stop this was through the idea of Jihad. In particular, anti-Shia views became more dominant among jihadist Salafis during this period because Jihadist Salafis, like Abd al-Wahhab, do not consider Shi'i Muslims, as they perceive them as non-believers.¹¹⁶ In fact, according to some people in the Islamic world, these separatist thoughts cause the Islamic religion to be divided from within, and that those who harm Islam are not Christians or Jews, but extremists who define themselves as Muslims.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, quietist Salafists criticized Al Qaeda and ISIS for their Jihadist mentality. They argue that Jihadist-Salafism does not conform to the method and methodology (manhaj) of Salafism. However, political Salafis are also against the idea of justifying violence that Jihadist Salafists have put forward. They have classified other Muslims as "Kharijites" because Jihadist-Salafi organizations have accused other Muslims who are not among them with the understanding of "takfir" and killing them. On the other hand, Jihadist Salafists admit that purists are religiously knowledgeable but claim that they are ignorant of state affairs and often hide the truth from the people to prevent possible protests and revolutions against Arab regimes.¹¹⁸ However, the ignorant and disguised approach of quietists caused political and jihadist Salafism to gain even more strength. While the jihadist Salafists resorted to violence to change the political order, especially Sayyid Qutb's thoughts, shaped radical movements, even though he was not seen as a Salafist by orthodox Salafis.¹¹⁹ In other words, three main elements of Jihadi Salafism can be classified as "armed struggle as a religious duty for all Muslims," "Al Wala' wa-l bara' concept," which divides the world into Good (Loyalty) and Evil (Disavowal)," and "Takfir," which is the excommunication of people who do not belong to Salafism, leading to violence. Furthermore, when describing Jihadi Salafism, it should be noted that it is a very distinct movement that is rooted in the pre-modern

¹¹⁶Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi 'is: Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi 'ism," *Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement* (2009): 2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁸ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", 226.

¹¹⁹ Robin Wright, et al. *The jihadi threat: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and beyond*. United States Institute of Peace, 2016, 8.

theological background. It also has legal networks through social media, scholars, and websites. To understand the origins of Jihadist Salafism, it should be noted that it has nothing in common with the Muslim Brotherhood or Political Islam. The desire of the organization was both to gain political power and control over Islamic society. In contrast to the ideas and ideologies of Jihadi Salafists, such organizations did not have any strict doctrines. For example, despite being a Sunni-oriented organization, it refrained from displaying any hostile attitude towards other sects of Muslims or Shiites. On the contrary, the main reasons for their activities emerged as a reaction against the increasing imperial power of the West in the Middle East that aimed to prevent it and also to restore the Islamic phenomenon, which lost its importance.¹²⁰ In light of this information, there was a vacuum in the Islamic world in terms of the caliphate with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. To fill this gap, the desire to revive the caliphate has emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood. In the same way, as we see in the case of ISIS today, the Jihadist Salafists want to rule all Muslims under a single leader. After the assassination of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2019, Haji Abdullah was declared the new leader of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and proclaimed himself Caliph, like the former leader, al-Baghdadi.¹²¹ Above all, the primary purpose of Jihadi Salafism is to prevent idolatry, which is called “shirk” in Arabic, such as visiting graves, stones, etc., and promoting “tawhid,” which is related to the oneness of God. The remaining people, whether they are democrats or Shiites, declare them all non-believers, infidels, idolaters, or apostates.

Furthermore, similar to the views of other Salafi groups, ISIS also had a desire to take Arab society back to the early days of Islam by rejecting all innovations and reforms, as they thought that these changes would corrupt the pure nature of Islam and Islamic identity. Although its basic ideology is based on Salafism and Wahhabism, not only has it spread terrorism and violence since the 1990s, but the organization has also declared jihad not only against secular governments, but also against non-Muslims, Shiites, or those who are Muslim but oppose ISIS's ideology.¹²²

¹²⁰ Bunzel Cole, "From paper state to caliphate: The ideology of the Islamic State," *The Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World* no. 19, (2015): 7.

¹²¹ [İŞİD'in yeni lideri: Halifelığı olmayan 'halife' - BBC News Türkçe](#)

¹²² *Ibid.*, 65.

If we analyze ISIS in terms of periods, the foundations of Jihadist ideology were established in Iraq between 2002 and 2006 under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Among the active factors, the failure of Saddam Hussein's regime to provide peace in the country, the US invasion of Iraq, and then the dragging of Iraq into a civil war were effective. In the second period (2006–2013), the jihadist idea began to lose its power, and the organization's efforts to establish an Islamic state failed. That period is called the “paper state.” In the third stage (2013–2014), it can be said that ISIS took control of Syrian territory. It is known that in the process since 2014, the leaders of the organization declared themselves the Caliph of Islam.¹²³

Likewise, Saudi Arabia was the main supporter of the exportation of Jihadi Salafism because it supported the idea of de-nationalized pan-Islamic unity, which prepared the ground for the rise of Jihadi Salafism. They think that they can help the umma wherever they are oppressed in the world. It paved the way for them to wage Jihad against Shia to eliminate “shirk” and protect “tawhid”. Although Saudi Arabia does not directly ignite the Shiite-Sunni conflict today, it is known that it provides economic funds to the Salafis.¹²⁴ However, the distinction between Saudi Arabia and Salafists has emerged due to both pragmatist and normative aspects. Saudi Arabia's alliance with America, its silent approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict, its participation in the United Nations and UNESCO, its oil sales to the west and to the United States, and the presence of a US military base in Saudi Arabia, which has caused conflict between the two, are all reasons why Salafists hold Saudi Arabia in great respect.¹²⁵ Indeed, ISIS tried to focus on rising sociological interruptions between Jihadism and Salafism that also led to the motivation of a new type of Jihadist ideology primarily based on violence by focusing on apocalyptic rhetoric rather than religious orthodoxy. It also aimed to transform itself into a hybrid movement by legitimizing its actions. As a result, this social disruption paved the way for the rise of Jihadi Salafism, a new strategy based on the “jihadization” of social relations aimed primarily at non-Muslims. However, Al-Qaeda had no territorialization strategy and aimed to struggle

¹²³ Cole, “From paper state,” 13-35.

¹²⁴ Cole, “From paper state,” 8.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 30.

against the enemies of Muslims and Islam. On the other hand, ISIS has a different strategy, like reviving the concept of “apocalypse.” Therefore, the actions of ISIS, like military and religious efforts, can be explained by this analogy. On the other hand, it has ideologies of contemporary Salafism like “Al Wala' wal-Bara'”, or loyalty and disavowal, and establishing an Islamic State through justifying violent actions to accomplish its jihad.¹²⁶

2.2.4 Modern Salafism

The understanding of "Modern Salafism" reflects a thought based on religious ideas and identities. In modern Salafism, it can be said that the Qur'an and the Sunnah are included in the belief system as a result of creating an ideology by looking at how the world should be governed from a moral, political, and social framework. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thanks to thinkers such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the Salafism movement laid the foundations for what we might call Modern Salafism today. As a similarity to the Muslim Brotherhood’s pragmatic view of moderation in Islam with their "Al-Wasatiyyah" doctrine, they also supported “Reformation in Islam” through re-interpretation of early sources.¹²⁷ However, some traditional Salafists were influenced by Ibn Taymiyya and his views about limiting free reasoning (ijtihad) and the rejection of modernity by al-Wahhab. The first attempts by Salafism to purify the religion and society of Islam have been legally and theologically a part of Islamic history. Wahhabism's ideology has provided a safe haven for today's Salafism and Salafist thinkers in Saudi Arabia. The main issue here, however, is that modern reform movements do not correspond to today's Salafism. In addition, as is clearly expressed in the Wahhabi tradition, they also completely reject modernity. Thus, in today's most Salafist organizations, they oppose reforms based on modernity. Modern Salafis also aimed to make Islam more modern, so they tried to purify what they considered "reactionary" in religion and focused on "the virtues of the ancestors."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹²⁷ Mohamed Bin Ali, "Salafis, Salafism and Modern Salafism: What Lies Behind a Term," *RISS Commentary* no. 052, (2015): 2.

¹²⁸ Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. (2016): 5-6. 1-26

2.3 Correlation between Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism

It is extremely difficult for Muslims in the Western world to distinguish Jihadist Salafists from other Muslims, particularly those with radical views. As a result, they believe that almost all Muslims in the Middle East, who they imagine in the minds of Westerners, have radical jihadist ideas. They believe, however, that the Muslim Brotherhood's structure and Salafism's ideology are built on the same foundations. The main questions to be asked here are: What are the differences between Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood? What are the similarities apart from the differences? Asking questions like this will help readers understand the subject better.

In the past, Western politicians often saw Salafists as structures with only marginal extremists, so they made the mistake of thinking that they could support Western-exported concepts such as democracy and human rights. The Muslim Brotherhood (Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin) was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. While it has the most powerful Islamic movement feature, it also has widespread support in the Arab geography. In addition to being an organization that supports and targets pan-Islamist and religious-political movements, it has become a social movement. Known for the slogan "Islam is the absolute solution", the main idea and purpose of the Muslim Brotherhood was to establish an Islamic State governed by Sharia rules. In the 1940s, the organization allegedly posed a potential threat to the ruling Vafd party. As a result of the "Free Officers Movement" that took place in Egypt in 1952, all political parties were closed down. While these were happening, the Muslim Brotherhood was also very influential in universities, especially in Al-Azhar University.¹²⁹ As seen in Salafism, they had a mission that served as a charitable institution rather than a political organization in the foundations of both formations. Due to this mission, the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood was closed, which started to gain power again in the political sense since the 1980s, and has formed structures with different names in other countries in the Middle East. With the onset of the Arab Spring, it played an important role in the protests in Tunisia in 2010 and in Egypt in 2011.

¹²⁹ Bruce K. Rutherford, "Egypt after Mubarak: liberalism, Islam, and democracy in the Arab world," *Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe* no. 8.1, (2011): 131.

Salafism, on the other hand, can be called an ideology or reform movement rather than an organization or structure. For this purpose, they advocate adopting what the Prophet Muhammad did and living in a similar way to his life, while Sunnah is a concept that they accept as the basis of the Islamic faith. Salafists differ from Muslim Brotherhood members in that they reject all types of innovations (bidah). Although Salafists argue that they have an apolitical stance, political and jihadi Salafis also have ideas such as the establishment of the political superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims and the realization of the understanding of jihad, influenced by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qadamah, and Ibn Qayyim.

Nevertheless, both Salafism and Muslim Brotherhood have religious and political power that are affiliated with Islam, but their methods are different from each other, so it can be said that both are separate organizations or structures. On the other hand, it can be argued that today's contemporary Salafism has roots in Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. The Muslim Brotherhood also had an important impact on Wahhabi students. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood found a way to escape the oppression of Egypt's despotic regime by traveling to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism have always had a tense relationship. The two structures merged to form a political-religious opposition movement known as the "Sahwa Movement" or al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya, which was heavily influenced by each other. This Islamic Awakening also became popular among youth in Saudi Arabia with the impact of the rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood and the radical views of Sayyid Qutb. The meaning of "Sahwa" is also related to "political activism" that emerged as a reaction against American intervention in terms of militarily. The Sahwa movement also included semi-secret groups like Sururis (al-sururiyyun) and Saudi Muslim Brotherhood (al-ikhwan al-muslimun al-sa'udiyyun).¹³⁰ Although the Sahwa Movement is seen as similar to political Salafism, the Sahwa Movement deals with issues such as political issues, human rights, corruption, and injustice.

In the example of political Salafism, direct participation in parliamentary politics, the establishment of political parties and competition in the political arena were aimed at, unlike in the Sahwa movement.

¹³⁰ Lacroix Stéphane, "Saudi Islamists and the Arab Spring," *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States*, (2014): 2.

As they were heavily influenced by Wahhabism, they also preferred to stay away from politics for many years. Together with the Gulf Crisis in 1990–91, radical actions started to increase, which shaped the formation of the Jihadi-Salafi organization. The Salafists, who had difficulties carrying out their actions in Saudi Arabia due to the excessively oppressive administration, found the solution by increasing their activities abroad. Inevitably, al-Qaida was founded, and influenced by radical Salafists and radical groups of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³¹ The reason radical Salafism has had a great influence on the formation of Al-Qaeda is that they adopted the ideology of takfir. They directly targeted the Shiites and declared them as infidels (kuffar). In addition, anti-American sentiments accelerated the process of radicalization. Thus, the ideas and principles of Salafism began to spread rapidly throughout the Middle East and the Islamic world. However, what were the motivations for the spread of Salafism throughout the Middle East? What distinguishes Salafists from the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, they present themselves as completely focused on religious piety and constantly use religious jargon in their discourses. The reason why it spread more than Wahhabism did was that the Salafis emphasized the early times of Islam, that the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah were the most important sources, and that they rejected the four Islamic law schools (madhhab), which had even more influence on the Sunni people.

The main distinction between Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood can be seen as the application of religious discourses and pragmatism. On the one hand, Salafism started to rise with its ideological and religious purity, which also had religious ideologies to replace the status quo. On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood followed pragmatism to gain power, and therefore, it could be regarded as a “moderate” organization due to its Westernized reform ideas. Yet, it would be wrong to say that the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928, and the Muslim Brotherhood of the present day are the same, because over time, the organization, which showed flexibility on certain issues, had to leave its power to other groups. Therefore, the moderate stance of the Muslim Brotherhood and constant

¹³¹ Fukuda, "Wahhabis and the Development of Salafism," 12.

concessions paved the way for the rise of the Salafists.¹³² Consequently, the Muslim Brotherhood has been trying to carry out its movements under pressure for many years, and since then it has become a growing movement by giving importance to its activities. However, it has turned into a failed system in terms of management. The most valid explanation for its failure is the uncertainties in its ideology as well as identity conflicts such as young-old and modern-conservative, which are some of the reasons for its failure.¹³³

Another point that distinguishes the Muslim Brotherhood from the Salafists is that the aim of the Muslim Brotherhood is to achieve its ultimate goals by transforming Western institutions and concepts such as democracy, human rights, political parties, etc. As a result, the Muslim brothers strategically adopted a different tactic than the Salafis, taking a more pragmatic and conciliatory approach. The Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, unlike that of the Salafists, is in direct contact with Western thought. In other words, they approach modern science more positively. Moreover, its organization could also act with the understanding of the state within the state, thanks to its own education system and laws. Unlike Salafis, the organization also reinterprets western concepts such as democracy within the framework of Sharia rules, but Salafists reject these interpretations. It is possible to talk about jihad in the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. It can be said that there is a similarity with Salafism. However, the organization argued that there are some stages in creating an Islamic State in which the rules of Islam and Sharia apply. First a stage based on secrecy is set up, then a community is formed, and then the sovereignty of Islam will be established either through political means or "jihad". Similarly, the ideology of Hasan al-Banna also included that violence could be used against the enemies of the Brotherhood and Islam.¹³⁴ Al-Banna also argued that "da'wah" (call to Islam) is necessary to apply Sharia. Further, he also stated that where the "da'wah" failed, the ideology of "jihad" would help to establish Sharia-based sovereignty. After his assassination in 1949, the

¹³² Nawaf Obaid, "The Muslim Brotherhood: A Failure in Political Evolution," *Cambridge: Harvard Kennedy School-Belford Center* (2017): 37.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹³⁴ Ashraf El-Sharif, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Future of Political Islam in Egypt*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014, 20.

ideas of al-Banna, which emerged as Islamic Socialism, emerged as an alternative to both capitalism and communism during the height of the cold war. In addition, Mohammed al-Ghazali and Abd al-Qadir had an important role in the emergence of the idea of Islamic Socialism.¹³⁵ However, this does not mean that the Muslim Brotherhood applied violence to its policies. In contrast, the Muslim Brotherhood supported political and social change through non-violent means. Therefore, Hasan al-Hudaybi, who was supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, stated that the organization rejected both “takfir” and “jihad” ideology, since Salafists mostly use these concepts in their rhetoric.¹³⁶ Likewise, Salafists acknowledge the doctrine of these stages, but while carrying out the stages of establishing Islam, they aim to create a pure community by purifying society.

Another obvious difference is that while the Muslim Brotherhood is more united politically, Salafists are more fragmented because Salafism is a theological reform movement rather than an organization like the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁷ After the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists also showed some similarities and differences in terms of democracy and elections. Salafis supported Islam as a form of democracy. When there is no clear information in the sharia, people will have a limited right to consult the "Shura". However, the Muslim Brotherhood opposed this idea because they hold the view that democracy and theocracy cannot act together, and therefore, it has no distinct borders. This means that the rule of the people is only limited to the consultation (shura) that some members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists agreed on that issue.¹³⁸ Moreover, the differences between Jihadist Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood are also based on pragmatism, which is rooted in the "Al-Wasatiyyah" doctrine, which is the “Moderation in Islam.” Hence, the doctrine makes

¹³⁵ Ronnie Azoulay, "The power of ideas. The influence of Hassan Al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb on the Muslim Brotherhood organization," *Przełąd Strategiczny* no. 8, (2015): 176.

¹³⁶ Annette Ranko, and Justyna Nedza, "Crossing the Ideological divide? Egypt's Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood after the Arab Spring," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* no. 39.6, (2016): 528.

¹³⁷ Mark Durie, “Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood: What is the difference?,” 2013, June: [Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood: What is the difference? :: Middle East Forum \(meforum.org\)](http://MiddleEastForum.org)

¹³⁸ Joas Wagemakers, "The Shifting Legitimation of Democracy and Elections: The Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis," (2014): 50.

the Muslim Brotherhood hostile to the Jihadi-Salafi trend.¹³⁹ On the other hand, the most distinctive point that differentiates Salafists and Muslim brothers is their views on politics and the methods they use to achieve their goals. On the issue of jihad, the Muslim Brotherhood took a pro-democracy stance and avoided the radically framed jihad and takfir approach. Salafists consider the Muslim Brotherhood unsuccessful in supporting the concept of "Hakimiyya," that is, the sovereignty of God, which belongs to the ideas of Sayyid Qutb.

As a result of its support of secular understandings such as religious equality, democracy, and human rights in many countries, Salafists are highly critical of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁴⁰

2.4 Ennahda Movement and Salafism in Tunisia

To better understand the subject, it would be helpful to ask the questions: how did Salafism arise in Tunisia and what was Salafism's relationship with the Ennahda Movement? The history of the Salafist movement that emerged in Tunisia in the 1980s under the rule of Habib Bourguiba, who led the country from 1956 to 1987. Today, it can be said that the birth of the Islamic movement in Tunisia was born in the 1970s. Both internal and external factors were effective in its formation. Indeed, many people were killed, and some trade unionists were imprisoned, during the 1978 conflict between the Bourguiba government and the National Trade Union Organization (U.G.T.T), which followed a policy hostile to democracy. While these oppressive conditions continued, the Islamic Movement started its first activities by publishing a magazine called "Al-Maarifa" (Knowledge), which initially dealt with social and religious issues. After the bloody conflict between the government and the union in 1978, the magazine stopped being interested in social and religious issues and started to publish articles on political issues.

Besides, Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the Ennahda Party, has the following views on Salafism: he stated that the Salafists in Tunisia are different from those in Egypt, that their number is not that great, and that most of the Salafists work in NGOs. The reason for the increase in extremist radical rhetoric and actions in

¹³⁹ Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* no. 33.6, (2010): 483.

¹⁴⁰ El-Sherif, *Egypt's Salafists at a Crossroads*, 14.

Tunisia was the ex-leader Habib Bourguiba's banning of the School of Islam after the independence from France in 1956, and his aim to form "Tunisian Islam," which is a mixture of modernization and Islam. Furthermore, Ben Ali, the subsequent leader, exposed the Ennahda movement to pressure from the Ennahda movement, which had a moderate political current. For these reasons, he stated that the absence of a moderate Islamic school led to the emergence of religious extremists.¹⁴¹ Bourguiba's modernization project created a dilemma for Muslims who were torn between their Arab-Muslim identity and the Western-oriented form of government. President Ben Ali positioned himself as a protector of the Islamic heritage in order to appeal to the people's religious feelings. He was more cautious about modernization than Bourguiba, and he became more dictatorial.¹⁴²

In the 2000s, there was an unprecedented rise of jihadist ideology in Tunisia, even in secular families. The main motivation for the rise of their actions was the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Harsh actions were implemented by the Ben Ali regime towards Islamists who were either Salafists or moderate Islamists, to protect and pursue modernization projects in Tunisia. After the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes, the Ennahda Movement started to explain their wishes for the future of Tunisia by declaring that they will implement modernity with democracy, but that does not mean that they will disregard Islamic identity and culture. Rather, it will be a mix of both Islam and modernity altogether, without Islamic Law in the constitution, which could be regarded as a double strategy.¹⁴³ In other words, the Ennahda movement tried to implement Islam within the reality of Tunisia through pragmatism, but it did not apply Islamic law because it did not reflect society. To show its modern attitudes, the Ennahda party started to make some references towards equality between men and women in social life and party affairs.

In addition, this polarization created such chaos that Islamists began to define leftists as enemies, so these factors could be regarded as internal issues. Among the

¹⁴¹ Robin Wright, "Tunisia: Interview with Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi", November 2, 2012. [Tunisia: Interview with Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi | Wilson Center](#)

Interview with Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi, Tunis, August 10, 2012

¹⁴² Anne Wolf, "An Islamist 'renaissance'? Religion and politics in post-revolutionary Tunisia," *The Journal of North African Studies* no. 18.4, (2013): 562

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 566

external factors, the gradual loss of importance of Arab Nationalism and the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, which came to be seen as a victory for the Muslims, were influential in the formation of the ideological and political ideas of the Islamic movement in Tunisia.¹⁴⁴ The regime, which adopted secular socio-economic policies in general, pursued policies of suppression and silencing against Salafism, which is a more conservative religious movement, while suppressing the other religious communities. Thus, Salafism remained a clandestine movement until 2011. The most important result of these political and economic policies was the formation of secular and religious polarization among the people. With the effect of this separation, religious organizations began to emerge in Tunisia. For example, Jamaa Islamiyya (The Islamic Group), a colleague of the Muslim Brotherhood, emerged as a reaction against secular elites. On this occasion, there was a division between members of it on the strategy issue. It was divided between revolutionist members who wished to control their actions without permission from the government, while reformists wanted to act with the approval of the state.¹⁴⁵ It was later renamed the Islamic Tendency Movement, which is based on mainly consensus and participation. In 1989, the Islamist movement was renamed the Ennahda Renaissance Movement during the Ben Ali Regime. Due to the oppression of the Ben Ali regime, some of the members of the movement leaned towards radical activities against the government. Therefore, the most important result of Bourguiba's policies was the emergence of a serious distinction between secular and religious groups.

Salafists who went to war in Afghanistan and Bosnia or were imprisoned as a result of repressive policies started to become radicalized. They believed that the democratic system was not suitable for Islam. Therefore, Tunisian Salafism was not imported but started to rise as a reaction against Ben Ali's regime and economic problems.¹⁴⁶ Before the Arab Spring, the Ennahda party started to moderate itself as a liberal-democratic party by diverging party and movement. Although some claim that

¹⁴⁴ Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between confrontation and participation: 1980–2008," *The j-Journal of North African studies* no. 14.2, (2009): 259.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 563.

¹⁴⁶ Stefano M. Torelli, Fabio Merone, and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafism in Tunisia: challenges and opportunities for democratization," *Middle East Policy*, no. 19(4), (2012): 151.

the party's goal is to Islamize Tunisia, the party has avoided radical discourse since the 1990s.

In the 1990s and 2000s, a new generation of Salafism emerged in Tunisia on the axis of Levantine Salafism and Saudi Wahhabism, which preferred to stay away from the Ennahda as an Islamic Movement. Since Salafist satellite channels were very common, especially in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where they were the only sources that could be reached in terms of religious education, it shaped Salafist norms, which have an important role in the socialization process among young people.¹⁴⁷ Thus, apart from being a growing trend, Salafism also has a significant impact on young people because there is no one to guide the young population.

Ennahda tried to change the vision of Jihadist Salafists that the creation of an Islamic state was not betrayal by reminding Salafi youth. In relations between Ennahda and Salafism, Ennahda focused on democracy, which includes justice, which is the aim of Islam. Salafism considers democracy to be a modern invention, resulting in a split between the two groups. On the other hand, the Ennahda Movement began to take a stance against Salafism because the presence of Salafists posed a significant threat to Ennahda and there was concern that Salafist radicalism could lead to a deterioration of democracy and political order as well as the emergence of social and economic problems.¹⁴⁸ In addition, Salafism did not have much influence in society and continued its life as a clandestine underground movement during the 1990s in Tunisia.

On the other hand, Salafists in Tunisia used democracy as their main tool due to its survival in the political arena. Therefore, it also caused a dilemma within both Islamic society and Salafism because adopting Western concepts such as democracy, free and fair elections, human rights, and minority rights brings political equality that also undermines the former beliefs of Salafi ideology.¹⁴⁹ Besides, the main reason for the rise of Salafism in Tunisia was that the Ennahda movement removed the barrier to the rise of Salafist groups. Thus, it supported the Salafists and their participation in

¹⁴⁷ Fabio Merone, Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillò, "The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism after the Revolution: From La Maddhabiyya to Salafi-Malikism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2021): 6

¹⁴⁸ Francesco Cavatorta and Stefano Torelli, "From Victim to Hangman? Ennahda, Salafism and the Tunisian Transition," *Religions*, no. 12(2), (2021): 8-12.

¹⁴⁹ Karagiannis, "The rise of electoral Salafism", 13.

politics, and political Salafists had the opportunity to enter politics during the Ennahda period. However, the aim of the Ennahda Party was to prevent their radicalization by ideologies like “jihad.” Therefore, the political organization of the Salafists was legally accepted by Tunisia, and since the Salafists had now legally formed a party, they tried to spread their ideology in this way.¹⁵⁰

Three Salafi parties, adopting the sharia-based legal system, were formed in early 2012. These parties are the Party of Mercy (Hizb al-Moreira), the Reclamation Front (Jibhat al-Islah), and the Reality Party. (Hizb al-Asala) After the revolution, the most active Jihadist organization in Tunisia was Ansar al-Sharia, which was founded by Abu Ayyad in 2011.

When we look at the national Islamic identity of Tunisia, it can be argued that Tunisian Islam became more politicized due to the divisions between Salafists, the Ennahda Movement, and seculars. It is difficult to mention revolutionary strategy in the Islamist project, but Islamists have primarily focused on political ideology through da'wa movements.¹⁵¹ Islamists try to implement Islamic ideology in politics, social life, and society. In the transformation period of Tunisia, it can be observed that Islamists aimed at both political and social change in the country due to a political vacuum. Therefore, jihadi Salafists started to control many mosques to control religious values and spread Jihadi ideology, especially at Friday prayers in Tunisia.

Islamic activism is associated mostly with charitable organizations and religious education that have become more visible and substantial. (e.g., Zeytuna Mosque started religious education in 2012). There was an agreement between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Higher Education on the issue of controlling Zeytuna Mosque. They agreed on its independence. However, the question arose after 2011 about who would control the mosque, because it was not only a mosque, but also a teaching institution, which led to the rise of a dichotomy between Salafists and the Ennahda Movement.¹⁵² In terms of the Islamic identity of Tunisia, people were mobilized to support the Islamic identity of seculars, but their collective identity was

¹⁵⁰ Rümeyya Aktaş, “Tunus’ta Yükselen Bir Dinamik Olarak Selefi Hareket,” *Ormer Perspektif Serileri*, no. 11, (2015): 3-4.

¹⁵¹ Teije Hidde Donker, "Re-emerging Islamism in Tunisia: repositioning religion in politics and society," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 18.2, (2013): 209.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 220.

not advanced because the protesters were of all Islamic leanings. However, they could not be bound by a shared sense of religiosity. The general common feature of all was their ideologically and religiously conservative views.¹⁵³ Unlike Jihadists, some of the Salafis are against a revolution in the religious sense because they want to educate society through "da'wa" to establish an Islamic state, citing the civil war in Libya and Syria as an example.

2.5 Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism in Egypt

Contributing to the strengthening and spread of Salafism since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia paved the way for the spread of Salafism not only in Egypt but also in other countries. With the influence of Wahhabism, xenophobic behaviors have increased against foreigners and non-Muslims, which excluded the Wahhabi-Salafi tradition. Salafists do not have a systematic and hierarchical structure like the Muslim Brotherhood, which has a clear and limited intellectual and institutional framework. From 1926 to this day, Salafists have progressed towards institutionalization and have received support from the state. Two active Salafi organizations in Egypt could be regarded as al-Jami'yya al-Shar'iyya, which was established in the 1890s and registered in 1913, as a reaction to the debates on issues such as making new reforms in education, increasing westernization tendencies, and discourses, and Jamaatü Ansâri's-Sunnah'l-Muhammediyye, which was established in 1926.¹⁵⁴ According to its view, Egypt could only be saved from the British occupation by following the Sunnah of the Prophet and abandoning innovations and superstitions. In terms of their characteristics, it can be said that these were not very broad organizations, but students went to different parts of the Middle East, and during the 1970s, the Salafi movement increased in Alexandria, whose aim was mostly different from the jihadi ideology as a non-violent then spread in Cairo, southern Egypt. When al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya was formed in Alexandria, it was against the Ikhwan because it was putting the interests of the party ahead of Islamic principles. Therefore, there was tension between Salafi groups and the Muslim Brotherhood, because Salafism followed more conservative ideas about social issues. However, al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya had the quietest attitude, and therefore, it had opposition to political involvement.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 212.

¹⁵⁴ Høigilt and Nome, "Egyptian Salafism in revolution", 37.

Equally important, Islam has had the main impact on the development of Egyptian identity since the seventh century, but it has never been the only significant factor in society. Muhammad Ali liberated Egypt from the Ottoman Empire, then they got support from France and Britain, which made them dependent and gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire, but in 1882, Great Britain took control of the region. This time, Egypt struggled to get rid of British imperialism.¹⁵⁵ With the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, the organization aimed to revive Islamic society on the basis of the idea of establishing an Islamic state as a reaction to the previous secularization policies of Europe. In the revolution that took place in 1952, as a result of Gamal Abd al-Nasir's support of the Muslim Brotherhood, the dynasty established by Muhammad Ali disappeared, and King Faruq was deposed. Although Nasir supported the Muslim Brotherhood, he later imprisoned their leaders. Therefore, Nasir's policies focused more on "Arabism" than "Islamism," although he tried to reflect that Islam is the basis of Egyptian national identity.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, he nationalized the Suez Canal as a reaction against Britain. Nasir died in 1970 and Anwar Sadat came to power in 1970. However, Sadat followed a policy of keeping good relations with the Islamists, expelled Brotherhood members who were imprisoned under Nasir, and tried to present himself as a religious leader until his assassination in 1981.

Since the 1970s, student movements have started to increase in the universities in Egypt, which led to the formation of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, also known as "the Islamic Group" and the Sunni movement. The organization had an important impact on the political situation in Egypt during Anwar Sadat's presidency, which they aimed to involve in the political arena even though it started as a student movement. In addition, this organization was held responsible for the planning of Anwar Sadat's assassination by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization in 1981.¹⁵⁷ The members of this organization later became part of the Muslim Brotherhood, and most of them acted independently of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, since the 1980s, the name of the organization has changed to "Medresetu's-Selefiyye" (The Salafist School) with the

¹⁵⁵ Lee, "Religion and Politics in the Middle East", 41.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 43

¹⁵⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim extremism in Egypt: the prophet and pharaoh*, Univ of California Press, 2003, 129-130.

direct impact of Saudi Arabia. Prior to 2011, they attempted to persuade society through sermons in mosques; later, they established satellite channels to capture the public's attention.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, The Salafist Call was the most influential group in Egypt that had different visions from Madkhalis on the issue of takfir than the Jihadists. It opposed the use of violence and the religious sovereignty issue with the Haraki Salafists of Cairo. The Salafist Call had some missions, such as destroying the existing heterodox Islamic beliefs, dealing with the spiritual purification of religious education and worship, and applying the rules of Sharia.¹⁵⁹ However, most of the Salafi parties were established, which had historical roots in the 25 January protests. They also adopted some concepts like purification of Islam (tazkiyya), religious education (tarbiyya), and jihad. Following the revolution, these organizations that made anti-democracy statements began to approach the issue more moderately as a result of the formation of political parties. However, they stated that the reason for their negative attitude towards democracy before the revolution is that if a non-Muslim or a female leader leads the country, the Islamic identity in Egypt may be in danger of disappearing. Later then, they accepted democracy as their method of applying the rules of Sharia.

On the other hand, the “Selefiyyetu’l-Harekiyye” movement also could be regarded as in this category, as it had harsh criticism towards leaders who did not follow the rules of Sharia and declared them as infidels without hesitation. Joining the political system or introducing a new interpretation of Sharia rules are regarded as haram by its ideology (illicit). In contrast, it excluded being part of jihad or the establishment of an Islamic state to prevent the corruption of Islamic identity and not to divide into more sects. Moreover, these Salafi organizations had no clear vision of social and political relations in the country and had negative feelings about political participation before the revolution.¹⁶⁰

If we consider Salafism in Egypt in the general framework, it can be said that Salafi parties played an important role in the formation of the new constitution with their pragmatic stance and practical discourses in the political sphere after 2011.

¹⁵⁸ Yildirim, "Politicization of Salafism in Egypt", 11. 1-24

¹⁵⁹ El-Sharif, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Future of Political Islam in Egypt*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 13.

Egyptian Salafism was heavily influenced by Ibn Taymiyya, who led to a reformist movement during his time, and Rashid Rida, who was considered the pioneer of modern Salafism in Egypt with Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Early Salafism in Egypt could be regarded as powerless due to Gamal Abdel Nasser’s policy of nationalization that undermined the impact of Al-Azhar University. Secondly, there was tension between Salafism and Sufism in Egypt. When Anwar Sadat came to power, he first aimed to destroy the legacy of Nasser by referring to the open market economy and liberal economic policies and by getting the attraction of Islamists. However, with the exception of Jamaa Islamiyya (The Islamic Group), Salafists had no strict organization. Later, the Salafi School (al-Madrassa al-Salafiyya) was formed, which led to the first mention of Salafism as a new current for the first time.¹⁶¹

During the Hosni Mubarak period, there was confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood and an authoritarian regime that supported Salafi encouragement, especially in the sub-urban areas where the Muslim Brotherhood had more power and influence. Political Salafism in Egypt, on the other hand, has both religious and social phenomena that spread their visions by establishing political parties and arranging networks of media and protests that later define its key features as heterogeneous movement.¹⁶² The Salafi Call focused on da’wah, thus it published a monthly magazine known as “al-Da’wa” to attract the attention of people in the country. However, due to the Mubarak regime's harsh oppressions, the Salafi Call was forced to pursue a low-key strategy.¹⁶³ Besides, Salafists could not get the attraction of people in the southern part of Egypt due to the fact that the influence of Sufism was greater in this region. Another important reason for their empowerment could be their networks based on charity activities and attracting the attention of youth through free religious education, which in most cases acts as a state.

In terms of conflict between Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood, mostly Salafi groups accused the Muslim Brotherhood of having close relations with Iran and soft attitudes towards the Shi’a community by using the “Iranian card” in the country. Thus, Al Nour followed a different strategy both domestically and regionally than the

¹⁶¹ Ahmad Wagih, “Salafism’s Many Faces,” October, 2018: <https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/salafism-egypt-every-aspect-explained>

¹⁶² Al-Anani and Malik, "Pious Way to Politics", : 58.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 59-60.

Muslim Brotherhood. It did not prevent the rivalry between relations in Iran and the Syrian civil war, then it followed pragmatic policies and sided with the military regime of El-Sisi against Mohammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. It also supported the Sis regime's counter-terrorist strategy in the Sinai Peninsula. It also created good relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the Gulf. Economically, it accepted some loans from the IMF.¹⁶⁴

Also, Salafists tried to represent themselves as the true protectors of not only Islam, but also poor, working-class society, while accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of mostly identifying with the bourgeoisie elite class. Therefore, Salafists in Egypt tried to focus on social and moral policies without implementing the MBs' "ikhwanization" policy.

¹⁶⁴ Bárbara Azaola-Piazza, and Miguel Hernando de Larramendi, "The interplay of regional and domestic politics in Egypt: the case of Salafism," *Contemporary Politics* no. 27.2, (2021): 14.

CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF ARAB SPRING ON SALAFISM

3.1 Arab Spring and Salafism

The Middle East has always become a desirable part of the world for great powers because of its location and natural resources. Most of the countries came under the direct control of European powers after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and they were controlled under “the Mandate System,” which is a new type of colonialism. This system created religious, ethnic, and boundary problems. In 1955, all countries except Algeria, which gained independence in 1962, became independent. That sparked a rise in anti-Western sentiments in the Middle East. By the way, the leaders of the Middle East mostly came to power either through military coups or through hereditary means. In Libya, there was a family-ruled state that Muammar Gaddafi, who came to power in 1969, ruled oil-rich Libya for 42 years until his death. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, who came to power in Egypt in 1981, ruled the country with an “iron fist” for 30 years. In Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ruled the country from 1987 until 2011 with despotism. In Syria, a semi-military dictatorship established by Hafez Assad and continued by his son Bashar Assad, a civil war broke out with the onset of the Arab Spring, and a series of problems arose. Therefore, we see the lack of democracy and liberal ideals in the Middle East. The reasons could be related to religion, natural resources, culture, political and economic dimensions, and western domination. Western powers have always backed dictators in the region who were anti-democracy in order to further their interests through colonialism. Therefore, the West was very afraid after the Arab Spring started because of the rise of political Islam in the region. For their own interests, the West also sometimes tried to provide democracy, like after the 2003 Iraqi invasion, in Libya during the Arab Spring, and in Egypt by forcing Hosni Mubarak to leave the leadership.¹⁶⁵ The Arab Spring was a conflict within states, and groups aiming to gain legitimacy adopted strategies such as both politicization and securitization of identities. They tried to accomplish it with their speech acts like “us” versus “them,” which reflects sectarian rhetoric. Although the proportion of the Shi’a community in Egypt was not high enough to threaten security, some violent actions were taken by Salafi sympathizers against some members of the Shi’a community, as Salafis, especially the Al Nour party, saw this

¹⁶⁵ Mohammad Huweih, "Barriers to Democracy in the Arab World," (2015): 8-11.

community as a social threat. Therefore, Salafists portrayed the “Shi’a community” as “other.”¹⁶⁶ The main role of the Arab Spring was to lead to the rise of Islamist parties after many years of repression. It also ended previous images of Islamists as victims of the authoritarian regimes of Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Jordan. Now, they are beginning to hold power and have a chance to get involved in the elections in the Middle East. As a result, rather than being an opposition in the current system, they have become main actors in the political arena. Furthermore, it can be argued that the Arab Spring brought about many changes in the region, laying the groundwork for Salafist discourses and practices. The Islamists' effort to gain power can be divided into three periods: first, it started with the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928; the second major turning point for Islamists was the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979; and third, the Arab Spring, which led Islamists to openly participate in the electoral process and implement their ideologies within the transformation vacuum in the countries where they got power and support of the majority.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, the Arab Spring caused the changing strategies and rhetoric of Islamists from theological debate, such as their involvement in politics, which were regarded as illicit (Haram) that adopted absolutism, whereas they began to follow pragmatism by establishing their political parties. In other words, they started to mention democracy, freedom, and secularization, but they were highly critical of these concepts as they are western-oriented. This also led to a rise in tensions between Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia on similar issues. However, Jihadi Salafism's agendas have been criticized due to their desire to use violence to establish an Islamic State governed by Sharia Laws and Rules. Significantly, the main reason for the Arab Spring was both socio-economic and political corruption. Islamists began to change their agenda from mentioning Islam to fixing the problems like poverty, unemployment, and high inflation in these countries. The Arab Spring also led to changes in the strategies of old actors against Salafists, jihadi Salafists, as they used fear to control power and moderate Islamists, which also led to the rise of both formal and informal Islamists whose main desire was to influence

¹⁶⁶ Khalil Al-Anani, "Islamist parties post-Arab spring," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 17.3, (2012): 466.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 467-468.

people through social networks without bounding an organization. Moreover, Islamists began to close FDI by emphasizing the importance of free trade and cooperation with the West, which led to harsh criticism from both extremists and political Salafists because they argued that it was not possible to establish an Islamic State through involvement with the West because that would damage the Islamic identity in Egypt and Tunisia.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, the causes of the criticism related to Islamists' positive attitudes towards Israel, especially the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1979, which signaled ignoring Palestine, and they mainly focused on tensions with Iran due to its Shia character. Also, the revolution led to the rise of equality discourses between men and women and minority rights within Tunisia's Ennahda Party, whereas conservative Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood were totally against both women and minority rights in Egypt.

In other words, the Arab revolutions prepared the ground for the changing strategies of the Salafists from dogmatic to pragmatic politics by adopting realism in their domestic and foreign policies. However, this does not imply that all Salafists followed this strategy; only Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood did so, and later, Egypt's Al-Nour party came close to pragmatism, such as respecting peace treaties between Israel and Egypt.

Besides, the Arab Spring shaped both cooperation and conflict between not only states and Islamists but also led to a critical relationship between Islamists who were regarded as both statist Salafists like political and jihadi Salafists and non-statists like quietist Salafism, especially in Tunisia and Egypt.¹⁶⁹ The populist regimes in the region mainly followed a divide and rule policy to curb the rise of Islamists. Starting from the 1950s, when Nasir put pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood, Arab socialism and Arab nationalism began to lose their power during the 1970s. Most Islamists aimed to implement Sharia rules in the region with the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, whereas Salafist jihad ideology failed after the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, demonstrating that Islamists failed in implementing an Islamic Revolution for the establishment of an Islamic State. The Arab Spring also challenged the nepotistic

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 468-470.

¹⁶⁹ Frédéric Volpi, and Ewan Stein, "Islamism and the state after the Arab uprisings: Between people power and state power," *Democratization* no. 22.2, (2015): 1-2.

regimes of Mubarak and Ben Ali, and that awakening started much earlier than the 2011 Arab Spring. It began with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which led to the rise of jihadi and other forms of Salafism with a clandestine movement.¹⁷⁰ However, unlike Salafists, Islamists mostly became moderate in terms of their ideologies and stepped away from establishing an Islamic State ideal due to the repression of Islamists for many years.¹⁷¹ In Egypt, the revolution led to a rise in mistrust towards the Mubarak regime and Islamists. The new military regime under Sisi undermined the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood and its wings in the country. Therefore, Islamists turned back to similar old regime times. This also led to the rise of jihadi Salafists as a reaction to dissatisfaction with the revolution and the Sisi regime. In Tunisia, the Ennahda Party has tried to incorporate democratization into its agenda since 2011. In addition, the Ennahda Party also did not place any emphasis on ideological claims by focusing on “good governance.”¹⁷² However, Jihadi Salafism started to increase in Tunisia with the establishment of Ansar al-Sharia, which affected youth in the urban areas.

Equally important, the Arab Spring prepared the ground for the rise of political Salafism but also for the emergence of Sufi and Salafi conflict. In Egypt, the Sufis were generally not very opposed to the policies of the Mubarak regime. Similarly, in Tunisia, the Sufis preferred to engage in theological debates rather than play a political role. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement, the Salafists' ideology was devoted to the establishment of an Islamic state.¹⁷³ It should not be forgotten that the Salafi ideology holds that if the ruler rules the country according to God's rules and is a Muslim, it is forbidden to rebel against the rulers. For this reason, when protests broke out in Tunisia and Egypt, Salafi leaders such as Yasir Burhami, Muhammad el-Baradei, and el-Adevi defined the protests as unauthorized actions against Islamic states.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 4-7.

¹⁷¹ Jillian Schwedler, "Can Islamists become moderates? Rethinking the inclusion-moderation hypothesis," *World Politics* no. 63.2 (2011): 368-369

¹⁷² Volpi, and Stein, "Islamism and the state after the Arab uprisings", 14-16.

¹⁷³ Anna K. Zajac, İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, and Kamile Ünlüsoy, "Süfilik ve Selefilik Arasında: Arap Baharı Sonrasında Selefi Eğilimlerin Yükselişi ve Etkisi," *İslami Araştırmalar* no.30.2, (2019): 348.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 350.

The Arab Spring also indirectly led to radicalization and the rise of jihadist Salafism. Basically, as we saw in Tunisia and Egypt, the old dictatorial regimes were destroyed, and people with Salafist ideology who were sent to prison as a result of the oppressive policies were released after the revolution. Thus, Jihadist Salafists criticize the political Salafists by thinking that they have moved away from the Salafist ideology, and they believe that the only way to establish an Islamic State will be as a result of a war started with non-Muslims.

In the transformation, social media had an important impact on the social resistance movement that spread rapidly to the other countries in the region. Tensions arose between old regimes, including military, authoritarian regimes, and opposition groups such as Islamists, Salafists, etc.¹⁷⁵ Thus, this could be regarded as a power struggle within both regional and international contexts. After the decolonization period, the West mostly supported dictator regimes when colonial rule was over to suppress any kind of Arab rebellions and to establish control in the region, so there would be no problem.¹⁷⁶ In addition to Islamists' desire to become active in the political arena that led to the rise of the protests, other determinants could be economic and social issues such as youth unemployment, high inflation, and a huge gap between rich and poor, as well as desires to grab freedom and democracy. That lack of civil society and independent trade unions could be one of the reasons. After 2011, the revolution led to the opening of its doors to Islamists when the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes toppled.¹⁷⁷ Actually, Islamists did not emerge within a night, whereas they already had networks as clandestine movements since the 1970s, when they waited for the right moment to rise in the chaos. Thus, it also led to the blocking of the power of the Muslim Brotherhood, which also caused the rise of Salafism. Once they were against political activism, they started to meditate on political involvement. Furthermore, the main argument of Salafism was that political activism was needed to implement “true Islam” or “Islamic Sharia.” The Arab Spring also increased divisions among Islamists

¹⁷⁵ Brigitte Herremans, "The Arab revolutions: the people versus the regimes and the regimes against one another," *Studia Diplomatica* no.65.3, (2012): 78

¹⁷⁶ Marwan Muasher, "Tunisia's Crisis and the Arab World," *Carnegie Endowment*, January 24, 2011: [Tunisia's Crisis and the Arab World - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

¹⁷⁷ Nathan J. Brown, "Islamists: Politics Beckons Once Again," *Carnegie Endowment*, February 22, 2011: [Islamists: Politics Beckons Once Again - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

because their ideas are not the same due to a lack of homogeneity, while some Islamists believe in the necessities of rights, democracy, and cooperation with the US and West, like Turkey's JDP.¹⁷⁸

On the contrary, the coming to power of Salafists after the Arab spring should not be regarded as revolutionary action because they tried to create a good image in the eyes of poor people for decades with their social networks, as we mentioned in the first chapter. They were under oppression from despotic regimes for many years to establish their vision by emphasizing "salvation" that became a desirable phenomenon for both youth and the middle class in society. In the protests, both the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia used not only social networks but also religion, especially in Friday prayers in mosques.¹⁷⁹ However, the "Arab Awakening" created tensions not only between Islamists and seculars, but it shifted among traditional Salafists like the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda Movement, and Political Salafists that they competed for power rather than ideological reasons, even though they had different ideologies. Therefore, the Arab Spring created tensions among Islamists for a power struggle in the political vacuum. There are three main Islamist groups: the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda Party can be considered traditional Islamists; secondly, Salafists who follow political activism to project their ideology into the political arena; and Jihadi Salafists, who have more violent aims because of their radical ideologies.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Party were unable to solve the countries' socioeconomic problems due to a lack of experience in governance, which caused them to lose their image in the societies they lived in, contributing to the rise of political Salafists. Until 2011, the countries had never experienced an alternative. Thus, traditional Islamists learned how to oppose existing regimes but failed to establish a strong system of government where they came to power. Moreover, Salafists aimed to reflect their desires by turning back to the early days of Islam after the Arab Spring. However, they could not manage to form a tight organization and political structure as they were not

¹⁷⁸ Herremans, "The Arab revolutions", 84

¹⁷⁹ Khalil Al-Anani, "Arab Islamists, from Opposition to Power: A Critical Appraisal," *IEMed: Mediterranean yearbook* (2013): 35.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36,40.

prepared for politics. Therefore, Islamist reformists who had different ideas about Islamic interpretations became the main rivals of Salafists.¹⁸¹

3.2 The Impact of Arab Spring on Egypt since 2011

With the outbreak of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, the idea of revolution, which spread rapidly as a “domino effect” from Tunisia and then to other Middle Eastern countries, especially in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, succeeded in overthrowing the despotic regime in Egypt. However, after the revolution, the opportunity to participate in politics was given to all social segments, and the Salafists began to draw more attention than other movements and became the center of attention. It can be said that there were radical changes in Salafist ideas before and after the January 25th Revolution. The effect of the Arab Spring on the Islamists caused them to enter into a great transformation. At the end of the revolution, they revised their ideas and decided that the only place where they could implement their actions and ideologies was the political arena.¹⁸² The point to emphasize here is that the Morsi government and other established Salafi parties in Egypt lack political experience; researchers generally compare political Islam in Egypt to the JDP in Turkey. However, we can say that JDP in Turkey has been more successful than FJP in Egypt as it had experience in party affairs and much preparation since the 1990s.

The Arab spring had its roots in Egypt because of both economic and political uncertainties. In the past, Egyptians and Islamists tried to topple secular authoritarian regimes, especially with the networks of the Muslim Brotherhood, but they failed until January 25 (Day of Rage), 2011. According to Hale, the Arab Spring was an awakening condition that had a domino effect that resembled the 1848 European Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Communist System in 1989.¹⁸³ At the same time, the Egyptian revolution is unique in many ways, so it differs from the post-cold war revolutions that took place in Eastern Europe. Another important factor that distinguished the Egyptian revolution was the presence of protestors from the middle

¹⁸¹ Ashraf El Sherif, "Islamism After the Arab Spring," *Current History* no. 110.740, (2011): 361 (358-363)

¹⁸² Yıldırım, “Arab Spring and Salafism-Case of Egypt”, 271.

¹⁸³ Henry E. Hale, "Regime change cascades: What we have learned from the 1848 revolutions to the 2011 Arab uprisings," *Annual Review of Political Science* no. 16, (2013): 331-332.

and upper classes, as opposed to only activists.¹⁸⁴ One of the most important factors that played a role in the effect of the Arab Spring in Egypt was the power of the media. The Al-Jazeera channel played an important role in the domino effect of the Arab spring. "External factors" were the most important factor in the uprisings in Eastern Europe after the Cold War. However, as seen in the example of Egypt, internal factors rather than external factors such as economic, cultural, social, and political uncertainties have become the main sources of the revolution. The role of external factors also differs. While the US, the main enemy of the Soviet Union, supported the uprisings in Eastern Europe, it took the opposite stance on the Egyptian Revolution.¹⁸⁵

January 25 is also significant for Egyptians because it is Police Day, which Mubarak declared to be significant because it symbolizes Egyptians' sacrifice and patriotism against the British in 1952. As a result, the Mubarak regime prepared police and army forces to suppress them. Importantly, the military was silent, which led to the victory of the opposition in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, corruption started in the institutions of government, and people had different ideologies towards government and its agencies, so their main aim was to change the constitution after the Mubarak regime's withdrawal. In addition, people were unhappy with state affairs, which led to contradictions. In terms of external problems, Britain, Russia, and America had negative impacts on the region. In 2011, people had hoped to struggle against the Mubarak regime. It became a national struggle when people started to demand change in the political arena.¹⁸⁷ Even though Mubarak ordered both police and military forces to suppress the opposition groups who were gathering in Tahrir (Liberation) Square, the situation became uncontrollable and Mubarak could not pursue its control of the country, which became a turning point for the Egyptians. Protests were actively taken part in by young people, children, and women. Protesters wanted to change and rewrite the constitution, form an independent parliament, remove corrupt Egyptian leaders, dissolve parliament, and form a new parliament

¹⁸⁴ Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab spring: parsing the differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," *Foreign Aff.* no. 90, (2011): 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ Noha Bakr, "The Egyptian Revolution," (2012): 68-69.

¹⁸⁶ Steven A. Cook, *The struggle for Egypt: from Nasser to Tahrir square*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 281-282.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

through free and fair elections.¹⁸⁸ Until the protests, the Egyptian opposition was weak because the Muslim Brotherhood had been banned since 1954, which led to the manipulation of its people by a repressive regime. On January 29, Mubarak claimed that he would establish a new government, but people did not want to see Mubarak in the presidency, and this resistance between government and people had negative impacts on the economy of Egypt, as it threatened the tourism and trading of the country.¹⁸⁹ However, as a result of these oppressions, Mubarak announced his resignation from the presidency on February 11, 2011, bringing his presidency to an end after 29 years.

In terms of social problems, there was a rise in the birth rate, which led to a change in demography in the country, whereas unemployment increased directly, which also caused unrest among youth. In addition, even though Mubarak sought to liberalize the Egyptian economy, policies aiming to open the Egyptian economy to the global world economy have reduced the influence of the state on the economy and encouraged the private sector since the 1990s. However, many parts of the banking system in Egypt were privatized. It was aimed at furthering the economy's growth by reducing customs and tariffs. It can be thought that the welfare level of the people increases in direct proportion to this.¹⁹⁰

Table 1. GDP Growth Rate of Egypt

Year	1981	1987	1991	1993	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2011
GDP Growth Rate	7.35%	3.83%	1.13%	1.57%	6.37%	2.39%	4.09%	6.84%	7.16%	5.15%	1.76%

Source: World Bank

¹⁸⁸ Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: The January 25 Revolution and implications for US foreign policy*. Diane Publishing, 2011, 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ Shinta Puspitasari, "Arab spring: A case study of Egyptian revolution 2011," *Andalas Journal of International Studies (AJIS)* no. 6.2, (2017): 165.

¹⁹⁰ Sahar Nasr, "Access to finance and economic growth in Egypt," *Middle East and North African Region*, (2008): 6.

According to Table 1, it can be argued that privatization and liberalization of the Egyptian economy led to the rise of the GDP growth rate from 2000 until 2011. However, there was still unrest among people due to the huge gap between the rich and poor, and the unequal balance of income meant that people had to live in poor conditions. In terms of the inflation rate, it was 11.1% in 2010 and the unemployment rate was 9%. Only elite segments of the Egyptian population benefited from the Mubarak regime's liberalization of the economy, but the poor could not see any change in their economic situation as a result of these economic developments, which made the hatred of the Mubarak regime increasingly widespread among the people.¹⁹¹ The main reasons why the Mubarak regime remained in power in Egypt for years were that the regime was supported socially, economically, and politically by marginal groups in Egypt. Egypt's foreign policy during this period maintained good relations with Israel and the United States. However, when the protests began, foreign powers chose not to recognize the Mubarak regime. Marginal groups within the country continued to support the Mubarak regime, as they thought they would lose their economic, political, and social privileges when power shifted from the authoritarian state to the protesters. However, religious groups such as the Muslim Brothers supported the revolution to establish a Sharia-based system rather than a democracy. The growing "middle class" amid economic uncertainties supported the revolution for economic improvements, the implementation of democracy, and to stop police brutality, political repression, and corruption.¹⁹² Besides, there are economic reasons for the overthrow of the Hosni Mubarak regime. To explain by emphasizing the period of the previous leaders, the nationalization program of Egypt, which was initiated under Nasser, began in 1952 with the land reform. Nasser's aim in nationalizing the economy was to prevent feudalism, imperialism, and capitalism, and, as a result, a strong army, social justice, and the spread of democracy were also aimed at.¹⁹³ During the Anwar Sadat period, the regime abandoned the idea of nationalizing the economy and started to adopt a policy of *infitah* (openness) in the economy in 1974. Although he thought that this policy would be successful, the economy started to get worse and worse, causing both

¹⁹¹ Ali Sarihan, "Is the Arab Spring in the third wave of democratization," *The Case of Syria and Egypt*, *TJP* no. 3.1, (2012):75.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁹³ Karatholuvu V. Nagarajan, "Egypt's political economy and the downfall of the Mubarak regime," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* no. 3.10, (2013): 23

an economic and a political crisis in this country. Similar policies were continued during the Hosni Mubarak period. In the 1990s, the regime decided to implement the IMF-supported Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which was also implemented in Turkey during Turgut Özal's presidency. The program, which succeeded in solving macroeconomic problems in the country, had unexpected and undesirable consequences for society. In the 2000s, the regime increased privatization even more, resulting in increased inequalities, corruption, and unemployment. As a result, protest movements became a spark, and the regime was overthrown in February 2011.¹⁹⁴

In light of this information, it is emphasized that there are five stages of democratization, as Samuel Huntington stated in his book "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century." According to him, third wave transformations generally develop into five main stages, four of which are included in the authoritarian regimes. According to this argument, the first wave is the "emergence of reformers." Similarly, due to internal problems in Egypt, some believed that the construction of democracy was desirable, while others wanted the establishment of a state system based on Sharia. Mubarak also became a reformer because he saw political liberalization as a means of stifling any form of opposition in order to maintain power. Therefore, he prevented full participatory elections in the country. The second wave is "acquiring power." Mubarak created an authoritarian regime in the country with repressive actions towards opposition groups. Mubarak was a dictator who used brutality to suppress any opposition and created fear in society rather than devotion. The third wave is "the failure of liberalization." This means that his regime stimulated the rise of repression on people because its liberalization policies did not have a positive impact on poor people. On the other hand, he began to control the media, closed down satellite channels, and blocked some websites. That meant preventing any kind of criticism towards his presidency, and he failed to pursue liberalization policies. The fourth wave is "backward legitimacy," and the final wave is "co-opting the opposition," as seen in the Mubarak regime.¹⁹⁵ It is argued that democracy will emerge as a result of these stages. However, according to the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 22

¹⁹⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*, Vol. 4. University of Oklahoma press, 1993, 127-140.

Democracy Index for 2020, Norway ranks first, while Egypt ranks 138th and Tunisia 54th. Despite the fact that these five stages took place in Egypt, the reason why democracy did not emerge was that the groups that carried out the revolution had differences of opinion. Indeed, the military, which had power in Egypt, did not want to leave its power to civilian administrations. Furthermore, religious groups were against the establishment of democratic institutions based on civil society, while people in the middle class saw democracy and freedom as the only salvation. The reasons for the failure of the democratization process lie in the fact that the military gradually gained power during the Mubarak period and the retired military officers emerged as "business elite" in the economy with the support of the regime. The regime also had an effect on the military power's control over the daily lives of citizens. On the other hand, it is due to the failure of liberal, secular, Islamist, and left-wing political actors in Egypt to solve the ideological problems because they were far from reconciliation. After the 2013 military coup, the problems of justice increased in the country due to the lack of the "Rule of Law." At the same time, while the leadership changed in post-revolutionary Egypt, the regime essentially remained the same. In addition, there is a lack of strong civilian actors because Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood) and seculars were divided and that did not put pressure on the military to form a civilian authority.¹⁹⁶

As previously stated, some groups protested and demonstrated against the regime in Egypt prior to 2011, but it would be difficult to argue that protests from all areas of life were successful in 2011. In 2004, for example, a movement known as the "Kifaya (Enough) Movement" arose. There were people with various socio-political views in this movement. Their common point was that they did not adopt the government's policies. That movement was regarded as the beginning of the uprisings against the Mubarak regime, and its purpose was to protest the corruption of the government. The April 6 Youth Movement also aimed to challenge the Mubarak regime through a movement formed in 2008 by workers.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, labor protests have become visible since the 2000s, whereas the death of Khalid Said by police

¹⁹⁶ Zeinab, Abul-Magd, et al, "Q&A—"Why Did Egyptian Democratization Fail?" Fourteen Experts Respond," 2020: 1-5.

¹⁹⁷ Nagarajan, "Egypt's political economy", 36.

triggered the movements into Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011. For the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the uprisings, it can be said that the organization was founded as a social, religious, and political movement in response to corruption and colonialism. By comparison, similar to the Ennahda Movement, Egypt's previous leaders put pressure on the organization when an assassination attempt on Nasser in 1954 led to the organization's ban. Anwar Sadat was somewhat more moderate towards the Islamists, but still the oppressive regime remained, and when Mubarak came to power in 1981, he imposed heavy sanctions against the Islamists and either exiled or imprisoned them, which eventually banned them from Egypt for years.¹⁹⁸ The Muslim Brotherhood did not choose to be directly involved in the protests and supported the demonstrators ideologically and logistically, providing security in Tahrir Square. This was because the Islamists had been isolated for many years by the Mubarak regime and were seen as the main opposition group against the authoritarian regime. They feared that people would label Islamists as extremists and blame them for the country's growing civil unrest, resulting in a backlash. As a result of the riots, another branch of the Muslim Brotherhood led by Muhammad Morsi, the "Freedom and Justice Party," was founded in 2011.

Although the influence of religion was weak in the 2011 protests, traditional and Salafi Islamists gained strength in the elections. The reason for this was that Islamists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, had many years of organizational experience in the region.¹⁹⁹ In 2013, actions and protests began to be organized against Mohammed Morsi. The people were divided into two groups, and a conflict began to take place between the opposition and the Muslim Brotherhood. Thereupon, a foreign-backed military coup was carried out by Abdelfattah es-Sisi, which seized the government. While the people previously rebelled against the dictator regime and defended democracy, the same Egyptian people preferred to support a military coup that had nothing to do with democracy this time. Es-Sisi, who seized power in a coup in 2013, is still the President of Egypt after winning the 2014 Presidential elections and then the 2018 elections. Although the Egyptian Revolution may seem unique, we can argue that it was only valid until 2013, and the main reason why the revolution

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was unique was that internal factors were evident in driving the protests that led to the fall of Mubarak. However, some argue that the USA is in the background of the second regime change that took place against democratically elected Mohamed Morsi in 2013, and the coup carried out by es-Sisi clearly shows that it is a reflection of America's interests in the region. The US had some programs like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that became more effective in both the Middle East and Egypt. The US tried to control the region with “neo-liberal” economic policies and to control oil and its hegemony against other actors like China and Russia.²⁰⁰ It is difficult to say that Egypt under El Sisi, who is pro-American, has made progress in terms of economic development, democracy, and freedom. On the contrary, the social, economic, and political problems that started with the end of the Mubarak regime increased gradually.

Besides, in the uprisings that emerged in the wake of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia, both difficulties and new opportunities were effective in the participation of the protesters in the uprisings. While the influential factor for Tunisia was adversity, new opportunities for Egypt encouraged actors to participate in the protests. Moreover, there is an individual-level aspect rather than a country-level perception that the main factors that ensure participation in the protests are "religiousness, the power of social media, economic difficulties, and socio-political problems." While the main determinants of the uprisings in Tunisia were economic and political complaints, as Tunisia had experienced a higher development level in terms of education and civil society, the possibility of new opportunities for Egypt, rather than complaints, played an important role in the uprisings launched against the Mubarak regime because Egypt had had a repressive army regime for many years.²⁰¹ This revolution, which spread the idea of changing the conditions that became necessary in social movements, also has a psychological aspect because in the 21st century, people living in the region began to believe that the change was both a need and a necessity, which is associated with the “relative deprivation model,” that grievances have an impact on the development

²⁰⁰ Mediel Hove, and Enock Ndawana, "Regime-change agenda: the Egyptian experience from 2011 to 2015," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* no. 10.1, (2017): 32-34

²⁰¹ M. Tahir Kilavuz, "Determinants of Participation in Protests in the Arab Uprisings: Grievances and Opportunities in Egypt and Tunisia." *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 17.67 (2020): 82

of rebellions.²⁰² However, as previously stated, such complaints were voiced by the people during the 2011 Arab Spring, but in order for these complaints to turn into action, they needed to be ready in their structural conditions, and as a result, this revolution had to take place. McAdam (1999), in *Mass Society Theory*, explains that structural conditions prepare the ground for the rise of social movements. "Social isolation" is necessary and a prerequisite for the emergence of social protest. The underlying reason for the emergence of such activities stems from the feelings of "alienation and anxiety." The thought of getting rid of these feelings then causes the act of "extreme behavior," which results in the emergence of a "social movement." Similar slogans began to be shouted in both countries regarding political and economic grievances. These slogans are "Bread, Freedom, and Human Dignity" (Aish, Hurriyah, and Karamah Insaniyyah) in Tunisia and "People Demanded the Fall of the Regime" ("al-sha'ab yurid isqat al-nitham" In Egypt, "Human Dignity" was removed from a similar slogan and replaced with "Social Justice." (Adalah Igtima'iyah)²⁰³ As it can be understood from these slogans, the concepts of freedom and social justice can be considered as a result of political complaints, and bread and human dignity can be considered as manifestations of their corrupted economies. In Egypt, Islamists did not have a direct role in the uprisings, but after the fall of Mubarak, the leaders of Gamaa Islamiyya, a Salafi organization, started to accept democracy and established their own party, named the "Construction and Development Party." Al-Nour Party leaders and members were also apolitical during the protests. The uprisings also increased extremist Islamist and sectarian violence towards Christians and Copts, so that they attacked Christian churches.²⁰⁴ Despite the fact that Islamists had no direct influence, both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement preferred to look to Turkey's JDP as an example rather than Iran's type of government.

Equally important, perhaps more so, the remarkable innovations within the structural changes: firstly, it became easier for the Islamists who gained political power to act in the political arena; and secondly, they were successful in implementing more

²⁰² Ibid., 84.

²⁰³ Killian Clarke, "Aish, huriyya, karama insaniyya: Framing and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising," *European Political Science* no. 12.2, (2013): 210-211.

²⁰⁴ Katerina Dalacoura, "The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications," *International Affairs* no. 88.1, (2012): 76

general and inclusive socio-economic policies apart from employment and economic growth by eliminating the "elite" in the public sector. On the economic aspect, there was a considerable decrease in the currency against the dollar. Its GDP was recorded as 4.2% in the quarter of 2010-2011, while it was 5.4% in the quarter of 2009-2010. In addition, the Arab Spring had a negative impact on investment and foreign trade.²⁰⁵ The deterioration of the Egyptian economy led to the Islamists' gaining power, as the Islamists, especially the Salafis, were supported by regional powers (such as Saudi Arabia) and had financial resources. Salafists aimed to gain trust in society by acting like a state within a state. This is because both the SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) and the government aimed to prevent any kind of uprisings or demonstrations that followed by limiting foreign aid to the organizations.

Moreover, the "Polity Score" of Egypt was recorded as "-2" (-10 to +10 represents hereditary monarchy) in 2011, while it was recorded as "-88" in 2012 due to foreign occupation and the breakdown of the central authority (for a review, see Makdisi, 2017). In terms of the EIU democracy index, while Tunisia had a "2.79" score in 2010, which is defined as an authoritarian regime, it increased to "6.59" in 2020 (a flawed democracy) and "5.99" in 2021, which became a hybrid regime. However, Egypt had a "3.07" score in 2010 as an authoritarian regime. It was reduced to 2.93 in 2021, which remained authoritarian.²⁰⁶ The underlying reasons for this were the empowerment of jihadist Salafism, which began to spread in the region and in Egypt, and Egypt's transformation into an autocracy, as it was in the Mubarak era, after the 2013 military coup. In Tunisia, the October-December 2014 Presidential Elections showed that Tunisia has made good progress in its democratization transformation, despite its economic and political difficulties, because when the Islamist Ennahda Party was elected in 2011, it had 40% of the seats in the parliament and its aim was to enact a new constitution. Egypt's democratization transformation, on the other hand, has only been partially realized, and despite the adoption of a constitution addressing social and economic rights in 2014, the military retains autonomy, and little emphasis is placed on concepts such as freedom and democracy.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Bakr, "The Egyptian Revolution" , 71

²⁰⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2021: The China challenge," (2022): 34-35,52.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 34

3.3 The Rise of Radicalization in Egypt

There is a connection between the Arab Spring and the rise of radical extremism due to the failure of political and social changes in the MENA region. At first, the Arab Spring was a people's revolution, but then it turned into a tool for extremists in the political vacuum. Salafism has its roots in some organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria and the Gamiyya Islamiyah in Egypt.²⁰⁸ Salafi Jihadism acts apolitical compared to its other branches by rejecting political participation because it is not related to God's sovereignty or hakimiyya. Al Qaeda was the main supporter of Jihadi Salafism, both ideologically and logistically, which became a global feature. Similarly, since 2011, social exclusion of youth, political oppression, economic grievances, released prisoners (Salafists), and uncontrolled religious areas such as mosques have been major determinants of radicalization in Egypt. became home for Muslims in the Maghreb and North Africa for a thousand years, but it also led to the rise of extremist Islamism in the region. According to Khaled, the reason behind its rise can be explained by some subsets such as the theory of colonialism, the upheaval theory, the socio-political movement concept, and the religiosity theory.²⁰⁹ According to the socio-political movement theory, the main causes of radicalism can be associated with political, economic, and social grievances such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, ethnic problems, and violence as a vicious circle. Colonial theory argues that it emerged in the past as a reaction to colonialism, enabling people to fight against Western domination for their own liberation. In addition, after the colonization period, a new government was formed in the region, directly supported by the West and prominently supporting Israel. It caused the rise of anti-American-Western rhetoric at the social level. Moreover, Upheaval Theory suggests that after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which led to new formations in the region, people hoped to revive the golden days of Islam, but came under Western domination through the artificial nation-state, resulting in a lack of sense of belonging that led to the rise of radicalism. The theory of religiosity explains that it can be explained by the direct effects of religion, as in

²⁰⁸ Igor Pejić, "Rising Extremism in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring," (2017): 28.

²⁰⁹ Khaled Hroub, ed., *Political Islam: context versus ideology*, Vol. 8. Saqi, 2012.

Islam. Islamic ideologies and Islamic identity are influential in the rise, as is the rhetoric of Jihad Salafism like takfir, loyalty, and disavowal doctrine.²¹⁰

The developments in Egypt can be evaluated in three main stages. First, the revolution started on January 25, and as a result, Mubarak, the despotic leader in power, was overthrown. Secondly, political Islam came to power in Egypt with the rise of the Freedom and Justice Party (al-Ḥurriyyah wa-l-‘Adālah), in power under Mohamed Morsi, which is a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood organization, through democratic means. And thirdly, as a result of Morsi's separatist policies and increasing popular revolts against the opposition and the consequent military coup by Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in 2013, extremist groups in Egypt have gradually increased, taking advantage of these political vacuums.

In addition, it is possible to talk about three types of extremist groups in Egypt. The first is the Sinai-based Jihadists, who emphasize their allegiance to the Islamic State; the second is the Salafi Jihadists, who have ties to Al Qaeda; and the third is the non-Salafi Jihadist groups. Moreover, before the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and Islamic Group (al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya) had radical ideologies that threatened the security of the country. The aim of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) was to overthrow the Egyptian government and establish an Islamic State in its place. Then the organization started to act with the understanding of "Global Jihad" presented by Al Qaeda and displayed a threatening attitude towards the West. Similarly, the aim of Al-Gama‘at al-Islamiya (GI) was to overthrow the current Egyptian government and establish the utopian Islamic State in its place. Its main aims were to minimize Western influence in the Middle East, and they did not refrain from using violence while achieving their goals. However, Jamaat Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis was formed in 2012 in Egypt, based in the Sinai region of Egypt, and declared its allegiance to the Islamic State in 2014. After the 2013 military coup, the violence of the organization increased even more. Then it was declared a terrorist organization by the USA, Egypt, and UAE.²¹¹ The main purpose of the organization was to establish the Islamic State and to validate the Sharia rules, as in the Jihadist Salafist discourses,

²¹⁰ Ric Neo, "The Jihad post-Arab Spring: Contextualising Islamic radicalism in Egypt and Tunisia," *African Security Review* no. 28.2, (2019): 97.

²¹¹ "UK Government Proscribed Terrorist Organizations," UK Home Office, 2014: [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/proscribed-terrorist-groups)

and then to liberate Jerusalem from the Israeli occupation. The organization, which currently follows a path away from politics, started to evaluate Western concepts such as democracy more negatively after 2013. Additionally, Ansar al-Jihad, founded in 2012, is Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula.

On the other hand, Afnan Misr (Egypt's Soldiers) has been actively carrying out its actions since 2014. The organization, which is active in the capital region, is known for its attacks against the security forces. Although the organization is not the same as ABM (Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis) in terms of views, it adopts Jihadist Salafism in its ideology. *Ansar al-Sharia fi Ard al-Kinana* is similarly an extremist group that emerged in Egypt and Sinai after the Arab Spring and organizes attacks. To put it briefly, the aims of Islamist extremist groups are first to weaken the influence of the security forces in the country and the region, and then to negatively affect the economy of the region with their actions. They believe that when they realize these two stages, they will be in control. Other radical organizations in Egypt are mainly as follows: Al-Takfir wa al-Hijra, Al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya Fi Sina, Jund al-Islam, and Tawhid wal-Jihad.²¹²

After 2013, violence became organized and predominant in Egypt, especially in North Sinai and other provinces like Cairo and Fayoum. Since the liberties, economic prosperity, and development promised by the revolution did not succeed, radical views found further support both to ensure justice and to quell the growing anger. While the splits shattered social hierarchies and could be said to have led to chaos, Al-Qaeda and ISIS as transnational radicalism began to support growing radical views in Egypt as they were seen as successful in their models of violence and extremism. Aside from transnational extremism, regional conflicts such as Libya had an impact on shaping and transferring knowledge, ideology, and material support to Egypt.²¹³

As a result of the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi in June 2013, unprecedented terrorist acts began in Egypt. Further, radical groups, which specialize in portraying and disseminating their violence with the influence of social media, have used violence

²¹² Wolfgang Puzsai, "Not Only on the Sinai. Islamic Extremism in Egypt," *ISPI Analysis* no. 289, (2015): 8-9. (1-12)

²¹³ "Egypt's Rising Security Threat," *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, (2015): 2.

not only against military forces, but also against government buildings, multinational companies, foreign institutions, banks, and, rarely, civilians.²¹⁴ The internal conflicts started to weaken the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, which led to division within itself and a lack of control over its members. Some people emerged from both Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood who claimed that their aim was to protect Islam and, therefore, they used violence gradually. Groups like non-Jihadi organizations, which did not conduct an armed conflict, started to focus on violence in the post-2013 period. Furthermore, Salafists who declared that they would fight against anyone who is against Islam and some members of the Muslim Brotherhood started to use similar discourses, which increased the popularity of Jihadi Salafism among youth.²¹⁵ They labeled themselves as “revolutionary fighters” rather than terrorists or radicals who are targeted by the withdrawal of the Assad government to protect Islamic identity. These groups, which are not part of the jihadist group but pro-violence, are more often ignored. The increasing sophistication of this group might cause them to cooperate with Jihadist organizations in the future and increase their numbers even more. Jihadist groups are taking advantage of this gap, seeing non-Jihadist groups as potential partners, and are very keen on cooperating with them.²¹⁶

In fact, Egypt had a military character, which started with a military coup by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952 and continued with a coup d'état in 2013. The only exception was Morsi, who came to power through democratic elections. In terms of people's trust in Egyptian institutions, Ali (2020) stated that people's trust in the army dropped from 80% in 2011 to 57.10% in 2019. (Source: Arab Barometer of 2020) Similarly, confidence in the government fell from 40–50% in 2011 to 27% in 2019.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Ibid., 6.

²¹⁵ Mokhtar Awad, and Mostafa Hashem, *Egypt's escalating Islamist insurgency*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015, 3.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 4.

²¹⁷ Hager Ali, "Egypt after the Arab Spring: A Legacy of No Advancement," (2020): 3. (1-12)

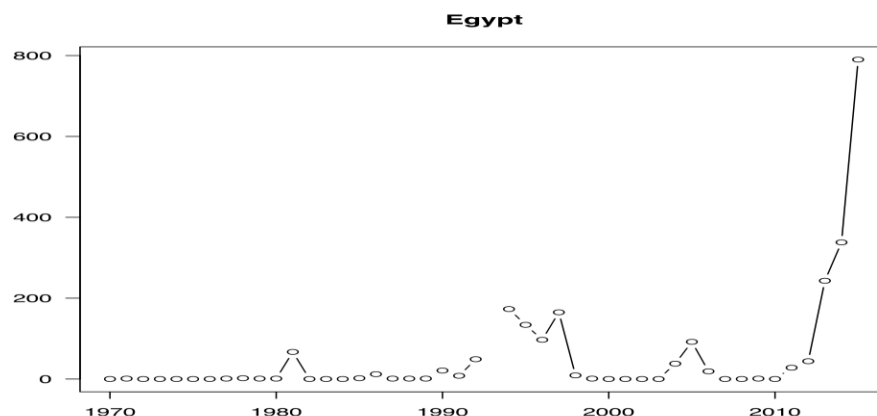


Figure 1. Death Rates due to Terrorism in Egypt During 1970-2015

Source: Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:Terrorism deaths in Egypt.svg," Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Terrorism_deaths_in_Egypt.svg&oldid=492723629 (accessed December 4, 2021).

According to Figure 1, terrorism incidents have increased as a result of the protests that began in 2011 and have reached unprecedented levels in Egypt's history since 2013. While the estimated number of people who died as a result of terrorist activities between 1986 and 1999 was recorded as 1,300, as of 2015, both Jihadist Salafists and other radical groups were held responsible for the killing of nearly 700 police and soldiers in two years. This rate was almost double the number of police and soldiers killed in the 2011 riots.²¹⁸ Although the Muslim Brotherhood is seen as an Islamist actor, some of its top leaders support the armed rebellion. In addition, some views on this revolutionary wing believe that violence should be launched not only against the police or the army, but also against the current regime in power. In 2013, Salafists, known for their provocative and sectarian rhetoric, provoked people in the protests and created an atmosphere of chaos. Since the Salafists hold more radical views than the Muslim Brotherhood, and even though they define themselves as a separate organization from the Muslim Brotherhood, their actions further strengthen the revolutionary thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood. Besides, radical groups aiming to take revenge against the security forces organized their organizations on social media. Thus, they attacked the police stations, police vehicles, and private property of

²¹⁸ Awad and Hasem, *Egypt's escalating Islamist insurgency*, 5.

the security forces in the country, creating an atmosphere of chaos as the Popular Resistance Movement.

In terms of geography, Egypt is one of the most important strategic areas, with more room for terrorist formations than any other. Using violence is one of the main elements of the radicalization process, and the Muslim Brotherhood can be regarded as an Islamist organization, whereas it started to follow a radical path after 2013. At an individual level, it can be said that young members started to support defensive violence and sabotage activities towards the economy.²¹⁹ In 2015, on July 1, "Sinai Province" (ABM) prepared attacks towards military officers of Egypt that resulted in the deaths of 64 soldiers. The withdrawal of Morsi led to a rise in regime repression. Taking advantage of al-Sisi's military coup, which helped ISIS expand its activities into the Sinai Peninsula On the one hand, while Al Qaeda could not be a threat to the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS has become an unprecedented threat due to its interests in the region due to its apocalyptic ideology. The main problems of the Muslim Brotherhood were to focus on changing the system from within to make it a democracy. Egypt was not ready for this transformation and failed in this democratic change. For this reason, the main agenda of ISIS is more focused on violence, which will somehow succeed. It can be said that 1,223 attacks took place in the period of July 2013–May 2015 as a reaction to the repressive policies of the El Sisi regime that triggered violence. In this regard, only 78 attacks took place due to the absence of such radicalization until June 2013. Thus, the military coup led by al-Sisi in 2013 created a catalyst situation that caused many backlashes from extremists.²²⁰

Equally important, Helwan Brigades ranked first among non-Jihadist violence groups after the Arab Spring in Egypt. This group, which is different from jihadists in terms of their appearance and the rhetoric they use, recorded their armed actions by video. Another group is the "Revolutionary Punishment Group," which was established in January 2015. Although these organizations describe themselves as a continuation of the 2011 Revolution, groups that carry out such acts of violence only aim to gain financial support and coordination networks from those who support them by recording their attacks. Similarly, although this group avoids Jihadist rhetoric, there

²¹⁹ Shadi Hamid, "Radicalization after the Arab Spring: Lessons from Tunisia and Egypt," *Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, November 30, (2015): 46.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 51-53.

is a theme of Islamic State-Jihadist Salafism in its actions. Yet, Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood came together at a common point and began to take action against the Sisi regime after 2013.²²¹ In other words, radical ideas in Egypt do not only associate people with joining terrorist organizations like ISIS or Al Qaeda, but also with groups like Revolutionary Salafism, which promotes the Islamist Jihadism ideology, refusing to establish a secular state and instead aiming to establish an Islamic state.

While the Arab Spring caused the Islamists to gain power with the non-violent strategies of election success and the suppression of radical views as a result, it also caused the radical views to be reborn as a reaction in Egypt to the military coup after 2013. With the advent of political freedoms in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring and the victory of the Islamists, the idea that political change could take place without being based on violence emerged. Besides, the political balances that changed through the elections further encouraged the Islamists (especially the Salafis) to participate in political participation by establishing parties. However, in countries where external factors have gradually started to play a role, especially in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq, radical views have begun to spread to countries in the region, especially Tunisia and Egypt. Once again, the idea of political participation and modernization was replaced by radical discourses with the military coup. Kurt argues that the unarmed and nonviolent movement would bring with it political transformation, because suppressing unarmed civilians could cause people to become more engaged in their struggle, resulting in the splitting of the political elite and security forces.²²² As a result of increasing pressures, international repression would also increase against the current regime. In the analysis the author made, among the violent and non-violent movements, non-violent strategies were successful with a rate of 53 percent, while strategies containing violence were found with a rate of 26 percent.²²³

Equally importantly, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya failed to achieve its goal of establishing an Islamic state, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood, which had a moderate

²²¹ Ibid., 12-14.

²²² Kurt Schock, *Unarmed insurrections: People power movements in nondemocracies*, Vol. 22. U of Minnesota Press, 2005, 43.

²²³ Ioana Emy Matesan, "The impact of the Arab Spring on Islamist strategies," *Journal of Strategic Security* no. 5.2, (2012): 30.

stance, had the opportunity to participate in the political arena through elections. After the 2011 Presidential Elections, political Salafists gathered under the umbrella of the Islamic Bloc (al-Kutla al-Islamiyya), which comprised Al-Nour Party, Al-Asala, and Al-Binaa Wal-Tanmiyya. (The Building and Development Party) This party, which is another branch of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, aims to apply both the rules of sharia and democracy at the same time, advocating that religion and politics should not be separate from each other. Moreover, it displays conservative and radical views against Christians and Copts in Egypt.²²⁴

Nevertheless, Bedouin communities living in North Sinai complain about the oppressive violations of their economy, politics, and identity during the Hosni Mubarak era. It can be said that the increasing Bedouin radicalization in North Sinai and other parts of Egypt fused as a reaction to both previous grievances: the overthrow of the Morsi government and the rise of Islamist radical religious discourses. Therefore, violence is justified in all anti-state actions promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, the use of violence against the protesters by the Egyptian state, which declared the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, has become legitimate.²²⁵ In fact, although the North and the South Sinai peninsulas are equal in terms of their land size, the South Sinai has fewer people and benefits from oil, while the North Sinai has more people and fewer economic opportunities. The local people living in the North Sinai region resorted to illegal means due to the lack of economic development, such as the increase in unemployment and the lack of change in the welfare level, caused by the hostile relationship between the state and the people living in Sinai.²²⁶ Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis was held responsible for 300 terrorist attacks against Egyptian security forces between 2013 and 2014. On November 10, 2014, the organization declared its loyalty to Islamic State and its former leader, Abu Bakr El-Baghdadi, and changed its organization to Sinai Province (Wilayet Sinai). This has resulted in a growing number of young Bedouins joining the ranks of Salafi-Jihadist groups in Egypt.²²⁷

²²⁴ Ibid., 33.

²²⁵ Evrim Gormus, and Angela Joya, "State power and radicalization in Egypt's Sinai," *The Canadian Journal for Middle East Studies* no. 1.1, (2015): 51. (51-61)

²²⁶ Ibid., 54.

²²⁷ Ibid., 57.

In addition to the Islamic Group, which started as a student movement in the South of Egypt that started to focus on Salafi ideology and established The Building and Development Party in 2011, Islamic Jihad emerged in the 1970s and adopted jihad ideology (Jama'at al-Jihad) and formed The Safety and Development Party, which was renamed as the Islamist Party at the end of 2012 in Egypt.²²⁸ With the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011, SCAF took power, suspended the constitution, and dissolved parliament. With the constitutional referendum held, the enactment of an interim constitution was accepted with 77.27% of the votes.²²⁹ The organizations like the Islamic Group and Islamic Jihad, which could not take a clear stance against the popular uprising, experienced divisions in terms of leadership. The most obvious distinction was between those who were moderates against the Mubarak regime and those who were hostile. In addition, Islamic Jihad was split into three branches after 2011; first, the group that recognized the supremacy of political participation formed the SDP party; the second group, led by Ahmad 'Ashush, Muhammad al-Zawahiri, and Murgan Salim, aimed at the spread of Jihadist Salafism. The last group, on the other hand, sees themselves as different from the Jihadist Salafists and refuses to participate in the political arena.²³⁰

3.4 The Impact of Arab Spring on Tunisia since 2011

Mohamed El Bouazizi addresses corruption, economic inequalities, social problems, etc. when he burns himself to protest, whereas he could not imagine how the Arab Spring started as a domino effect and spread to other Middle Eastern countries in a noticeably short time. For political reasons, power was in the hands of families, military groups, secular leaders, or tribes, but not in the hands of citizens. As a result, authoritarian leaders disrupted the establishment of modern states that adhered to democracy, human rights, the rule of law, checks and balances, and all other forms of Western democracy. In addition, governments have adopted wrong policies such as populism, nepotism, corruption, and governing the country with foreign support. Therefore, free and fair elections were not held, and minorities lacked proportional

²²⁸ Jerome Drevon, "The emergence of ex-Jihadi political parties in post-Mubarak Egypt," *The Middle East Journal* no. 69.4, (2015): 516.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 518.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 523.

representation practices.²³¹ By comparison, most Arab countries had one-party systems as their general political problem, and opposition was not allowed. Civil society and trade unions were directly controlled by authoritarian regimes. Thus, they came to power either through military coups or by hereditary means. All these pressures led to the lack of freedom of self-expression that paved the way for the Arab Spring.²³² Hence, the “Arab Spring” started as a reaction to changing the old structure because when we look at the regimes such as Syria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen before the Arab Spring, there were dictatorial features and dynastic elements.²³³ Incontestably, they used all kinds of violence to defend their positions by rejecting the law.

In brief, we can call the Arab Spring the Arab awakening for the democratization and changing economic, political, and social problems of the Middle East countries. People wanted change and freedom. It all started in 2010 when a Tunisian youth set himself on fire due to increasing corruption, food inflation, unemployment, and political problems in Tunisia; a lack of democracy and freedom of expression. Therefore, the Arab Spring was a process that started with citizens' attempts to overthrow dictatorships and continued with the support of international actors. Meanwhile, social media played a significant role in spreading the riots to other countries. Twitter, Facebook, and especially television channels, allowed the revolution to rapidly spread uprisings and enlightenment.²³⁴ As a result, the process is not a social media revolution, but a social media powered revolution. In Tunisia, people were divided into supporters of secularism and Islamist groups. Thus, there was a rise of political Islam where people thought that such parties would provide freedom and democracy, which they wanted to give a chance to the Islamist parties.²³⁵

²³¹ El Hassane Aissa, “The Arab spring: Causes, consequences, and implications,” Army War Coll Carlisle Barracks PA, (2012): 4.

²³² Michael Sakbani, “The revolutions of the Arab Spring: are democracy, development and modernity at the gates?,” *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, no. 4(2), (2011): 130,131.

²³³ Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz, “Democratization Theory and the” Arab Spring,” *Journal of Democracy* no. 24(2), (2013): 27.

²³⁴ Elfatih A. Abdel Salam, “The Arab spring: Its origins, evolution and consequences... four years on,” *Intellectual Discourse*, no. 23(1), (2015): 135.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

As a result of the revolution, it destroyed the despotic, authoritarian form of government and the vicious cycle of repression that ruled Tunisia for five decades, under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba from 1957 to 1987, and then Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who was in power from 1987 to 2011. With the rapid impact of the Arab Spring, the first democratic elections in the country took place in 2011, and with these elections, the Islam Party in Tunisia (Ennahda) and two centre-left parties, Ettakatol (Democratic Forum for Labouré and Liberties, or FDTL) and Congrès Pour la République (Congress Party for the Republic), formed a coalition government. The Ennahda Movement came to power through elections.

In terms of the failure of political Islam, it is clear that it mostly focused on the relations between Islam and politics. After the Arab Spring, jihadist Salafism increased, in which the Tunisian youth were also involved.²³⁶

Although the Arab Spring instilled ideas such as democracy, freedoms, human rights, and equality, it also brought some conflicts and problems in Tunisia. Among the most important problems, the conflicts between Islamists and the secular community emerged as a result of social and political uncertainties. Another important result is that after the revolution, socio-economic factors shaped the unrest in the country gradually because the unemployment rate, inflation, and other economic troubles like corruption and high inflation caused public anger against the government. Before the Arab Spring, most of the Jihadists were in prison. According to young people, Jihadists are the true Muslims and others are infidels, which is the motivation that led them to get involved in civil wars in other countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.²³⁷ However, the Salafi groups, which were disturbed by the policies of the coalition government, were already released from prison during the Ben Ali period, and the growing Salafism thought to have the influence of the increasing Saudi Wahhabism in the Middle East can be attributed to these Islamist groups, one reason for the increase in Islamic radicalization in Tunisia. On the other hand, rapidly rising

²³⁶ Özge Özkoç, "Tunus'ta Demokrasiye Geçiş Süreci ve En-Nahda'nın İdeolojik Dönüşümü," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, no. 74(3): 692.

²³⁷ Jerome Drevon, "Embracing Salafi jihadism in Egypt and mobilizing in the Syrian jihad," *Middle East Critique* no. 25(4), (2016): 331.

unemployment rates and, on the contrary, a growing young population feeling neglected by the government caused them to be marginalized.²³⁸

Hence, Tunisia has shown that it has mostly completed its democratization transformation by fulfilling certain requirements. First, it completed the procedures with sufficient agreements in terms of forming the new government. Secondly, free and fair elections were held. Thirdly, the newly formed government did not share the legislative, executive, and judicial power with other organs such as the military, and as a result, it had the authority to create new policies independently within democracy.²³⁹ However, while Tunisia has taken steps to create a more democratic and effective political society, Egypt has done less in this regard. In contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood's criticism that Christians and women, in particular, have a role in administration, the Ennahda Movement aimed to be a civil state rather than a religious state because democracy ensures equality for all citizens.²⁴⁰

Besides, the divisions between the Islamist and secular sections of society that deepened after the revolution, the economic crisis, the inability to achieve political unity, and the inability of the coalition government to come to a consensus on the making of a new constitution show the difficulties of realizing political reform in Tunisia due to increasing antagonism. Salafism, which emerged as a result of the revolution, defines itself as a community that sees themselves as being on the right of the Ennahda Movement and has conservative views in the religious sense, unlike the Salafists that emerged in Egypt. Salafists also became responsible for some criminal acts in Tunisia since 2011 that created a "Salafi Problem" on social grounds.²⁴¹ Increased marginalization following the revolution should not be interpreted solely as a result of poverty and economic factors. Salafism (especially Jihadist Salafism) provides many Tunisian youth with an Islamic identity, a subculture, and the opportunity to fight for Islam.²⁴²

²³⁸ Róisín Hinds, "Conflict analysis of Tunisia," *Birmingham, UK [United Kingdom]: GSDRC, University of Birmingham* (2014): 4.

²³⁹ Alfred Stepan, "Tunisia's transition and the twin tolerations," *Journal of Democracy* no. 23.2, (2012): 90.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁴¹ Monica Marks, "Youth politics and Tunisian Salafism: understanding the Jihadi current," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 18.1, (2013): 107.

²⁴² Hinds, "Conflict analysis of Tunisia", 11.

Understanding the reaction of the Ennahda Movement against the different Salafi groups who aimed to apply Islam as a political ideology and form a true Islamic society based on an Islamic State ruled by Sharia that emerged after the revolution in Tunisia will also explain the role of Ennahda in the rise of Salafism. However, contrary to Salafism, which continued to gain strength between 2011 and 2013, the policies of the Ennahda Movement were more moderate and uncertain. The Ennahda Movement, which initially approached the Salafists with a more unifying approach, led the Salafists to establish political parties and enter the elections after the revolution. Therefore, four Salafi parties were formed, and the troika government legalized them. These parties, such as Hizb Al-Tahrir, Hizb Al-Asala, Hizb Al-Rahma, and Jabhat al-Islah, renounced violence and accepted the principles of democracy in practice.²⁴³

Salafist groups started to organize some attacks and protests in society, such as the attack on a theater and art gallery in La Marsa in 2012 and the protests they organized at Manouba University. The reason why the Ennahda Movement was weak in its policies against the Salafists was that it initially supported these protests under the name of "religious freedom", then tried to prevent such actions as they led to violence because Salafi Jihadists started to organize actions like attacks on the US embassy and the assassination of two secular politicians (Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi) for which Ansar al-Shariah in Tunisia (AST) was held responsible and these actions caused it to be banned and declared as a terrorist organization due to its affiliation with Al-Qaeda and Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the country.²⁴⁴ In an interview with Rachid Ghannouchi in October 2012, he stated that Ennahda did not want to label Salafists as enemies because, during the Ben Ali regime, Ennahda members and Islamists were either imprisoned or forced into exile due to heavy repression. If the Ennahda Movement pursued anti-Salafist policies rather than engagement and inclusion policies, it feared that the Salafists would seize the opportunity and grab power in the coming years.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, the policy of approaching both sides equally in order not to lose the interest of secular voters and not to lose the support of Salafists and other Islamists was the main factor behind the

²⁴³ Stéphane Lacroix, and Rebecca Koch, "Islam and Politics in Tunisia," (2014): 9.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁴⁵ Reuters Staff, "Tunisian Islamist leader says Salafis must not be demonized," October 18, 2012: [Tunisian Islamist leader says Salafis must not be demonized | Reuters](#)

party's policies against Salafis. It cost the secular Nidaa Tounes votes and 16 seats in the 2014 elections.²⁴⁶

In 2014, the NCA (National Constituent Assembly) put into effect the new constitution, and Tunisia, which has undergone many innovations in the political wing since 2011, held parliamentary elections in October 2014 and presidential elections in November 2014. However, economic development has been halted due to a lack of complete political consensus. Following the terrorist attacks on the Bardo Museum and Sousse Beach in 2015, Tunisia entered a new economic stalemate.²⁴⁷ Although Tunisia has made significant progress in the democratization of the country and in reaching a political consensus, the increase in security problems, the deepening of economic inequalities that became worse than before the Arab Spring, especially in rural areas, and the fact that extremism and terrorism have become a growing domestic threat show that Tunisia still has major problems to overcome.²⁴⁸

Another effect of the Arab Spring on Tunisia can be stated as the Ennahda Party's (Renaissance Party's) becoming the main conservative party in Tunisia by shaping its extreme anti-system ideas, which it has adopted since the 1970s, on the occasion of the revolution and starting to look more pragmatically. The main reason why Tunisia today is more democratic than most Middle Eastern countries is that the Ennahda Movement, which was suppressed for about 30 years due to oppression and prohibitions, started to look more positively and constructively towards pluralism, separating its perspective towards moderation and democracy from traditional and fundamentalist Islamist thought, such as tawhid-oriented, believing that ideological transformation and change were necessary during and after the revolution.²⁴⁹ Thus, the Ennahda Party stands out in the system established in post-revolutionary Tunisia with its first examples of this, giving importance to democracy, civil liberties, and human rights in its discourses and party program. Besides, in the post-2011 period, Ennahda

²⁴⁶ Lacroix and Koch, "Islam and Politics in Tunisia", 13.

²⁴⁷ Mohsin S. Khan, and Karim K. Mezrani, "*Tunisia: The Last Arab Spring Country*," Atlantic Council, (2015): 1.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴⁹ Francesco Cavatorta, and Fabio Merone, "Moderation through exclusion? The journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from fundamentalist to conservative party," *Democratization* no. 20.5, (2013): 858.

showed that it attaches importance to democracy and liberalism with the "power sharing agreement" that has been established with two centre-left parties as mentioned.

While the Ennahda Party criticized the capitalist economy in the 1970s and 1980s, it followed a different path by combining both the imperialist capitalist order presented by the West and the command economic system offered by socialism after the revolution, during which it began to believe that a neo-liberal market economy was necessary for the growth of Tunisia.²⁵⁰ Along with these, the Ennahda Party, which transformed both ideologically and practically, reflected this in its foreign policy and continued to pursue more pragmatic policies, especially towards America and the West. Although the Ennahda Movement experienced both heavy state repression and social rejection for 40 years, "moderation through inclusion" could not be practiced and excluded. It began to be known as the most moderate and pragmatic Islamist party in the Arab world. The JDP in Turkey, PJD in Morocco, and Al-Islah party in Yemen proved that the "validity of moderation by inclusion thesis" was valid, but the Tunisian case progressed differently from these countries, because it was ostracized by both the state during the Bourguiba-Ben Ali period and society. Thus, it is difficult to talk about the application of the "moderation through inclusion thesis" in the Tunisian case.²⁵¹

Consequently, the main weakness of Ennahda comes from its lack of control and due to its political weakness, but it became successful in terms of the transformation of Tunisia through democracy due to its pragmatic vision. Even though each Islamist party faced some difficulties in terms of political history, culture, and the effect of the political movement in Tunisia, it evolved from a repressive party for many years into a majority within this context.²⁵² However, Tunisia had to face some problems after the coalition government. These were related to economic grievances, social and security problems, as well as political issues. Economic issues were the main determinants of the revolution, and unemployment heavily increased after Ben Ali, which created social tensions and stimulated public protests. Public security started to diminish with the evolution of Salafism due to their violent discourses against Sufism and secularism. This all created distrust among secular and political

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 861-862.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 865.

²⁵² Laura Guazzone, "Ennahda Islamists and the test of government in Tunisia," *The International Spectator* no. 48.4, (2013): 31-33.

groups who had Islamist visions in their party propaganda. However, these advances prepared the ground for rising opposition towards the old regime and its focus on consensus through democratic means. In other words, deep polarization created a contrast among seculars, Salafists, and Islamists on issues such as religious identity, minority rights, civil liberties, etc.²⁵³ Nevertheless, the main reasons for the successful democratic transformation in Tunisia were political and religious reform movements that started in the 19th century. Also, there were other political actors and civil societies, such as the UGTT trade union and the Tunisian League for Human Rights, in the post-Arab spring period.²⁵⁴

3.5 The Rise of Radicalization in Tunisia

Even though radicalization is not associated with terrorism but rather with extremist ideologies, it can be viewed as the first step toward becoming a terrorist organization through the process of ideological radicalization. In the Tunisian example, there is a level of individual radicalization (social radicalization) rather than group or collective radicalization (political radicalization). These violent attacks were planned and carried out against both the national guard and security forces in areas such as Jebel Chaambi, which borders Algeria.²⁵⁵ The attack by AST on the US Embassy in 2012 can be perceived as a conflict against the West and Western values, and the assassination of two politicians in 2013, shows the tactical transformation of the organization and Ennahda's attitude towards Salafis from an opportunistic approach to Salafi Islamists, which turned it into a confrontation. It also created distrust among Salafis, which led to the rise of marginalized youth in Tunisia. Thus, the need arose for Ennahda to prove, first, that it had nothing to do with violence, and second, that it should ensure public and land security.²⁵⁶

There might be two main hypotheses about radicalization in Tunisia. One might be related to the export of jihadist-minded extremist views from Algeria to Tunisia, and the second might be considered personal jihadist ambitions that were

²⁵³ Ibid., 35-36.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 48.

²⁵⁵Stefano M. Torelli, "Radicalisation and Jihadist Threat in Tunisia: Internal Root Causes, External Connections and Possible Responses," *IEMed*, (2017): 110-111.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 113.

radicalized due to some major grievances. However, the main cause was the attempts of radicalization to spread externally from Algeria rather than internal conflicts, but internal problems in the country diverted this path to even more violent actions. In terms of internal influence, it can be said that the government's ineffective policies further polarized and radicalized those who are not affiliated with jihadist Salafism.²⁵⁷

In other words, cultural, social, economic, and political marginalization prepared the ground for the evolution of radicalization in Tunisia. Tunisian Jihadism, in fact, differs from other parts of the Middle East in that it began as an individual and social radicalization rather than as a group or collective organization. Another important determinant of radicalization, which led radical individuals to adopt new strategies in the post-revolutionary period, was the ongoing civil war in Libya. Since Tunisians started to adopt the ideology of ISIS in the period of 2014–2015, they went to Syria and Iraq to fight in the ranks of ISIS, and with the same motivation, they went to Libya to continue their actions under the name of jihad.²⁵⁸

Although concepts such as political freedoms, human rights, democracy, and elections were realized in Tunisia, radical Islamists surrounded Tunisia due to the lack of a strong regime that came to power after the revolution. The main reasons for the increasing radicalization in Tunisia are the conflicts between the secular and religious communities, economic and social factors, the release of the Jihadist Salafists who were imprisoned after the overthrow of Ben Ali, and the marginalization of the youth. The policies of the Ennahda movement also led to an increase in groups with Islamist extremist views in Tunisia. Extremist groups, on the other hand, took even more active measures to spread their ideas as a result of the increasing security vacuum in Tunisia following the revolution. The Ennahda Movement's failure to adopt harsher and more oppressive attitudes toward these organizations can be considered a failure.

The re-emergence of radical Salafists in Tunisia started with the imprisonment of Muslims who had ultra-conservative ideologies before 2011, and the release of some militants, such as Ansar Al-Sharia's founding leader, Abou Iyad, after 2011. Therefore, conservative ideologies began to spread through religious education and

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 114.

²⁵⁸ Fabio Merone, "Between social contention and takfirism: the evolution of the Salafi-jihadi movement in Tunisia." *Mediterranean Politics* no. 22.1 (2017): 14. (1-20)

television broadcasts from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and the socio-economic situation of the country accelerated the process even more.

It can be said that the foundations of the political and social strengthening of a new jihad movement emerged in direct proportion to the countries' targeting of democratic transformations between 2011 and 2013. Although terrorist tendencies and apolitical ideologies formed the basis of Jihadist radicalization, new tendencies caused it to transform both politically and socially. Therefore, two separate Jihadist ideas can be mentioned. Those in the first group are ISIS, and those in the other group are Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia and Libya), Jabahat al-Nusra, and Ahrar al-Sham, who are in this transformation. (Syria)²⁵⁹ Due to these developments, the modern Jihad movement that has emerged today has emerged not only as a structure with violent tendencies but also as a political actor. Therefore, it directed its main actions from the ideas of "da'wah" and reconciliation to the actions of armed struggle and "takfir." The main reason is that, as a result of internal pressures, radical views that could not find a place in politics caused both the concept of jihadism and the approach of takfir to move from the local to the international level.

While Tunisia faced some religious freedoms, they made some sermons by controlling the mosques of ultra-conservative and extremist ideologies from abroad to spread and influence the Jihadist Salafist ideology against all the resentments in Tunisia, which allowed them to rise even more and establish their own religious authority in an environment of chaos, which paved the way for them to gain power. However, most post-revolutionary Salafists remained apolitical, but parties such as the reform front supported the Islamic Revolution with gradual initiatives and advocated for the establishment of a caliphate and then an Islamic state as soon as possible.²⁶⁰

Ansar Al Sharia was formed in 2011 and declared itself a political project and against pluralism. According to the views of the organization, it did not recognize democracy or the state itself. The main reason for this is that they only accept to apply the rules ordered by God, which are the rules of Sharia. Therefore, they consider the Sunnah and the Qur'an as their main and universal sources. They also state that Tunisia

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.

²⁶⁰ Anne Wolf, "Tunisia: Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution," *World Today* no. 68.11, (2012): 3.

is different from Iraq and Afghanistan and that it is possible to talk about the existence of a Tunisian identity.²⁶¹ Therefore, the main aim of AST was to spread its religious identity, which became the main determinant of the Salafist ideology. Another radical group was the Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade, which had terrorist activities and began to threaten Tunisia's security. It followed the strategies of Al-Qaeda with its underground fighters that aimed to attack the government and its military forces. Thus, AST can be regarded as a political threat, whereas Okba ibn Nafaa is regarded as a security threat. Even though both had similar purposes, like forming Islamic State, they followed different strategies.²⁶²

Unlike in the Ennahda Movement, the importance of both Islamic identity and Islamic norms was frequently emphasized in order to preserve legitimacy during the Ben Ali period. While radical groups had the opportunity to spread their ideas further in the vacuum created by the elimination of the Ben Ali regime, on the other hand, the Ennahda Movement, which gained power after the revolution, first gave importance to the making of a constitution and political struggles, so it could not establish a proper balance in the face of increasing radicalization. In order to prevent increasing radicalization, the first thing to do is to meet the political demands of the young population living in Tunisia and to take steps towards solving socio-economic problems. Furthermore, while analyzing radicalization, it is not possible to talk about a single entity because it does not have a hierarchical structure. While some argue that such forms of organization are against Islam and its values, it should be emphasized that other radically affiliated groups, such as Ansar Al Sharia (AST), are separate entities rather than representing a whole.²⁶³ The main reason for the rapid spread of radicalization is that rising dynamics such as AST gained control of the country, particularly in mosques, and they took advantage of the opportunity to distribute meetings and religious publications to spread their ideas. Factors such as the structural adjustment program launched in the 1980s, economic privatization and liberalization policies implemented in the 1990s, and then unfulfilled economic promises and

²⁶¹ Fabia Merone, "Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with a Member of Ansar al-Sharia," April 11, 2013: [Jadaliyya - Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with a Member of Ansar al-Sharia](#)

²⁶² Malka, "Tunisia: Confronting Extremism", 93.

²⁶³ Georges Fahmi, and Hamza Meddeb, *Market for jihad: Radicalization in Tunisia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015, 6

unemployment following the 2011 revolution enabled radical groups to increase marginalization and create a protest identity.²⁶⁴

On the other hand, there was an identity issue because even Ansar Al-Sharia, a brand of al-Qaeda, was regarded as a radical and terrorist organization that provided some social services like providing food, medicine, and clothes to people. In addition, it was the most influential Jihadist Salafi group in Tunisia. Therefore, Salafists acted as charity organizations in this manner. The increasing terrorist acts after the rise of jihadist groups increased the tension between AST and the Ennahda party. For example, in the Bardo and Sousse attacks that took place in 2015, although ISIS claimed to be responsible for the attacks, it was claimed that AST had a connection to the attacks, and in 2013, the assassination of two Tunisian politicians (Chokri Belaid and Muhammad Brahmi) was linked to AST, which radical extremist terror events led to the banning of Ansar al-Shari'a in 2013.²⁶⁵ However, with the absence of a strong state, so-called terrorist organizations like Ansar Al-Sharia acted like a state by providing basic goods to the poor people in Tunisia.²⁶⁶ Hence, the "absence of a state" could be regarded as an important motivation for spreading violent Islamist groups and Salafism in the post-revolution period in Tunisia. In the literature, there is a link between socio-economic problems and increased motivations for radicalization. Therefore, at first glance, we can say that the lack of opportunity, the increase in poverty, unemployment, and social factors played an important role in the strengthening of Islamic groups in both Egypt and Tunisia, and other determinants could be related to increased marginalization. On the other hand, there is a link between poverty and terrorism, although, according to some, they reject this kind of linkage. The main reasons could be related to suffering from poverty, lack of a desirable job, and the fact that it is easier to become the target of Islamic organizations than secular ones, because an unemployed person will have too much free time, so they can go to the mosque or spend time on social media.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁶⁵ Christine Petré, "Tunisian Salafism: the rise and fall of Ansar al-Sharia," *FRIDE Policy Brief* 209 (2015): 4-5.

²⁶⁶ Lazreg, "Post-Islamism in Tunisia", 15.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

Even though the Jasmine Revolution, which took place in 2010-2011 in Tunisia, caused the fall of an authoritarian regime through protests rather than a coup, its transition to democracy has been threatened by the evolution of Jihadi Salafism. It is an organization of traditional Islamists, which is Ennahda, that claims to govern the country with modernity, secularism, and democracy rather than Islamic principles, unlike fundamentalist Islamists like Salafism. However, the attacks on tourists in Sousse and Bardo in 2015 and similar attacks in 2018 showed that Jihadi Salafism threatened the country's national security. These radicalization attempts started with some organizations in Tunisia. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is one of the radical organizations that was established in 2007 and claims to support ISIS and threaten Tunisia. Ansar al-Sharia became responsible for the attacks on the US embassy in Tunisia in 2012. When it was established, it did not have radical aims like supporting violence; rather, it supported nonviolent means for becoming a political actor, even criticized by Salafists due to their anti-political involvement ideology. However, together with its prohibition, it started to focus on violent extremism, which is supported by ISIS. Furthermore, there was also a lack of security policies like fighting against extremism in Tunisia during the Ennahda movement because it followed integration policies rather than repression of radical Islamists, which led to the emergence of Salafi ideology and Wahhabism, which were totally against the idea of democracy, secular government, etc.²⁶⁸

The civil war in Syria also affected the rise of radical discourse and became a great motivation for the youth to get involved in radical organizations. The "Tunisian Combatant Group" can be regarded as jihadi Salafists, and leaders who were released from prison led to the formation of Ansar Al Sharia that focused on division rather than da'wah by diminishing freedom of expression and free reasoning (ijtihad) in the political vacuum to attract more people in Tunisia.²⁶⁹ Estimated numbers show that more than 3000 Tunisians wanted to go to Syria to fight with ISIS against the Assad Regime. In 2015, 12,490 Tunisians tried to escape to fight in countries that have civil wars like in Libya, Iraq, and Syria, but their attempts were prevented by the Tunisian

²⁶⁸ Neo, "The Jihad post-Arab Spring", 98.

²⁶⁹ Haim Malka, "Tunisia: confronting extremism," *Jon B. Alterman, Religious Radicalism after the Arab Spring, CSIS*, (2015): 99,103.

government. Takfir (Excommunication of Fellow Muslims) ideology had an impact on youth as well as social media and Jihadist forums on the internet, leading to the rise of brainwashed youth who wished to die for ISIS. The reason related to that radical perception of the Assad regime as secular and infidel was that they aimed to establish Jihad as a given religious order. Therefore, religion had an impact on the radicalization of Tunisia since 2011. Also, individuals' motivations had main factors, but these are more complex.²⁷⁰ In other words, fear and grievances would lead to radicalization in a vicious circle. While socio-economic problems shape the rise of radicalization, on the other hand, a lack of strong state and socio-economic opportunities can provide some social services by increasing the financial resources of radical groups by influencing individuals through ideological, political, and psychological factors.²⁷¹

While analyzing the radicalization process, we need to address the socio-economic factors that have triggered radicalization in Tunisia and justify the use of violence against civilians and security forces. For many years, there was the issue of political exclusion in Tunisia, but it could not explain the main reasons for radicalization. The lack of infrastructure, unemployment, high inflation, and low GDP levels have increasingly shaped the radicalization of the Islamists.²⁷² As a result, the effect of radical groups in Tunisia after the revolution can be viewed as a result of grievances and terrorism, which can be listed as follows: Al-Jazara Group, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al-Sharia fi Tunis (AST), Katiba Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN), Islamic State, Jund al-Khilafah, Leagues for the Protection (TICG).²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Hamid, "Radicalization after the Arab Spring", 46-47.

²⁷¹ Clara-Auguste Süß, and Ahmad Noor Baheige Aakhunzzada, "The Socioeconomic Dimension of Islamist Radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia," (2019): 19.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 10.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARING TWO CASE STUDIES: POLITICAL SALAFISM IN EGYPT AND TUNISIA

4.1 Political Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia

The most striking policy that the West has brought to the Middle East was the "Divide and Rule" policy. In addition, the nation-state-building process was artificially established without taking into account the realities of the Middle Eastern countries, and almost all of them had a heterogeneous ethnic structure, making it impossible for them to form their national identities. As a result, the consequence of issues such as the Islam-Democracy relationship, radicalization, Salafism, and political Islam, which are frequently discussed by academics, has grown. In fact, the democratization process that started slowly in the Middle East after the Arab Spring was undermined by the 2013 coup d'état in Egypt. For Tunisia, the situation was somewhat different and could be called more modern and democratic. However, the active ingredient of the Salafi dynamic, which rose before and after 2011, stems from identity problems rather than the absence of democracy or economic problems in the region. The states that arose in the region following the fall of the Ottoman Empire were unable to define their national identity.²⁷⁴ Besides, Pan-Islamism prevents the formation of a national identity. In the religious sense, Islam does not accept the concept of nation-state because it is the concept of the Western-oriented nation-state that undermines the ummah (the community of Muslims).²⁷⁵

When we compare their populations, political structures, historical facts, and education, we find two different structures. Egypt was conservative as a society, and had a strong military but low levels of education. On the other hand, Tunisia did not have a strong army like Egypt, but gave more importance to education. The point to be noted here is that the military in Tunisia was not involved in the economy and politics. The fact that Egypt is militarily more advanced than Tunisia has caused the military to play a role in both politics and the economy. Perhaps this relationship from the past laid the foundations of the 2013 coup d'état.²⁷⁶ Because of the discriminatory

²⁷⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Who am I? The identity crisis in the Middle East," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* no. 10.1, (2006): 63.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁷⁶ Ibrahim SI. Rabaia, "Political Islam and the Arab spring: Between the failure in Egypt and the success in Tunisia," (2016): 3,4.

policies of the state services against various ethnic and religious groups, they have triggered religious and ethnic conflicts, which have, in turn, influenced political, historical, and cultural factors in improving community service. The state's integration and social support services in Egypt's rural areas were very limited, and this problem prompted the Salafis to act as a "charity association" and gain the people's trust and support in the political arena.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, after the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, they began to act against democracy and secular understandings. The fact that they were suppressed by repressive regimes for many years led them to seek power at the earliest opportunity. In addition, there was a rise in uncertainties in both Egypt and Tunisia because neoliberal economic policies led to a rise in corruption in those countries. People then started to deal with problems like unemployment, poverty, high inflation, etc.²⁷⁸ Hence, Salafist groups came up with ideas of ideological purity and strong religion to change the existing status quo in these countries. However, the Ennahda Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood could be regarded as "moderate" as they reconciled the status-quo to gain power by following pragmatism. Salafists brought along religious, national, and ideological conflicts in order to protect their ideas and the "authentic Islamic identity" from external threats. In addition, Salafists polarized society with discriminatory discourses such as "us" and "them" to achieve their political goals and gain the support of the people.²⁷⁹

In 1958, Nasir's alliance with Syria turned into a political, economic and military fiasco. At the same time, the fact that the Islamists were in prison caused the increasing conservative views to quickly find support and spread underground. Therefore, the ideology of Arabism laid the foundations for the gradual initiation of conflicts rather than unity in the Middle East. Since 2011, Sufis in Egypt have started to collaborate with liberals or pro-government moderate religious parties because they were frightened of rising religious control of the state by Salafists.²⁸⁰ The dynamics of

²⁷⁷ Elizabeth M. Coker, "Religion, ethnicity, and community mental health: service provision and identity politics in an unplanned Egyptian community," *Community Development Journal* no. 43.1, (2008): 80.

²⁷⁸ E. Kirdis, "Uncertainty and the Religious Market: The Unexpected Rise of Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring," *Journal of Church and State*, (2020): 8-9.

²⁷⁹ Alam Saleh, and Hendrik Kraetzschmar, "Politicized Identities, Securitized Politics: Sunni-Shi'a Politics in Egypt," *The Middle East Journal* no. 69.4, (2015): 545.

²⁸⁰ Jonathan AC Brown, *Salafis and Sufis in Egypt*. Vol. 20. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011, 13.

sectarianism in Egypt began to change as a result of the Arab Spring. Not only Salafis, who had previously taken an apolitical stance, but also Sufis, Christian Copts, and Shiites wanted to enter politics to protect their own interests and rights.²⁸¹

Equally important, Salafism and Islam identity provided both structure and certainty towards people who were searching for Islamic State or revolution due to oppressions, humiliations, and angers. This process could lead to both radicalization and deradicalization. Therefore, the biggest threat comes from radical Jihadist Salafism, which threatens democracy in newly transformed Tunisia and Egypt. Before the Arab Spring, Salafists were not well organized. After the Arab Spring, they came up with an umbrella organization that would form political parties, whose aim became more political rather than traditional wisdom.²⁸²

The identity of the region could not be regarded as organic, but it is mostly defined by the popular rhetoric. The identities of the region are mostly constructed with artificial boundaries that transnational ideas and ideologies have had a greater impact as the process of identity formation was unsuccessful and unnatural. It is a paradox that Salafists see Iran and Shiites as greater security threats than Israel. The Salafis' view of Iran and Shiites as a greater threat than Israel can be explained in two ways: first, because the options for fighting Israel were insufficient, and second, because Salafists did not prefer to prioritize the conflict with the West in their agenda. As a result of isolating themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood and claiming to be distinct, Egyptian Salafists stated in their discourse that they would not oppose the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979. (Camp David Accords).²⁸³ Also, Salafists in Egypt and Tunisia use securitization discourses not only against the Shi'a community but also against Copts, Seculars, Sufis, and non-Muslims.

Therefore, Salafism has been one of the most striking movements in Egypt and Tunisia since 2011. The Salafists, who took control of both countries with the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali, were able to use this power. The fact that

²⁸¹ Sami Zemani and Brecht De Smet, "A Post Scriptum: The Arab Spring and the Sectarian Issue," in *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals, and the Media*, eds. Brigitte Maréchal and Sami Zemani (London: Hurst, 2013), 249–50.

²⁸² Ramazan Yıldırım, "Arab Spring and Salafism-Case of Egypt," *İlahiyat Akademi*, no. (1-2), (2015): 265.

²⁸³ Barry Rubin, "Revolutionary Salafi Islamists in Egypt: An Analysis and Guide," *MERIA Journal* no. 17(2), (2013): 44.

they entered the political arena brought to mind the question of whether Islam and politics could be integrated together. As a result of the military coup d'état that took place in Egypt, the regime of Mohammed Morsi, who came to power with the consent of the people, was overthrown, and this caused some divisions within the Islamist movement.

The resurgence of Salafists in Tunisia began with the imprisonment of Muslims with ultra-conservative ideologies prior to 2011, followed by the release of some militants, including Ansar Al-Fatah's leader, Abou Iyad, after 2011. Similarly, Salafists gained power in Tunisia by focusing on ideological purity, as they did in Egypt. Thus, Salafism led to the rise of conservatism in both Egypt and Tunisia. However, "quietist Salafism" had no direct threat to the Ennahda Movement and Muslim Brotherhood, and besides, political Salafists had a small voice in parliament.²⁸⁴ With the rise of Salafism, Saudi Arabia had an impact on both Tunisia and Egypt with the power of their satellites and media power. Therefore, conservative ideologies began to spread through religious education and television broadcasts from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and the socio-economic situation of the country accelerated the process even more. Therefore, Saudi Arabia became the main sponsor of Salafism in both Tunisia and Egypt, both financially and ideologically.

4.2 The Egyptian Case

Together with the Arab Spring, such developments led to the formation of Salafi parties in Egypt, such as the "Party of the Light," "Authenticity," and the "Building and Development" party. On the other hand, since Salafism does not have a historical background or a tight organization like the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism can be called a popular movement or "front" (Jabhat) rather than a party that includes different groups.²⁸⁵

4.2.1 Rivalry between Salafism and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

On the one hand, there are some differences between Ikhwan and Salafism in terms of political activism and partisanship. In terms of their ideologies, purist Salafists have followed a policy that is far from both politics and participation by establishing

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 16-24.

²⁸⁵ Høigilt and Nome, "Egyptian Salafism in revolution", 43.

a party in elections for years. These developments are primarily focused on Saudi Arabia. For example, sheikhs such as Abu Ishaq al-Heweny, Mohamed Hassan, and Mohamed Hussain Yaqob were heavily influenced by Abdulaziz Ibn Baz, Mohammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani, and Mohammed Ibn al-Uthaymin. Therefore, they began to compete against the idea of the rise of political Islam by combining the religion of Islam with the state administration adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood under one roof. Thus, the rivalry between Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood began long before 2011, and the basis of this rivalry was actually in the 2000s, when Salafists disseminated their negative resistance to the Muslim Brotherhood. They rejected its peaceful, conciliatory approach through forums and websites and argued that the idea of political Islam would lead to further oppression of the Islamists by the authoritarian regime in the country, as in the past.²⁸⁶

The Salafists' common belief and attempts to collaborate with the Muslim Brotherhood in the early years of the revolution would lead to their political power. However, two years after the revolution, Salafi parties realized that Morsi's administration had no intention of sharing power with them. As a result, there are major reasons for the conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism. First and foremost, the administration led by Mohammed Morsi became more authoritarian, and as a result, a negative public perception of the Muslim Brotherhood emerged. Morsi sought to monopolize control of the state and its institutions in order to return to an authoritarian form of government rather than addressing the country's growing social and economic problems. The second reason is that the elections, which were scheduled to take place on April 22, 2013, have been pushed back to October 2013. Because of these fundamental issues, the Al-Nour party launched a clear and public campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁸⁷ Moreover, there are some other reasons underlying the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood as a result of the revolution in 2013. The first of these is that the organization does not have a progressive and revolutionary policy against the Salafist organization. The second is that the organization lags behind in terms of management experience. Although Salafists have

²⁸⁶ Steven Brooke, "Muslim Brotherhood faces growing challenges in Egypt." *Ikhwanweb, The Muslim Brotherhood Official Website* (2009): 2-3.

²⁸⁷ Michael Barak, "The Salafist Al-Nour Party and the Muslim Brotherhood: The End of the Affair?," *Tel Aviv Notes* no. 7.4, (2013): 3

a similar lack of experience because they have been away from politics for many years, thanks to some pragmatic policies after the revolution, they have overcome this inexperience. Thirdly, it can be characterized as the stagnation of the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of its administration and controlling strategies in Egypt.²⁸⁸ The reason behind the weakness of the Muslim Brotherhood against the Salafists was that it preferred to cooperate with some traditional organs such as the army and the Interior Ministry, which are regarded as "deep state" organs, rather than collaborate with the revolutionaries and activists during the revolution. However, its relations with the liberal and secular sections became more complicated because the organization decided to cooperate with the Salafists, such as the Al-Nour Party and the Building and Development Party. (BDP)²⁸⁹

On the other hand, while Jihadist Salafists preferred to stay away from politics and resort to violence, others, such as political Salafists, aimed to participate in the political arena through the process of institutionalization. Therefore, it should be noted that Salafis who aim to participate in this political game can be studied in the context of political Islam, unlike Jihadist Salafists. Furthermore, the Al Nour party's attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2013 military coup and its cooperation with the secularists led to some criticism in Egypt, raising questions about whether these criticisms would lead to division. To understand the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, we need to touch upon how they competed in the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections. As we mentioned, in the early Salafism ideology, they approached political participation as openly biased and opposed. However, Al-Nour became the second largest party in Egypt with 27.8% (7.5 million votes) and the Morsi-led Freedom and Justice Party took power with 37.5% (10.1 million votes). Strangely, the Salafist party's pragmatist stances surprised those who harbored negative feelings towards Salafis. The foundations of the rivalry between the two structures began when the Mubarak regime allowed Salafi television channels and their appeals and fatwas to be broadcast in mosques, thus undermining the Muslim Brotherhood's power and influence over society. The main source of contention between the Salafis and the

²⁸⁸ Khalil Al-Anani, "Upended path: The rise and fall of Egypt's muslim brotherhood," *The Middle East Journal* no. 69.4, (2015): 529.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 535.

Muslim Brotherhood is their emphasis on adopting only one's own Salafist ideology in order to become a Salafi, rather than being a part of a larger Islamist movement.

In terms of economics, Salafists began to complain about the economic inequalities that had arisen as a result of the failed policies of the Mubarak Regime, thus gaining both the support and appeal of people living in rural areas through their charitable activities, such as Ahrar Salafis (Free People) and the Costa Salafi movement. However, the Muslim Brotherhood mostly supported private property rights and did not want to deal with the social problems created by the old regime, focusing only on how to apply *Sharia* in the context of society and politics, which further weakened them in the eyes of society.²⁹⁰ Both Al-Nour and the National Liberation Front supported and sided with the rebellion against the Muslim Brotherhood because of their desire to monopolize power in the country. In other words, Salafists have fewer reservations about secular and non-religious powers than they do with the Muslim Brotherhood in terms of political and ideological strife.²⁹¹ This conflict was also seen in the foreign policies of the Muslim Brotherhood between 2011 and 2013. Besides, "Salafi Call" and "Al Noor" strongly criticized the foreign policy actions of the Muslim Brotherhood because they aimed to increase relations with Iran, especially in the tourism sector, through their foreign policy. However, Salafists had different opinions in this regard. According to them, it was a possible Shiite invasion, and they argued that the increase in Iran's influence over Egypt could be perceived as a threat to Egypt's Sunni Islamic identity. In this competition, not only did resentments and conflicts arise between the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Nour, but also the latter began to lose the support they had gained from other Salafi parties.²⁹²

Therefore, both the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood, as traditional Islamists, are two different groups, aiming for different goals and competing. While the Salafists sought to formulate a pure version of the religion, the Muslim Brotherhood combined both Islam and state transformation in its political path. Thus, while the Muslim Brotherhood sought to influence both the government and the elite, Salafists sought to influence other Muslims who had no vision or intentions for

²⁹⁰ Nagwan El Ashwal, "Egyptian Salafism between Religious Movement and Realpolitik," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs* (2013): 1-2.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

political Islam. With the Arab Spring, the "conformist rhetoric" of the Muslim Brotherhood on Islam and modernity has been undermined by both secularists and radicals, such as supporters of ISIS and political Salafists such as the Al Nour Party. In terms of religious ideology and social work activities, the Muslim Brotherhood gained a popular reputation in Egypt over the years, but it can be said that these ideologies were less influential during the Arab spring. While the Islamic movements that emerged with the revolution in most Middle Eastern countries caused their governments to become more centralized with the military, the strategies they implemented were similar to the authoritarian regimes that prevailed in the past. Together with the military coup of El-Sisi in Egypt, the credibility of these Islamic groups in the eyes of the public was shaken, and the problem of "marginalization" in this country became even more evident. The direction of increasing conflicts was determined by the use of social media. While the Muslim Brotherhood primarily used social media to express their organizations' political goals and leadership, the Salafists aimed to keep less politically influential issues such as theology and religiosity off these platforms. The reason why the Salafists were ahead of the competition with the Muslim Brotherhood was that the Salafists did not directly aim to be a political power, although they were examined under the category of Political Islam in both groups. Salafists had much more to say, both in rural areas and outside the political sphere. However, the Muslim Brotherhood, as part of their foundation, adopted a hierarchical political structure of leadership in their basic organizational policies.

In fact, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Muslim Brotherhood became an opposition force in Egypt, holding by far the largest share of opposition seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The Muslim Brotherhood, which started its activities as a non-governmental organization, was dismissed from its duty after the military coup in Egypt in 2013. In the process from 1952 to 2013, the Army has already played an important role in the political regime, and it directs society in this way. The biggest shortcomings of the Muslim Brotherhood in the power race with other Islamist groups were political inexperience, the large population, and some economic reasons, such as the unbalanced income distribution, which further fueled this conflict. Actually, the Sinai Peninsula, occupied by Israel in the 1967 war and returned after the 1979 Camp David Accord, is Egypt's most unstable region. On the one hand, there are tribal quarrels, and on the other, strong radical currents accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of

pacifism. The attacks of extremists and radicals against institutions and individuals representing the state in Egypt generally take place in the Sinai Peninsula.²⁹³ During this time, the Sisi regime's increased operations against the Muslim Brotherhood prompted Salafi organizations in the Sinai region to resort to violence. One of these organizations, "Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis," did not hesitate to attack the Egyptian army even when Morsi was President. There are also those who claim that the activities of Salafi organizations that resort to violence ultimately benefit the regime and are used as a pretext for the coup against Morsi.²⁹⁴ Another issue of conflict is that while Salafists regard democracy as a Western and pagan form of government in theory, the Muslim Brotherhood defends the view that democracy has a basis in religion because it would take place with the principle of "shura" and freely expressing one's preferences (election). In other words, according to the Muslim Brotherhood, combining Islam and democracy will make society more harmonious. Likewise, the approach of the Muslim Brotherhood has innovative features on issues such as minority rights, fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and pluralism, which are considered the foundations of liberal democracy.²⁹⁵

Although there was a consensus on political participation, some developments before 2011 had an impact on both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists. The Muslim Brotherhood, as a hierarchical movement compared to the Salafists, has taken a position that intensifies the internal divisions. Salafists, too, gained unprecedented support, turning their propaganda of the power race with the Muslim Brotherhood towards the Islamist momentum, but they failed due to a lack of mobilizing structures in the pre-2011 period.²⁹⁶ Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Nour and al-Dawa al-Salafiya (Salafi Call) advocate not only limiting the rights of Christians, but also the idea of limiting the rights of some Muslims if their faith is not sufficiently practiced. On the issue of democracy, Al Nour began to take a more skeptical attitude, so they

²⁹³ Ziad Jawadi, "Egypt as a Conflict/Fragile State," *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association*, (2015): 6. (1-11)

²⁹⁴ İrfan ÜLGER, "MÜSLÜMAN KARDEŞLER TEŞKİLATININ İDEOLOJİSİ VE MİSİR SİYASETİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ," *Kırıkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* no.6.2, (2016): 138.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁹⁶ Jerome Drevon, "The constrained institutionalization of diverging Islamist strategies: the Jihadis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafis between two aborted Egyptian revolutions," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 22.1, (2017): 18.

only adopted some mechanisms of democracy. The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, advocates the inclusion of "Islamic Democracy" in the administration of the state it aims at. Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood also had disagreements and some conflicts on democracy in this context. Those who have Salafi ideas such as Al-Raya (Flag Party), on the other hand, oppose the idea of the nation-state as the most important determinant of politics in politics. In contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood, it aimed to abandon the concept of the nation-state in favor of establishing an Arab-Islamic Union in economic and political terms, while advocating the application of Sharia rules in administration.²⁹⁷ Other parties, such as al-Watan (Homeland Party) and al-Fadya (Virtue Party), on the contrary, preferred to move towards cooperation rather than conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, they took a more moderate stance towards democracy in their views. However, this does not mean that they fully accepted democracy and the freedoms of individuals. On the contrary, they used democracy as a tactic to increase their cooperation. Contrary to the Al-Raya and Al-Nour parties on the issue of Sharia, they supported the more flexible view of Sharia like the Muslim Brotherhood because flexible Sharia meant more rights and democracy.²⁹⁸

In comparison, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists' ideological development and diversity of thought have changed not only in a political sense, but also in their use of violence as a result of some developments. The overthrow of Mohammed Morsi in 2013 is the most visible example of this, and the Muslim Brotherhood, which has long opposed a policy of violence, has gone to restructure this idea. The conclusion we can draw from these inferences is that, while the mainstream Salafis distanced themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood following the Egyptian revolution and engaged in an ideological and political race, some Salafi parties did not adopt this strategy and, on the contrary, collaborated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Moreover, the basic ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood also supports participation in politics, but they emphasize that politics should be considered as a mission of the organization and not one of its most important goals. In its vision, it adopted the principles that set the way for them in line with purposes such as social,

²⁹⁷ Annette Ranko, and Justyna Nedza, "crossing the Ideological divide? Egypt's Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood after the Arab Spring," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* no. 39.6, (2016): 524.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 525.

individual, educational, cultural, and charitable activities. Between 2011 and 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood changed its vision slightly and prioritized politics in its purpose and mission.²⁹⁹ As a result, both the ideological and political races and conflicts into which the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists have entered have resulted in bad decisions. While this indirectly harms the image that both the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists have established in society, it also harms the public's perception of all Islamic movements. Furthermore, in these ideological and political power struggles with the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist organizations in Egypt had to make concessions as well as set new priorities.

Similarly, Salafist parties face challenges in competing with the Muslim Brotherhood and the FJP Party. First, Salafi parties are thought to have a looser structure than the Muslim Brotherhood; second, public prejudices against Salafists have gradually increased; and third, Salafists have been in a weaker position against anti-Salafi/Islamist ideas spread by secular media organs.³⁰⁰ We can say that the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists is both very complex and not very good because both organizations view each other from the point of view of suspicion and abstraction from each other. According to Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood's dealings with politics are founded on the fight against corruption. The Muslim Brotherhood also believes with similar suspicion that the Salafists have no connection with reality and that the "purity" ideology they advocate is purely pretentious and deceitful.³⁰¹ In addition, Salafists were also in conflict on issues such as constitutional debates, attempts to monopolize the power of the FJP in Egyptian politics, attempts to exclude political actors other than themselves, and the Brotherhood's moderate stance on relations with Iran. All these conflicts led the Salafists to form a coalition with the liberal and secular National Liberation Front and later supported the military coup launched against the Morsi regime. As a consequence, the constitution and the parliament were suspended, and the Muslim Brotherhood organization was banned as a terrorist organization. Although the role of

²⁹⁹ Nathan J. Brown, *Islam and Politics in the new Egypt*. Vol. 23. The Carnegie Papers, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, 4.(1-28)

³⁰⁰ Douglas H. Garrison, "The Salafi Political Experience in Egypt, 2011–2013," *Decentering Discussions on Religion and State: Emerging Narratives, Challenging Perspectives* (2015): 11.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

the Salafists in the administration was restricted as a result of the coup, the Salafists still managed to play an active role in Egyptian politics.³⁰²

4.2.2 January 25 revolution and impacts on Egypt

Before delving into the January 25 Revolution (Day of Rage), it is possible to predict that revolutions will continue in the future because revolutions are unavoidable as long as there are distinctions such as east-west and north-south. However, rising globalization trends and the role of the state also play a role in shaping revolutions. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the January 25th revolution began as an anti-system movement. The fact that the events started in Tahrir Square actually expressed a reaction against both the hierarchical system and the traditional opposition. At the same time, Wallerstein argues that minorities are forgotten. As a result, the neoliberal economic policies implemented during Mubarak's time in charge harmed these minority groups while also opening the door to revolution with their slogans of "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice, and Human Dignity."³⁰³ In other words, the Egyptian revolution was an unavoidable consequence of a shift in both neoliberalism and the global system. Over the years, people have become victims due to oblivion by the state, neo-liberal economic policies, and the state's position in the economic world order. Similarly, uncontrolled privatization attempts have not only prevented the increase in unemployment in the country, but also created low-paid jobs.³⁰⁴

While Hosni Mubarak thought that he had established a strong and authoritarian regime in Egypt for more than 30 years with the support of the US and the Egyptian army, the process leading up to his resignation on February 18, 2011, took place only 18 days after the revolution began on January 25. In fact, the revolutionary process in Egypt had begun long before people gathered in Tahrir Square, primarily through the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups that advocated applying Islamic principles in politics. However, there were many strikes and protests by workers between 2004 and 2008. Similarly, the military tolerated these protests as recently as January 25, 2011. Some discourses that created the Egyptian

³⁰² Patrick Kingsley, "Egypt's Salafist al-Nour Party Wins New Influence on Post-Morsi Coalition," July 2013: **Hata! Köprü başvurusu geçerli değil.**

³⁰³ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Contradictions of the Arab Spring," November 14, 2011: [The contradictions of the Arab Spring | Opinions | Al Jazeera](#)

³⁰⁴ Amany Abdellatif Osman, "The Egyptian revolution of January 25, 2011, as an anti-systemic movement," *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences* (2021): 9-11.

Revolution and enabled the people to act together began to circulate in the mouths of the people, the most well-known of which was the slogan "Bread, Freedom, and Human Dignity". The main reason why people, particularly young people, participated in the revolution can be seen as a natural result of the dictator regime's autocratic management system, which had been in place for years, because young people and workers had suffered the most from this form of government. Furthermore, there was a widespread belief that Hosni Mubarak's power would be passed on to his son, Gamal Mubarak, after his death. People who began to use social media actively organized and accelerated their organization on common issues such as the state of emergency law, anti-democratic policies implemented by the regime in the past, its closeness to Israel as per the Camp David agreement, and its moderate relationship with the United States.³⁰⁵

Three major currents have been influential in Egypt's political history: those with liberal ideas, those with statist ideology, and those with Islamic ideology. As a result of the Free Officers' military coup in 1952, statist policies and an autocratic state administration system were followed in politics, and both liberal and Islamic movements were tried to be limited in proportion to this. In the years when the Cold War was at its worst, a model was adopted under the name "Islam and Socialism" due to the close relationship they established with the Soviet Union. In the following years, although the regime followed strategies such as the religion of the state and the frequent use of discourses about Islam, the main reason for this was to prevent the Islamic movements from gaining power and to depoliticize society.

The conflict between the regime and those with anti-regime views between 2000 and 2011 can be evaluated into three groups. The first of these, the Kifaya Movement (Enough!), which emerged in 2004 as a reaction against the oppressive regime and corruption, aimed to achieve political, economic, and social improvements in Egypt. Those in the second group came together and held demonstrations, mostly due to economic problems. The third group, which has been organized through social media since 2007-2008, advocates both political and economic innovations and changes. It would not be wrong to say that this group of young people formed the basis

³⁰⁵ Selin Bölme, and M. Özhan, "25 Ocak'tan Yeni Anayasa'ya: Mısır'da Dönüşümün Anatomisi," *Seta Rapor*, no. 2 (2011): 4.

of the revolutionary movement that emerged on January 25, 2011.³⁰⁶ As there was no pluralism in the political sense, it became impossible for the people to express their demands in such a closed system. Thus, they sought alternative means and announced their demands through the revolution.

To summarize the human rights violations underlying the revolution, reasons such as increased torture against people, arbitrary detention of people without charge and keeping them in prison for years, restrictions on religious freedoms against the Muslim Brotherhood and other religious groups, restrictions on freedom of expression and the press, and activities of associations-parties and trade unions can be listed. The reason why the Muslim Brotherhood was in the background in the January 25 demonstrations was that the revolution was developed by different segments in Egypt and that the organization would only come to the fore with its Islamic identity in these protests. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood has been subjected to oppression and persecution over the years in Egyptian political history, and its support for the coup in 1952 caused the organization to be exposed to harsher attitudes. For this reason, it is due to the historical memory of the organization that it allows the participation of its members but not directly involved in the movement.³⁰⁷

Furthermore, during the Cold War and later, Egypt made attempts in its foreign policy to normalize relations with the United States. With the Camp David agreement in 1979, America cemented its role as a major player. The reason Egypt is a very important country for the United States is that Egypt dominates approximately 8% of the world's maritime trade through the Suez Canal. However, Egypt has a special importance for the United States for reasons such as ensuring Israel's security and access to oil in the region. In the post-1979 period, America has given great economic aid to Egypt in the military sense, but it would be more accurate to examine the relationship between these two as a "mutual dependency." As a result of these aids, the public perception of America as a supporter of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East has grown. As a result, under the Obama administration, the US administration

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 12.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 22.

did not overtly support the Hosni Mubarak regime during the Arab Spring, attempting to demonstrate to the world that it did not support authoritarian regimes.³⁰⁸

In like manner, the most important and distinctive feature of the January 25 revolution was that it was not put forward by a certain ideological group. Therefore, it was a civil uprising at the heart of the revolution. For these reasons, the number of people who participated in the revolution from Cairo to Alexandria, from Ismailia to Suez, exceeded 15 million. The heterogeneous demonstrators wanted change, but their clear goal can be described as overthrowing the Mubarak regime instead of the army.³⁰⁹ Although the army did not support the Mubarak regime in order not to fall into a bad position in the eyes of the people during this process, it also preferred to stay away from uncontrolled regime change. In general, although it was concluded that the revolution that took place in 2011 was a success as a result of the popular movement, the policy adopted by the army determined the outcome of the revolution. The Egyptian army, which has been actively involved in politics, foreign policy, and the economy since 1952, has evolved into a holding corporation as it has grown economically stronger.³¹⁰ For this reason, it can be said that although it is integrated with the regime, it has gained autonomy from the political system. Hosni Mubarak, who left power on February 11, transferred all his powers and administration to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The council, which initially declared that it would act as interim leadership for 6 months, took 17 months to transfer its powers to a civilian government. The military, in order to maintain its tutelary stance on Egyptian politics, argued that the military coup on July 3, 2013, was a continuation of the January 25 revolution and suppressed all forms of opposition to the coup. The authoritarian regime, thought to have been destroyed by the January 25 revolution, was re-established by the military coup of July 3, 2013.

The January 25 revolution created some uncertain results in Egypt. The people marched to Tahrir Square on this date, and these actions resulted in Hosni Mubarak's resignation from the presidency. When the revolution began, it appeared that Egypt

³⁰⁸ Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A history of Egypt: from the Arab conquest to the present*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 171-172.

³⁰⁹ Edip Asaf Bekaroğlu, and Veysel Kurt, "Mısır'da Otoriter Rejimin Sürekliliği ve Ordu:" Arap Baharı" ve Sonrası Sürecin Analizi," *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* no. 2.2, (2015): 22.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

was making positive progress toward democracy, but as a result of SCAF's direct intervention and control, a new authoritarian regime emerged in Egypt. Simultaneously, SCAF's unchecked rise to power fostered deep rivalries between Islamist and liberal-left parties, preventing political actors from reaching an agreement on their transitional progress in this climate of insecurity.³¹¹ It would be correct to say that the economic developments, the problem of political legitimacy, increasing Islamism, the demographic problem, social media, and television broadcasts had a significant impact on the background of the revolution that took place in Egypt in the years 2010-2011. All these factors contributed to the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, intensifying the protests and raising concerns about Egypt's future. While it was determined that the number of demonstrators attending Tahrir Square was close to 18 million during the January 25 protests in Egypt, which has a population of 80 million, this square has also become a symbol representing the freedom and power of the people. The common motivation of the protesters was to act together against increasing police brutality, poverty, injustice, and the despotic Mubarak regime that has been in power since 1981, aiming for the success of the revolution. The slogans of the revolutionaries, "The people want the overthrow of the regime," echoed all over Egypt. In response, the regime took some drastic measures to prevent its spread by blocking the internet and communication tools. In light of all these developments, Egypt succeeded in transferring power under Mubarak directly to SCAF, thanks to the successful revolutions in 2011, as in 1919 and 1952, and the authoritarian regime disappeared, at least for a short time, it seemed. During the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood followed a low-profile strategy due to years of oppression, preferring to be in the background rather than directly at the forefront of the action.³¹² The reason why the public's trust in the dictator's regime was shaken is, first of all, although a 5% growth rate was recorded in the 1990s, this growth rate increased to 7% between 2006 and 2008. (OECD) However, the common point among authoritarian regimes is that although the economy has grown, only some elite segments and regions close to the

³¹¹ Roel Meijer, and Floor Janssen, "The Egyptian 25th January Revolution One Year On: Challenges and Opportunities in the Transition towards Democracy," *CRU Policy Papers*; no. 22, (2012): 1-5.

³¹² Mohd Irwan Syazli Saidin, "Rethinking the 'Arab Spring': The Root Causes of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution and Egyptian January 25 Revolution," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* no. 13, (2018): 74-75.

government have benefited from this growth. Despite these economic developments, people still have to live in poor living conditions. Similarly, it was announced that the unemployment rate had increased too much, and around 2.5 million young people were unemployed at the time of the revolution.³¹³

The January 25 Revolution has opened a new door for political activism, but also caused some questions about the future of Egypt. As mentioned earlier, the revolution prepared the ground for the reshaping of the system of the country by formulating a new constitution and establishing political parties. However, there were also some inconsistencies within the discourses of the Salafi parties. Although they were against the idea of considering politics and religion together because they thought it would harm the Islamic identity, after the revolution, the Salafis founded a political party, which shows that they were gradually moving away from the Salafist ideology. They stated that their excuse for founding a political party was to spread da'wah and keep people away from what is sinful. However, the main point to be emphasized here was that the reason Salafists adhered to the principle of political utilitarianism, or pragmatism, was to prevent Salafists from being perceived as having a radical ideology in the world, especially in the West.³¹⁴ Furthermore, the Al Nour party defined Shi'as as one of the main national security threats to the religious identity of Egypt for its own political interests and to gain domestic legitimacy by inciting hatred towards the Shi'a community that is often linked to Iran. This hostility could be regarded as political rather than religious, since it is a proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Egypt. Due to its low numbers, the Shi'a population in Egypt could not be regarded as a substantial threat to the Egyptian Sunni identity, but it was encouraged by Salafists who are supported by Saudi Arabian Wahhabism, which used anti-Shi'a rhetoric and containment strategy to isolate Iran in the region. This is a common misunderstanding. Therefore, the "Shi'a threat" was constructed in Egypt by defining Shi'a as un-Islamic through acts of speech by Salafists. It also led to organizing Jihadi-Salafists for anti-Shia violence due to the perception of Shi'a threat to Islam.³¹⁵

³¹³ Ibid., 76.

³¹⁴ Umaima Abdul Latif, "Salafists and Politics in Egypt," *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* (2012): 14-15. (1-16)

³¹⁵ Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is: Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi'ism," *Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement* (2009): 108-109.

As a result of the events that took place in Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, the dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak ended. However, Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, who played an active role in the country for years, became new political actors in Egypt. The January 25 Revolution was a series of actions such as protests and street demonstrations that called on the people to be united against the current Egyptian policies, the administration, and the dictator regime, after the Jasmine Revolution took the lead. In the background of the revolution, the government's rule of Egypt with the "State of Emergency Laws" since 1967 has had an important effect on the increasing number of problems. With these emergency decisions, the power of the police and military was expanded, police violence gradually increased, the influence of non-governmental organizations was reduced, political and economic corruption, which has become a major problem in the country, and the economic policies adopted by the Mubarak regime (the poor people were still poor despite the economic growth rate, the results of which were that the elites close to the government benefited from the growth rate of the economy), flared up the revolution that soon took place and became unavoidable. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood followed the steps of political normalization enabled Islamists to integrate into the democratization process that started on January 25. Since the Muslim Brotherhood did not fully comply with the principles such as tolerance, democratic values, and pluralism required for its continuity in the political arena, its active role in Egyptian politics was restricted. With the January 25th Revolution, the idea of "re-Islamization" increased in the Middle East, whereas the Islamists, who failed to control the power, proved that this idea was not very reliable for the people of the Middle East.³¹⁶

Moreover, in defining a fragile state, as in the case of Egypt, the lack of legitimacy determines whether a state is fragile or not because there is a correlation between the state and state authority that weakens the capacity of the state. Therefore, legitimacy, shared beliefs, values, socio-economic status, geographical division, internal problems, and human rights issues are the main determinants of a fragile

³¹⁶ Maria Dolores Algora Weber, "The Muslim Brotherhood Following The "25 January Revolution": From The Ideals of The Past to the Political Challenges of The Present," *Journal of the Higher School of National Defense Studies*, no. 0, (2012): 211.

state.³¹⁷ Although Egypt's quest for democracy has come to an end following the revolution and coup, some efforts are being made to ensure stability. Egypt was ranked 49th in the "fragile states index" in 2010, but jumped to 36th in 2018 as a result of the regime change, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists having a say in power, and the military coup.³¹⁸ As of 2021, according to the index, Yemen ranks 1st, Syria 3rd, Egypt 39th, Tunisia 94th, and Turkey 57th. (Fragile States Index 2021).³¹⁹ As an explanation for these events in countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Libya, it can be said that the Middle East is not yet fully ready for a democratization process as in the example of the West. Despite the fact that totalitarian regimes fell as a result of popular movements, fragile states have emerged instead of democracy and stability in these countries where foreign interventions are active. As seen, the fact that the search for democracy is a prerequisite for regional stability did not bring democracy or peace to these countries. For these reasons, it is possible to predict that the phenomenon of failed states could well persist in the Middle East in the medium and long term.³²⁰

4.2.2 Egyptian parliamentary elections in 2011-2012

The 2011-2012 elections were particularly important not only because they were the first elections held in a free and fair environment, but also because the Egyptian people determined the future of their country through these elections. The people preferred the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, known for their religious rhetoric, in the first bloc, and al-Wafd and the Egyptian Bloc, which advocated liberal democracy. In the other group, Al-Wasat (New Center Party), whose members were composed of former MB members and Christian Copts, also took the middle ground, supporting both Islamic laws and democracy. According to some studies, in countries where political, social, and economic dissatisfaction has increased, military intervention took place without taking too long. Or in countries where a new democracy was established, those connected with the old regime used these aims to mobilize the people against the established new order, together with their longing for

³¹⁷ Ziad Jawadi, "Egypt as a Conflict/Fragile State," *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association* no. 1, (2015): 2-3. (1-11)

³¹⁸ Azime Telli, "Başarısız Devlet Terminolojisi Üzerinden Arap Baharı'nı Okumak: Libya, Mısır ve Suriye," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* no. 19.3, (2020): 1280.

³¹⁹ FFP, *2021 Fragile States Index*, Washington: FFP, (2021)

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1282.

the past. For these reasons, it would not be wrong to say that the new democracy and order created in Egypt did not provide stability, and that it went back to its old authoritarian days.³²¹ When we look at Egypt's post-revolutionary transition period, we can say that the people see democracy as an ideal political system, but their views on the effect of democracy differ. It is clear that religion has a significant impact on politics and therefore greatly influences the voting preferences of the people. The reason why the FJP, Al-Nour, and Al-Wasat parties received close to 77 percent of the votes in the 2011-2012 elections shows the effect of religiosity on society.³²²

In the legislative elections that took place in November 2010, there were some question marks in everyone's mind. The Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats in the 2005 elections, which was 20% of the 444 total seats in the parliament that created the Muslim Brotherhood as the main rival to the National Democratic Party. However, in 2010, the election was allegedly blatantly rigged, and the NDP took almost all the seats, while the Wafd Party gained little power. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood lost the 88 seats it had won in 2005. The Muslim Brotherhood's political success in 2005 exacerbated the Mubarak regime's anti-Muslim Brotherhood measures. The most obvious of these, the increasing tension and anxiety as a result of the violation of rights and freedoms, was one of the reasons for the January 25 revolution.³²³ The most important issue for the NDP, which was in power, was that a different secular party would adopt more democratic policies and overshadow the success of the NDP. For this reason, it gave more political privileges to the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to these, the Muslim Brotherhood's political activities, which it has been carrying out since its inception, are constantly evolving and changing.

Along with these developments, the Egyptian government was overthrown in February 2011 and a referendum was held on March 19th for the constitutional amendment, which we can call the first democratic movement. After Mubarak's departure, SCAF suspended the 1971 constitution and dissolved parliament. In this referendum, Christians, who were mostly described as minorities, senior executives,

³²¹ H. Ege Ozen, "Egypt's 2011–2012 parliamentary elections: Voting for religious vs. secular democracy?," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 23.4, (2018): 3

³²² *Ibid.*, 21-22.

³²³ Mona Farag, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the January 25 Revolution: new political party, new circumstances," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* no. 5.2, (2012): 214

wealthy and intellectuals, voted "no". The reason why they voted against the constitutional amendment targeted in the referendum reflected the ongoing hatred against the Mubarak regime in the country. The Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters voted "yes" because Article 2 of its constitution was about Sharia. The referendum was accepted for constitutional change with 77% of "yes" votes.³²⁴ However, the main reasons behind the growing prejudice of the youth and the public against the Muslim Brotherhood are the organization's desire to build a state government based on "Sharia Rules." Similarly, the country's Christian Coptic minority (about 10% of the population) was growing increasingly concerned about the administration. The third factor was related to the place of women in politics and social life. The organization advocated the view that women should not take part in the social and political arena.³²⁵ In short, before the elections, the Muslim Brotherhood frequently stated that they did not support theocracy in the form of government. However, in the 2011 parliamentary elections, the Islamists won a landslide victory over the liberals. Thus, liberals mostly played an active role in the protests against the interim government. The Islamists, on the other hand, preferred not to participate in these protests and to get more votes by eliminating the weaknesses in their organizations. For these reasons, both the FJP and the Al-Nour party signaled an Islamist victory in the elections.³²⁶

Furthermore, Egypt went through two important transformations. As stated earlier, with the protests that broke out on January 25, 2011, Islamists' access to the political arena became easier. In the second transformation, as a result of the military coup of June 30, 2013, all Islamic actors were expelled from Egyptian politics, except for the Al-Nour party, which won 25% of the parliamentary seats with almost a quarter of the votes in the 2011-2012 elections. It is not as effective as before due to the increasing internal divisions among the Salafis and Salafists, who adopt a bottom-up strategy and advocate Islamization in society for the establishment of the Islamic State, although it tries to maintain this position today. The FJP party, led by Mohammed

³²⁴ Marty Harris, "The Egyptian constitutional referendum of March 2011: a new beginning?," March 2011: [The Egyptian constitutional referendum of March 2011 a new beginning – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](#)

³²⁵ Farag, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the January 25 Revolution", 220

³²⁶ The **Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)** won %40 of the seats, **The Al-Nour Party** won %20 of the seats in the parliament.

Morsi, which won 47 percent of the seats in parliament in the elections, was also unable to maintain power. In other words, despite their rapid rise following the revolution, the Islamists were unable to maintain their power due to a lack of experience in politics and state administration. The Islamist protest groups, which gathered behind this tension, including the newly formed Watan Party (Homeland Party), which split from the Al Nour Party in 2013, protested the elections and did not vote for the Al Nour Party, claiming that it supported the Morsi regime that accused them of treason against the Islamic movement.³²⁷

Although the coalition formed with the three Salafi parties (with the Authenticity Party and the Construction and Development Party) under the leadership of the Al-Nour party in 2011-2012 gave the impression of unity, this unity was short-lived. In another presidential election held in May and June 2012, the Authenticity (*Asala*) Party preferred to support Muhammed Morsi, while the Al Nour Party preferred to support Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the representative of liberal thought. Although he was supported, all Salafis supported Mohammed Morsi in the second round.³²⁸

Table 2. Egypt's 2011-2012 Parliamentary Election Results

Participants	Number of Deputies	Percentage of Votes
Freedom and Justice Party	235	47,2
Al Nour Party	121	24,3
New Wafd Party	38	7,6
Egyptian Block	34	6,8
Al-Wasat Party	10	2
Reform and Development Party	9	1,8
Egyptian Revolution Party	7	1,4
Other Parties	18	3,6
Independents	26	5,2

Source: (Yaşar, 2012)³²⁹

³²⁷ Clément Steuer, "Current Developments in the Egyptian Salafist Scene," *Observatoire of Arab-Muslim World and Sahel, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique*, (2016): 3. (2-13)

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

³²⁹ Yaşar, "Mısır'daki Geçiş Sürecinin Aktörler Üzerinden Değerlendirilmesi."

According to Table 2, Egypt's first elections were held on May 23, during the Tahrir Square protests. Despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has seized Egypt's political balance since November 2011, it has not been able to fully control the country. According to the parliamentary elections held in 2011-2012, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) received most of the votes, with 235 deputies and 47.2% of the seats in the People's Assembly (Majlis al-sha'ab), while the other Islamist political actor, with 121 seats and a 24.3% vote share, the Al Nour Party became the second largest political actor. Third, the New Wafd Party won 38 deputies and 7.6% of the seats in parliament, giving the three Islamist parties an advantage over liberal-left parties. In this context, the FJP and other Islamist parties hold roughly 70% of parliament seats can be interpreted as an indication of the transition from a military/secular to an Islamist government. However, the Islamists could not pursue and maintain a successful policy, especially in terms of FJP's goals and the continuation of its power, which caused its share in the political arena to disappear with the military coup that took place in 2013.³³⁰

The partial withdrawal of the army from politics and the failure of the opposition alliance required for demilitarization are two of the main reasons for the Muslim Brotherhood's serious loss of power. However, it can be said that in the referendum held in March 2011, Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists were successful in mobilizing society for a "yes" vote.

Table 3. 2011-2012 Parliamentary Election Results in Egypt

³³⁰ Ibid., 70.

Coalition	Party	Total Seats	Percentage
Democratic Alliance	Freedom and Justice Party Dignity Party (Al Karama) Al- Hadara Egyptian Labouré Party	227	45.58
Islamist Alliance	Al-Nour Party Building and Development Party Al Asalah Party (Authenticity Party)	124	24.90
Egyptian Block	Egyptian Social Democratic Party National Progress Party Free Egyptians Party	33	6,63

Source: EISA 2012³³¹

According to Table 3, three groups can be mentioned in the first round of the presidential election. The first group consisted of Islamists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, who held most of the power, and they did not want to share this power with other actors. In the second group, there were those who were defenders of the old regime and were defined as "stabilists." When we look at the third group, those who have more populist discourses, have adopted "Nasserist" ideology, and have less organizational integrity.³³² The Al Nour Party supported Aboul Fotouh rather than Morsi in the elections because the Salafi party did not want to work with the Muslim Brotherhood. This action, however, did not result in votes for Fotouh; rather, it created an atmosphere of chaos among the Salafis. The main reason for the conflict among Salafis was that Fotouh's moderate discourses towards women, Sufis, and Copts were unrealistic and far from the radical ideologies of Salafis.³³³ In this context, it can be said that the rhetoric of polarization and deprivation of central politics has shifted to

³³¹ "Elections in Egypt Analysis of the 2011 Parliamentary Electoral System," Middle East and North Africa International Foundation for Electoral Systems, November 1, 2011.

³³² Yaşar, "Mısır'daki Geçiş Sürecinin Aktörler Üzerinden Değerlendirilmesi", 73.

³³³ Marwa Awad, "Egypt Salafis back ex-Brotherhood man for president," April 29, 2012: [Egypt Salafis back ex-Brotherhood man for president | Reuters](#)

more radical sides, and this has had effects on the election results. In addition, it can be said that after the despotic Mubarak regime, the army both expanded its scope in Egyptian politics and aimed to protect its old and new gains. Therefore, the army tried to turn the new order brought by the revolution against itself.

Furthermore, some theories have emerged, such as non-Islamists in Egypt claiming after the elections that Saudi Arabia and Qatar financed the Islamists and paved the way for their victory. Furthermore, it has been claimed that the money funded was used for Islamist teaching, though some argue that this financial resource was used for Islamist political campaigns during the election, which is consistent with similar claims.³³⁴ Another explanation for the Islamists' success contends that the Islamists are better prepared for elections and that the FJP is a newly formed party, despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has played an influential role in Egypt for more than 80 years.

The basis of the success of the Salafists was the existence of strong Salafi organizations such as al-Jami'yya al-Shar'iyya and Jama'âtü Ansâri's-Sunnah'l-Muhammediyye and the sheikhs were very influential in the country. However, they were remarkably successful in controlling mosques in Egypt and had many offices. They succeeded in spreading the Salafist ideology around Egypt.

Another factor that is considered one of the reasons for the success of the Islamists is that the literacy rate in the country is very low, and, in direct proportion to this, the increasing influence of the Islamists in the country, especially in the rural areas, which began to appeal more to the ignorant, caused the Islamists to gain power as they turned this weakness into an opportunity. In addition, the fact that the groups advocating Arab nationalism, leftist groups, Christian minorities, middle class elites, and secular-minded parties and groups did not come together on a common ground other than hatred against Islamists. It also prevented the formation of a common ideology and caused the Islamists to gain strength. While the Islamists offered both some programs and alternatives to society in terms of morality, it was inevitable that the segments within these groups would lag behind the Islamists because they could

³³⁴ Samuel Tadros, "Egypt's elections: why the Islamists won," *World Affairs*, no. 174, (2011): 30.

not offer a consistent political and economic program and a moral alternative to Islamism.³³⁵

The main argument that may emerge as a result of the 2011-2012 elections is that the Muslim Brotherhood is attempting to exploit the political vacuum created by the January 25 revolution and the disappearance of the Hosni Mubarak regime, which made accusations, claiming that the Muslim Brotherhood was responsible for the emergence of the revolution and its rapid intensification, as well as the deaths of protesters in Tahrir Square. However, from the point of view of legitimacy, the Muslim Brotherhood had major shortcomings in terms of both holding power and legitimacy due to the lack of national success. Although the organization achieved some success in gaining the support of the Egyptian people against the undemocratic and oppressive policies of the old regime, President Morsi was dismissed with a military coup in the following years, before completing his four-year term, due to the fact that legal legitimacy could not be crowned with concrete success and tangible populist legitimacy after Morsi's election.³³⁶

The FJP party's rhetoric advocating Sharia and its belief in democracy are among the main factors behind the success of the election. In addition, political and economic reform, strengthening of national security, and the declaration that party membership is open to Christians and everyone else, signaled that the Muslim Brotherhood would become an alternative to the old regime in the eyes of the people. Mohammad Morsi's gaining political power signaled that power would pass from the Islamists to the army, with some difficulties arising before the military coup. Internationally, countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Qatar have gradually increased their influence over Egypt. The Morsi regime made efforts to normalize relations with Israel and Hamas. Internally, it cannot be said that the Morsi government has been successful in dealing with social and economic problems such as increasing unemployment, budget deficits, inflation, and an increase in crime rates. In addition, the government increased its control over the media and assigned unlimited powers to itself with the 2012 constitutional declaration, which led the masses to be hostile

³³⁵ Ibid., 34.

³³⁶ Hesham Al-Awadi, "Islamists in power: the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* no. 6.4, (2013): 539.

towards it and failed to transform the order it had established into popular legitimacy.³³⁷

To sum up, Egypt aimed to complete its democratic process with the 2011 constitutional referendum, parliamentary elections, presidential elections, and 2012 constitutional referendum. As a result of the first democratic presidential elections held in May and June 2012, Mohammed Morsi, who surpassed Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, the symbol of the liberal wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Islamic thinker Mohamed Saleem Al Awa, a senior member of Al-Wasat, and Ahmed Shafiq, received 51.7 percent of the vote, becoming Egypt's first democratic leader. Free and fair presidential elections have become a symbol of the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. At the same time, Egypt, which is an important actor in the region, assumed that it would affect the way of doing politics in the countries around it through democratic elections.³³⁸ It is undeniable that ideology and patronage have an impact on elections and voters, so patronage in public employment is also an indication of their support for the nomination associated with the relevant ruling regime. The reason behind the enthusiastic support of the Islamists is that almost all of the social services were provided by the Islamists, so while a large part of society complained about inequality, unemployment, poverty, and the wrong policies of the government, the Islamists, especially the Muslim Brothers and Salafists, came to their aid. Along with this, it caused the Islamists to both become popular and increase their legitimacy in the eyes of the public.³³⁹ The reason for the growing support of the Islamists can be explained by the hypothesis that the effects of ignorance, poverty, human capital stock, and unequal policies are the reasons why Islamists gain more votes in poorer and unequal areas where less educated people live.

On the contrary, young Islamist groups in Egypt chose to distance themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood and its discourse of Islamist identity in 2013. They argue that Islamism no longer has any strategic importance and does not bring success, so it would be more beneficial to adopt a "pluralist" perspective. For these reasons, the Muslim Brotherhood was no longer perceived as the main organization that defended

³³⁷ Ibid., 544-546.

³³⁸ May Attallah, "The determinants of voting for Islamists in Egypt's first post-revolution elections 2011-2012," *Middle East Development Journal* no. 9.2, (2017): 184.

³³⁹ Ibid., 186.

political Islam, because new actors were now in competition on the axis of this pluralism. Furthermore, while Islamism arose as a reaction to state alienation, it was unavoidable that it be replaced by pluralist views such as new developments and Salafist perspectives.³⁴⁰ Therefore, the main factors in the absence of competitive political parties in Egypt were the inadequacy of the revolutionary youth groups in terms of organization and resources and the increasing ideological conflicts that brought about divisions. In other words, the 2011 elections led to the elimination of the leaders of the old regime and the Islamists. Political organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood—Free and Justice Party and the Al Nour Party have benefited from this political transformation.³⁴¹

4.2.3 Formation of political parties by Salafists in Egypt

Although the Salafists entered the election race in the post-revolutionary period by establishing political parties, they had to make some concessions in democratic politics and learn how to form their organizations as structural political formations rather than just preacher-oriented organizations. Likewise, the Muslim Brotherhood was not founded for political purposes, but politics was only part of its mission, so they focused more on charitable activities in the community. Although Egypt did not follow Iran's steps with the 1979 Islamic Revolution, it began to encounter some problems due to the in-separation of religion and politics and by using this political power to establish the Islamic State targeted by the Islamists in the new Egypt and to realize their wishes regarding Da'wah. Thus, they continued to show their influence by maintaining and strengthening the importance of religion in politics.³⁴²

Therefore, some questions may arise about how politics will change Islamic forces in Egypt rather than whether Islam will become the main determinant of Egyptian politics. This is because Islamists entered the new political environment and were unaware of how politics began to change their main ideologies and discourses.

³⁴⁰ Dalia Fahmy, "The Muslim Brotherhood: Between Opposition and Power," In *Egypt beyond Tahrir Square*, edited by Bessma Momani and Eid Mohamed, Indiana University Press, (2016): 85. (76–94)

³⁴¹ Clément Steuer, "Representing the people in the street or in the ballot box? The revolutionary coalition campaign during the 2011 Egyptian elections," *Mediterranean Politics* no. 26.1, (2021): 100. (97-116)

³⁴² Nathan J. Brown, *Islam and Politics in the new Egypt*, Vol. 23. The Carnegie Papers, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, 1.

However, the Salafi parties, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, did not have enough time and were not formally organized. They had less formal organization. Therefore, they did not have enough time to prepare for any ideological repression, but some people began to talk about the “Brotherhoodization of the Salafis” after their rapid success in the elections.³⁴³

Political Salafists, who started their activities more strongly and legally in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen with the Arab Spring, argue that while there are some problems, such as the oppressive regimes in the Islamic world continue to oppress rights, at the same time, there is the desire of foreign powers, namely America, Russia, and China, to continue the proxy wars in the region and Israel's increasing dominance over the Palestinian lands. Therefore, Political Salafists strongly criticize the fact that Purist or Quietist Salafists still claim that people will become infidels as a result of their obedience and rebellion to the rulers without assessing the reality due to their obedience-minded mentality. Indeed, political Salafists, which started as an increasing trend after the 2011 Arab Spring, formed parties such as "Hizb al-Nour" in Egypt or "Jibhat al-Islah" in Tunisia, which emerged under the name of "politicos", that is, political Salafism, independently and differently from the Sahwa Movement.³⁴⁴

The most successful Salafist party was the Al Nour party, which had its roots in al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya, which was established in the 1970s by the students at Alexandria University. It adopted an apolitical stance towards political engagement and rejected violence.³⁴⁵ It also embraced mobilization for its constituencies and began to speak out about social and economic issues, combining this political opportunity with enthusiasm. Most of the Salafist parties have started to focus on Article 4, related to the charter of Al-Azhar University, and Article 219, related to the principles of Islamic law.³⁴⁶ Thanks to the ideological flexibility, the acceleration of organizational work and the financial support provided by Saudi Arabia, the Al-Nour party managed to become the most influential Islamic party after the Muslim Brotherhood. With the

³⁴³ Ibid., 8

³⁴⁴ Joas Wagemakers, "Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and defining the branches of Salafism," *Salafism after the Arab awakening: Contending with people's power* (2017): 17-18.

³⁴⁵ Frank Griffel, "What Do We Mean By “Salafī”? Connecting Muḥammad ‘Abduh with Egypt’s Nūr Party in Islam’s Contemporary Intellectual History," *Die Welt des Islams*, no.55(2), (2015): 188.

³⁴⁶ Brown, *Islam and Politics in the new Egypt*, 10.

2013 military coup, the Muslim Brotherhood lost the support of the people, which they had struggled to gain for many years, which also caused divisions among the Salafis.³⁴⁷ While Qatar supported the Muslim Brotherhood financially, Saudi Arabia supported Salafi parties in Egypt and asked them to support the military structure led by Al-Sisi. This has caused a division between Salafists because some activists have refused to consent to these requests due to their own ideologies.³⁴⁸

On the other hand, while the Muslim Brotherhood was the most powerful and popular Islamic group in Egypt prior to the 2011 Arab Spring, it can be said that it is no longer the only dominant force in the political arena. With the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, Islamists entered a new era of freedom, and as a result, new Islamic parties and actors have emerged in Egypt. The most prominent of these are the Salafists and Jihadists. Although both groups have a long history of existence in Egypt, their political acceptance took place after 2011. Even though the Salafi parties were divided among themselves during the Hosni Mubarak period, they managed to unite again with the impact of the revolution. Al-Nour and the Al-Asala parties are the leading Salafi parties that have been established since the revolution. In addition, the emerging Islamic Group (IG) not only has some characteristics of the Salafist ideology but also differs due to its past experience with terrorism. The members of Islamic Jihad and al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, who had been imprisoned for many years after the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, were released with the revolution. Figures such as Mohamed al-Zawahiri and Abboud al-Zomor rejected violence and formed a new party known as Al Bena'a wal Tanmeya. (Construction and Development Party)³⁴⁹

As a result of the events that developed after the January 25 revolution, the role of Salafists in Egypt completely changed. In the past, Salafists, who thought that political participation and forming a party was wrong due to their ideology, wanted to take advantage of this gap with the overthrow of the National Democratic Party, and these groups, which emerged under the name of Political Salafists, preferred to have a say in the political arena by establishing official parties. Apart from the social,

³⁴⁷ Antonii Palamar, "The influence of the salafi movement on the political transformation of Egypt in 2011–2013," *Reality of Politics. Estimates-Comments-Forecasts*, no. 14(4), (2020): 154.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁴⁹ Samuel Tadros, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood after the revolution," *Current trends in islamist ideology* no.12(5), (2011): 12. (5-20)

economic, and religious motivations that enabled the Salafists to act together, they also tried to gather under a single roof for common purposes. The most visible example was their defense of Article 2 of the 1971 Egyptian Constitution, which states that Islamic Law (Sharia) is the primary source of Egyptian law.³⁵⁰

One of the first officially registered Salafist parties, the Al-Nour party, was founded and achieved legal party status in mid-June 2011 by members of the middle, lower, and working classes known as the "Salafi Call". Politically, the Al-Nour Party (Party of the Light) became much more flexible and pragmatic with its establishment, taking 123 seats with %24 of the votes in the 2011-2012 elections in Egypt.³⁵¹ In contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood, the party started to deal with the socio-economic problems in the country with its Salafi character that claimed to be against the religious type of state. Unlike traditional Salafists and jihadist Salafis, its aim was to appeal to all segments. Later on, it cooperated with other parties, such as the "National Salvation Front" in the December referendum of 2012.³⁵² During the years between 2012 and 2013, there were some divisions and controversies among the Salafists. The reason was that the Al-Nour party supported Abdel Fattah Saeed Hussein Khalil El-Sisi in the military coup d'état that was launched against the Mohammad Morsi administration.

Furthermore, the Al-Asala party (Authenticity Party) was founded in 2011 by Salafi Movement members who took a more active political stance. Among its fundamental beliefs, it preferred to follow a vision that was completely opposed to the Mubarak regime and was not afraid of any political conflict.

In addition, the origins of the Building and Development Party are based on the more radical and violent "Islamic Group" (al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya) organization compared to other Salafi parties. Most of its leaders spent almost all of their lives in prison after the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat. Although the party's history includes terrorism and violence, the party leaders, like Tareq al-Zumr, openly stated that they would stay away from all forms of violence and would adopt ideas such as equality and pluralism.

Table 4. Understanding the Salafi Trend in Egypt

³⁵⁰ Garrison, "Sacred confronts profane", 7.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 15.

³⁵² Karagiannis, "The rise of electoral Salafism in Egypt", 6.

Anti-Political Salafists	Political Salafists	Apolitical Salafists
Purists	Al-Nour Party (Party of The Light) (Ad-Da'wa As-Salafiya)	Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah
Jihadi Salafists	Hizb el-Asala Party (Authenticity Party)	al-Jamiyya al-Sharia
Madkhaliyya Salafists	Al-Fadyla Party (Virtue Party)	
Quietists	Building and Development Party (Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya – Islamic Group)	

Source: (Boemher, and Murphy, 2012)³⁵³

According to Table 4, Salafism in Egypt can be examined in three main categories. The common point of political Salafists is that they argue the political system under Hosni Mubarak lacks Islamic references and that this system is illegitimate. For this reason, Salafis, who had not had the opportunity to change the rules of the system for many years, thought if they joined this non-Islamic system, they would have to make huge concessions on the Islamic principles they accepted.³⁵⁴ Therefore, Salafists criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for making concessions on Islamic principles during the Hosni Mubarak era. After 2011, most Salafis felt that joining the political system would not require them to compromise on basic Islamic principles. After this process, Salafist groups, which focused on politics, began to spread their political messages to the public more freely and uncensored. However, Salafists do not associate their participation in politics with Western values such as democracy, human rights, and popular sovereignty, and the factor in their participation in politics is not because of their increased belief in democracy. On the contrary, they attempted to legitimize their entry into politics in this manner, arguing from a side view that the concept of consultation (Shura Council) is at the heart of Islam and is prescribed by the Qur'an.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Boehmer, and Murphy, "The Politicization of the Egyptian Salafiyya", 79.

³⁵⁴ Daniel A. Boehmer, and James P. Murphy, "The Politicization of the Egyptian Salafiyya: Principled Participation and Islamist Competition in the Post-Mubarak Era, George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs," *Institute for Middle East Studies, IMES Capstone Paper Series* (2012): 4.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

We can state that the Salafists have been accused of being passive and isolated from the political environment as a natural consequence of their staying away from political participation for many years. However, they emphasize that religion and politics should be perceived as a whole and that it would not be possible to separate them. Salafis oppose inclusion in this political arena because they see the system as un-Islamic, and they believe that any secular and democratic order will distance them from the ideologies of establishing an Islamic state. In such an environment, they would have to compromise the Islamic principles they advocated in order to participate in the political game, which was unacceptable because political participation had become too costly for Salafists.³⁵⁶ Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists have created the perception that they are only interested in Islamic practice issues and that they are the ultimate defenders in terms of the protection of Islamic principles in the television channels that they established before 2011 in order to gain the trust of the people and to be more effective in all parts of Egypt.³⁵⁷

In traditional Salafi ideology, they emphasize that Muslims should not protest against their leaders and should obey their leaders with obedience-minded logic. In light of this idea, there was a difference of opinion between the Al Nour party and other groups with Salafi views. The main reason was the attitude of the party, which tried to control the country on one hand by excluding Ikhwan. However, the rivalry turned into a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Qatar; while Qatar supported the Ikhwan movement, Saudi Arabia did not hesitate to support the Salafists who sponsored it. As a result of El-Sisi's interventions in the 2015 elections, the party had only 11 seats in parliament. Therefore, it had to follow a low-profile strategy during the election period, although its party rhetoric claimed that it was not a religious party, going beyond the traditional expressions of the Salafists, but its principles were mainly about Islam. Therefore, it supported democratic concepts such as the rule of law, freedom of expression, and civil rights in the context of "Sharia."³⁵⁸ However, there were some divisions within the party because some of the members believed that democracy was bi'dah (innovation) and illicit, but later they began to admit

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 19.

³⁵⁷ Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "Islamic fundamentalism in Arab television: Islamism and Salafism in competition," *Fundamentalism in the modern world* no. 2, (2011): 287-289.

³⁵⁸ Karagiannis, "The rise of electoral Salafism in Egypt", 8.

democracy, which caused it to be described as pragmatic and unprincipled by the public. The party gradually lost its support in society as a result of its discriminatory rhetoric against Christian Copts in Egypt and its backing of el-Sisi's military coup against Mohammed Morsi. Even though the Al Nour party seems to be defending checks and balances, division of powers, and equality of rights, it still has illiberal views, especially against minorities. Paradoxically, the party also preferred to follow pragmatism in its foreign policy, especially with Israel, by respecting the peace treaty between the two countries.

On the other hand, the Building and Development Party (Hizb el-Benaa wa el-Tanmia) was established in 2011 and played an active role in the January 25 protests that also had roots in al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya.³⁵⁹ At the same time, it attempted to project a pragmatic stance by stating in party propaganda that it would pursue equal policies against Muslims and non-Muslims, and that it was open to concepts such as justice, equality, and freedom in Egypt. They were also outspoken in their opposition to the 2013 military coup.

Another party was the Virtue Party (Hizb al-Fadyla). Despite the negative comments from the theological debates on democracy, the party took a moderate stance, stating that democracy is similar to the "Shura" (Consultative Council) in Sharia. On the other hand, the principles advocated by the party, were established for purposes such as regulating income distribution, ensuring equality and justice for all Egyptians, making Egypt the main actor in the Islamic world, as it was in the old days, and making reforms.³⁶⁰ Adel Abdel Maksoud, the party's leader, left Al-Fadyla to found Al-Asala, a new Salafi party (Party of Authenticity). This party's basic ideology is defined by its adoption of ultra-conservative Islamic ideology and emphasis on the application of Sharia law. It also participated in the elections under the name of the "Islamic Bloc", led by the Al-Nour party, in the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections.³⁶¹ It also stated repeatedly in party speeches that it opposed the military coup and held

³⁵⁹ el-Karanshawi, Shaimaa, "Egyptian court approves new political parties," October 10, 2011: [Egyptian court approves new political parties - Egypt Independent](#)

³⁶⁰ Hamdi Dabbash, "Salafis in Cairo aim to establish 'Virtue' political party," May 19, 2011: [Salafis in Cairo aim to establish 'Virtue' political party - Egypt Independent](#)

³⁶¹ Ahram Online, "Egypt's Salafists proliferate with yet another Salafi party in the Works," 11 July 2011: [Egypt's Salafists proliferate with yet another Salafi party in the works - Politics - Egypt - Ahram Online](#)

right-wing views across the political spectrum. However, it is extremely difficult to claim that the participation of Salafist parties in the political arena resulted in an Egyptian modernization movement because the Salafists did not implement an ideological reform. In other words, there was no relationship between political participation and ideological modernization. Only parties with reformist views showed some ideological modernization by referring to the place of women and non-Muslims in society and politics.³⁶²

Furthermore, another party was the Authenticity Party (Hizb el-asala) that was formed in 2011. It also had ultra-conservative views about applying the rules of Sharia. The party left the Virtue party and stated that they would follow the principles of tradition with a modern perspective. The Homeland Party (al-Watan) was also established in 2013 due to the divisions within the Al Nour Party. In addition, it followed a mediator policy between FJP and the Salafi parties. The Al-Asala, which tried to change the perception that it was not right for the Salafis to enter the un-Islamic system, argued that entering the non-Islamic system was a condition for reintroducing this system into an Islamic order.³⁶³

Consequently, Salafi parties did not bring modernization within the country, although they expressed that they were different from the Muslim Brotherhood. Since their party identities and community identities were different from each other, they could not take a firm stance in their statements on social, economic, and cultural issues. For example, they were heavily criticized because of their identity conflicts about the place of women in the political arena and their differences of opinion about democracy and western concepts.³⁶⁴

Moreover, parties such as Al-Nour, Al-Asala, Al-Watan, and the Construction and Development Party preferred to cooperate with other political actors and take part in the pluralistic political arena. Among the main obstacles faced by these new Salafist parties joining the political arena, it can be said that their lack of knowledge about the process of politics, their inexperience with political know-how, and their sometimes-

³⁶² Barbara Zollner, "Does participation lead to moderation? Understanding changes in Egyptian Islamist parties post-Arab Spring," (2018): 16-17.

³⁶³ Yildirim, "Politicization of Salafism in Egypt", 18-19.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 21.

prejudiced approach to other political actors and groups constitute the main obstacles.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, the fact that political Salafists have a say in the political order by establishing parties in Egypt creates the perception that groups adopting the "Jihadist" ideology, which includes illegal violence, may also change their minds and present their ideologies with non-violent actions. For this reason, political Salafists offered an alternative to direct political participation to those who were of Jihadist ideology.³⁶⁶ Despite emerging as the second largest political force in the 2011 elections, the Al-Nour Party's role in parliament was severely limited due to its poor performance in the 2015 elections.³⁶⁷ By comparison, since the Salafis did not participate in political activities in the period before 2011, Egyptian families thought that the Salafists did not pose a political threat to the government. However, these families, who thought that Salafists represented the poor and lower class while the Muslim Brotherhood represented the middle class, were advising their university-going children to stay away from the Muslim Brotherhood because those who participated in social activities organized by the Muslim Brotherhood were highly likely to be arrested. Because of this, these families viewed Salafism as an alternative to extreme religiosity.³⁶⁸ The difficulties that the Al-Nour party experienced were primarily related to organizational difficulties, as the party's political activities revealed the organization's inability to distinguish between the "da'wah" and politics. The second point that should be mentioned shows that although the party has become an official and hierarchical institutional structure, the decisions are still taken by some sheikhs.³⁶⁹

However, while the Al-Nour party preferred to adopt pragmatism as a new approach in politics from 2011 to 2012, it abandoned some of its doctrinal principles that it had defended before and adapted to this political game in order to become a powerful political actor in the new Egypt. When analyzed since 2013, it adopts a different perspective by looking at politics as a tool and finds that the party is almost

³⁶⁵ Jean-Nicolas Bitter, and Owen Frazer, "Promoting Salafi Political Participation," *CSS Policy Perspectives* no.4(5), (2016). 2.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶⁷ Ahmed Zaghloul Shalata, "The Salafist Call in Alexandria: the trajectory of the organization and outcomes of its politics," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* no. 9(3), (2016): 351.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 355.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 361.

completely under the control of the Sheikhs. At the same time, the party, which stated that "dawah" is necessary and that all kinds of interests will be necessary for this purpose, tried to justify itself by arguing that it made some concessions in the political game for this path. Since 2013, the party has continued its activities as the lobby of a religious organization, which aims to change society from below, spread its Salafi ideology, and become a much more moderate party.³⁷⁰ In other words, what we mean by the political pragmatism approach can be explained as the party's alliance with other parties and groups both domestically and internationally that are far from itself in terms of religious ideology and have no common ground. In fact, the ideas and projects they advocated are very similar to the organizational structure that the Muslim Brotherhood had previously put forward and adopted. In this sense, although the Al Nour Party claimed to be different from the Muslim Brotherhood, each of them acted under the heading of Political Islam and in line with common goals.³⁷¹ As a result, Abd al-Ghaffar, the former leader, believed it was necessary to leave the Dawah as politics was not the specialty of sheikhs and being a politician was different from being a sheikh.³⁷²

Leaders such as Yasir Burhami, on the other hand, criticized Ghaffar's views and argued that the party should benefit from Da'wah in accordance with its goals and that it should be included in the party's main position. In line with this debate, Burhami was critically opposed to the statement that the party was open to all religious groups and political parties, because the meaning of this statement was that there was a danger that Christians, who were seen as a minority in Egypt, could emerge actively among the members of the party in the coming years, and Christians could then establish authority over Muslims.³⁷³ At the same time, he strongly opposed the party's adoption of the example of Turkey under the umbrella of Political Islam. In other words, in the new environment, the Al Nour party began to behave like an Islamist party because of its political concessions that did not fit the Salafist ideology, and its excuse was that

³⁷⁰ Stephane Lacroix, *Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016, 1-2.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

the necessary concessions were made to preserve the spirit of Da'wah. Moreover, Abdul Ghaffur's resignation did not change the party's approach to politics.³⁷⁴

4.2.4 Rise of democratization attempts in Egypt

Looking at Egypt's recent history, it can be clearly stated that democratization steps started in the 1970s. The main reason for this was that the elites, who were seen as having similar authoritarian management styles, were interested in Egypt's administration. In addition, the country has become the main center of radical views and actors, such as political extremism, since 1981. Therefore, Egypt entered the democratization process through both a long and difficult process. As a result, we can say that Egypt, which entered a democratization process, suspended its democratization adventure as a result of the military coup.³⁷⁵

When we look at the democratization process prior to the 2000, we see that the Anwar Sadat regime came to power in 1970, and after gaining power, he first eliminated the socialist policies left by the Nasser regime, as well as the Soviet Union's influence in Egypt. At the same time, he helped the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were imprisoned in the Nasser period in the name of democratization, to be released from prison. In addition, he advocated the liberalization process and the normalization of relations with the West.

Hosni Mubarak came to power after Anwar Sadat, who was assassinated by Islamic militants in 1981. The Mubarak regime brought a populist authoritarian form, constantly emphasizing the importance of national identity and endeavoring to gain the legitimacy of the people. The importance of the military and state channels intensified with the Mubarak regime. However, it can be said that there was only one party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), which was concerned with the economy and social order during the Mubarak period. Between 1980 and 2011, the Mubarak regime made economic liberalization breakthroughs in the country, which led to the country's turning into a more liberal autocracy. Liberalization was realized by

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.

³⁷⁵ İsmail Kurun, "Democratisation in Egypt From A Historical Perspective: Problems, Pitfalls and Prospects," *Yönetim ve Ekonomi: Celal Bayar Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* no. 22(1), (2015): 183.

supporting the free market economy, while "infitah" (opening) also brought about political liberalization. As a result of increased repression of Islamists by the Mubarak regime in the 1990s, some Islamist groups like al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group) launched a war against the regime and committed some acts of violence that undermined the country's democratization process. Moreover, there was an unwillingness on the part of both the ruling elites and the regime towards democratization because they perceived liberalization and democratization as the main threats to their privileges.

In the post-2000 period, there were not only parties such as the National Democratic Party and the Wafd Party in the elections, but also the Muslim Brotherhood, which achieved a low success rate in the elections. The Muslim Brotherhood, which doubled this success in 2005, won 88 seats in the elections and became the main threat to the Mubarak regime. During this period, some articles of the constitution, such as Articles 74, 34, and 76, were changed by the authoritarian regime. In summary, the importance of the popular vote was increased, executive power was restricted, and the President's authority to initiate a state of emergency was narrowed.³⁷⁶

From the 2000s to January 25, 2011, the Egyptian people were fed up with the oppressive and corrupt policies of the Mubarak regime, and many political protests during this period were carried out by workers, leftists, secular and liberal sections, nationalists, and Islamists, such as the Kiyafa (Enough!) Movement and the April 6th Movement. The basis of all these protests was to increase public belief in democracy with the help of social media, which helped to organize the demonstrations. It was Hosni Mubarak who resigned from his post within 18 days, in line with the demands of the people gathered in Tahrir Square on January 25. However, it has emerged that a lot of effort must be made to change the ideology of the despotic regimes and institutions that have been in place for 30 years. With the transition of the administration from SCAF, the belief that democratization would take place gradually began to spread among the people. The first signals of democratization started in June 2012 with Mohammad Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected President. However, not long after, a military coup was carried out by Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi on July 3, 2013,

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 184-186.

as a result of the anti-Morsi rhetoric and actions of the people gathered in Tahrir Square. Similarly, other Salafist parties and Muslim Brotherhood organizations, except for the Al-Nour party, have completely restricted their role in Egyptian politics. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood organization have been jailed, and the organization has been declared illegal. For these reasons, Egypt's democratic transition process was seriously damaged and undermined, and the country entered a vicious circle of violence and instability.³⁷⁷

The three basic elements that need to be mentioned in a successful democratic transition process are: the first of these should be reformers who aim to change the system; the second should be opposition groups that aim to maintain democratic and peaceful opposition to the regime; and third, all external support for the authoritarian regime should be terminated and change should be carried out directly from below rather than from the upper segments.³⁷⁸

However, a change has taken place from the bottom of the democratization process with the popular base. While a new authoritarian government was created in the country after the military coup, at the same time, the lack of reformers, democratic reforms, free and fair elections, and social and economic problems gradually increased with the January 25 Revolution in Egypt. They tried to change the system from below, as there was no other alternative for the people, and Egypt became a place where the people aimed to change this order. The reason for this is that the authoritarian regime under Mubarak has hindered all kinds of democratic developments for 30 years, as they saw such advances and democratization as a threat to their own regime. This meant that opposition groups could not hold a political demonstration for many years due to pressure and increasing fear, because, according to the regime, the realization of the democratic transition was perceived as a national threat. The ruling elites, who have close relations with the regime, enforce the state of emergency laws and pressure the regime. Thus, they began to establish monopolies and control over the state and economy to maintain the status quo by supporting them. In Egypt, where mass demonstrations were insufficient, people held demonstrations mostly due to economic and social problems, whereas they could not come together and hold demonstrations

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 190.

³⁷⁸ Abdel-Fattah Mady, "Popular Discontent, Revolution, and Democratization in Egypt in a Globalizing World," *Ind. J. Global Legal Stud.* no. 20, (2013): 313-314.

for political reasons. However, the Kifaya Movement (Enough!) can be considered a political uprising, but when examined in terms of its impact, it did not have an impact on all parts of Egypt.³⁷⁹

Economically, there were some economic crises in Egypt in the 1970s and 80s that helped the rise of the authoritarian regime, as the ruling elite began to tolerate any form of corruption in order to maintain their status quo. The relationship between the state and the ruling elite in post-revolution Egypt was close because the state tried to limit the power of the elites by meeting their demands. Meanwhile, the elites were not perceived as a threat to the regime because they were seen as dependent on the state for their survival. While the Mubarak regime adopted the privatization program initiated by the World Bank, which resulted in increased economic growth in the country and international trade, high inflation and unemployment continued to negatively affect people who were considered low and middle class due to high levels of uncontrolled corruption. As a result of these, economic and political uncertainties in the country increased and the situation inside the country worsened.³⁸⁰

As mentioned, there were three important protests against the regime. The first of these was the Kifaya Movement, which opposed the Mubarak regime in 2004. Although it was not successful, it lessened the growing fear of the Mubarak regime and destroyed the perception of people not criticizing the government for years. The second was the workers' protests, which were influenced by the Kifaya Movement (Enough!), voicing their problems such as low wages, unemployment, food prices, and the privatization of the Mubarak regime due to neo-liberal economic policies.³⁸¹ Third, the use of social media has had a huge impact on democratization. According to the data, Facebook had a total of 15 million users in MENA countries in 2010, and Egypt was the country that used Facebook the most, with 3.4 million users. As an example, the “April 6 Youth Movement” organized its protests on Facebook in 2008.³⁸² Therefore, it can be said that the rise of independent media channels, satellites,

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 316-318.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 323.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 326-328.

³⁸² Carrington Malin, “15 Million Mena Facebook Users – Report,” Spot on Public Relations, 24 May 2010: [15 Million MENA Facebook Users | | Communications | Marketing | Content \(spotonpr.com\)](http://spotonpr.com)

magazines, and websites was effective in mobilization and protests for the democratization process. In other words, the transfer of Mubarak's administration to SCAF after January 25 led to growing political divisions and strife among the Islamists. Thus, these problems in Egypt showed that political actors had great deficiencies in terms of openness and tolerance, and therefore, these problems created instability in Egypt in terms of internal security, economic, social, and political aspects.

With the January 25 revolution, the general framework of the protests began to express certain problems such as political, economic-social problems, human rights, all kinds of freedoms, social justice, and economic improvements. On the other hand, while examining the democratization process after the revolution, with an overview of the role of political Islam, it can be said that it had an impact on Egypt after the Arab Uprisings. As a result of the post-revolutionary elections, the Islamists came to power through the ballot box, and the Islamists, who became important elements of the transitional government, had significant power to set the legal and constitutional frameworks necessary for democratization and make the final decision. A three-stage framework needs to be realized for the democratic process to be successful. These stages are, respectively, "political liberalization, the overthrow of the dictatorship, the beginning of the democratic transition process, and the consolidation of democratization." Egypt and Tunisia have reached the stage of "beginning of the democratic transition process". Within these stages, although Tunisia seems to have completed the fourth stage, it is not possible to say the same for Egypt.³⁸³ The reason why the fourth consolidation phase required for democracy did not take place in Egypt is that it does not have the "soft-liners" necessary to advance the democratic process in the country. On the contrary, the "hard-minded" pro-status quo are in a much more active position..³⁸⁴ With the coming to power of Mohammed Morsi, the hope that the necessary stages for democratization would be completed in society spread. But the real question is, "Was Morsi really interested in democratization?" Although the FJP frequently talked about democratization in its rhetoric until the time it came to power,

³⁸³ Jeffrey Haynes, "The 'Arab Uprising', Islamists and Democratization," *Mediterranean Politics*, no. 18(2), (2013): 171-172.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

it always dreamed of establishing an Islamic State, as the party was a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood organization. While the establishment of Salafi parties such as Al Nour, Al Asala, BDP, and Virtue Party shows that pluralism in terms of democracy has been successfully realized, we can also define Salafi parties as traditional Islamists and "one who does not compromise" in terms of ideology and democracy. Hence, since they look at democracy from a conservative point of view, they have devoted themselves only to the establishment of the Islamic State. Although the FJP approached democratization from a moderate and pragmatic perspective, the Muslim Brotherhood, like the Salafists, could not develop a democratic perspective on politics, as they lived under pressure for years. They were caught off guard by both the change and the democratization, as it was unexpected for the Islamists to gain power.³⁸⁵

As a result of the 2011 revolution and the 2012 elections, the newly born Egyptian democracy has evolved into a skeptical view of democracy due to external factors such as the continuation of the peace treaty with Israel and the preservation of the balance in the region with its neighbors. Actually, in the classical and mediaeval Islamic understanding, there was both consultation (shura) and consensus (ijma') that formed the Islamic way of government. However, Islamic thought did not use such concepts like democracy or the will of the people, but early Islamic doctrines were remarkably similar to modern ways of democracy.³⁸⁶ Politics in Egypt does not, in essence, require any compromise, even a little bit. While more than one party group entered into a power race, these parties could not reach a consensus on common values and acted in the name of solving problems. While the jihadists plan a revolt against the regime and the Christian Copts, while the Muslim Brotherhood and political Salafists dream of establishing an Islamic State, it is far from reality for liberals to dream of democracy in such a case, as in such a political environment, the necessary consensus for democracy to manage the political control mechanism could not be achieved due to conflict between Islamists and modern liberals.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 181.

³⁸⁶ Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Islamic democracy and pluralism," *Progressive Muslims On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*. Oxford: One World (2003), 33.

³⁸⁷ David J. Sarquís, "Democratization after the Arab Spring: The Case of Egypt's Political Transition," *Politics & policy*, no.40(5), (2012): 882.

To believe that the Arab Spring could well result in immediate democracy and freedom is to be overly optimistic. When Mohammad Morsi was elected in 2012, most observers believed that Egypt would successfully complete a full democratization process under his leadership. However, as the government under Morsi was advancing as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the country came to the brink of civil war due to increasing protests and unresolved social-economic problems. Therefore, history repeats itself, as on January 25, 2013, millions of people protested the change of the Morsi administration on June 30, 2013.³⁸⁸

Consequently, while examining the democratization process in Egypt, the policies of the leaders in Egypt's recent history have been influential. First, with the overthrow of the Monarchy in 1952, the military administration did not attempt to share the power that they had gained with other organs. On the contrary, they decided to adopt an authoritarian form of government by closing all political parties in 1953. Gamal Abdel Nasser, a charismatic leader, was the most important figure in the survival of the authoritarian regime. However, since his ideas, such as nationalization, were not adopted as an ideology, it caused problems such as the "participation crisis" in the 1960s. Anwar Sadat, who came to power after Gamal Abdel Nasser's death, drew attention by using democracy-based ideologies such as the rule of law and political freedom in his discourses. Adopting a policy of political and economic liberalization, Sadat proved that the issue of democracy had become a public issue. However, Hosni Mubarak, who came to power after the assassination of Sadat by the Jihadists in 1981, made some breakthroughs that signaled the transition from an authoritarian regime structure to democracy. The major ones are political prisoners' release and political and economic liberalization. However, the emergency laws, which were in place for years without a break during Mubarak's reign, contributed to the emergence of social, economic, and political uncertainties, such as increased police violence, corruption, nepotism, and poverty. After Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power in February 2011, Mohamad Morsi was proclaimed the first democratically elected president in June 2012. However, as the problems remaining from the authoritarian rule continued, this democratization process ended with the

³⁸⁸ Masoud Rezaei, "Egypt and democracy dilemma." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, no. 9(6), (2015): 218.

dissatisfaction of the people with the Islamist government and the military coup carried out by Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. He changed the slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood from “Islam is the only solution” to “Security is the only solution” and enacted an anti-protest law. The most important deduction to be made from all this is that Egypt can be considered a very stable country in terms of authoritarianism and a failed country in terms of democratization. The most obvious reason for this is that the common feature of all the regimes that came to power, be they Islamist, democratic, or military coup, was that they often controlled the media, non-governmental organizations, and political and social life in an illegal and unlawful way.³⁸⁹

4.2.5 Decline of political Islam after 2013 coup d'état

Political Islam has shown great developments and changes in the political and ideological fields in Egypt since 1928. Even though the ideology adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood when it was founded was political, it was away from politics. However, political Islam, which gained political strength as a result of the increase in the interest and support of the people for the Islamists after the January 25 revolution, experienced evolution in this short period of time. Mohammad Morsi, who came to power through democratic means, was not successful in solving the political, social, and economic problems in the country after he gained power. On the other hand, liberal and secular segments of the country advocated for a military takeover, while some Islamists split and continued to support Morsi. To combat these rebellions, the army, led by Fattah el-Sisi, the chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces, gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the Morsi administration to end the conflict in the country. However, knowing that Morsi could not achieve this in such a short time, the army launched a military coup against President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013. After the coup, El-Sisi appointed Adly Mansour as President until the presidential elections. When the May 2015 elections came, there were no opposition groups to oppose El-Sisi. The reason was that the Muslim Brotherhood's license was revoked, and it was banned as a terrorist organization. Among the Salafi parties, only the Al-Nour party was not affected much by the pressures, but it did not receive as much support as it used to.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 219-220.

In such a political environment, El-Sisi won the elections with 97% of the votes. Although El-Sisi frequently stated that if elected, he would solve the country's economic problems, not only economic but also political and social issues must be addressed on the path to democratization. Otherwise, El-Sisi also learned that power was in the hands of the Egyptian people, and they could overthrow El-Sisi when necessary.³⁹⁰ Although we constantly say that the democratic transition process was undermined as a result of the military coup, Egypt became the center of power for various actors such as Salafists, Liberals, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the military.

After the military coup in Egypt, it was frequently emphasized that democracy was betrayed due to the pro-coup stance of the West and some opposition groups. Foreign powers (the United States, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia) and internal interventions (the media, high bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the army), which played a critical role during the coup, opposed Political Islam's hold on power. Although we often say that the removal of Mohammed Morsi along with the revolution has undermined democracy, the important point here is that with Morsi's democratic election, the Islamists who were marginalized, oppressed, and excluded over the years in Egypt have gained a place in both the political and social arena. It should be noted that the coup against the Muslim Brotherhood has both a regional and an international dimension. Regionally, aside from the country's undeniably worsening economic and social problems, the old regime's elite actors never supported the FJP because they were afraid of losing the privileges they had gained under Mubarak. In the international sense, countries such as America and Israel were conducting their politics in the region in the way they wanted during the Mubarak era. However, these external actors, who lost control with the transition of power to political Islam, provided economic support to the increasing domestic opposition in Egypt.³⁹¹ Attributable to the growing opposition in the country, the "Tamarod" movement started as a result of these discontents, as the Egyptians could not fulfill the promise of "inclusive rule" against Morsi's rule, and demonstrations began on June 30, 2013, the anniversary of Morsi's inauguration. In fact, during the formation of this

³⁹⁰ D. Kolyuncu, "From Gamal Abdul Nasser to Abdulfettah El Sisi; The Historical Evolution of Muslim Brotherhood and Democracy in Egypt," *Yeditepe Üniversitesi Tarih Bölümü*, (2017): 71.

³⁹¹ Nebi Mis, and Ismail Numan Telci, "Devrimden Darbeye: Mısır'da Askeri Vesayet Dönemi (From Revolution to Coup: Military Tutelage in Egypt)," *Ortadoğu Analiz (Middle East Analysis)*, no. 5(56), (2013): 21.

movement, businessmen, the media, and Western opposition groups, who were close to the Mubarak regime during its 30 years in power, wanted to overthrow the FJP administration, which received the support of some Salafists.

At the same time, although the Islamists had about 70% of the vote, the 30% opposition group played a more dominant role than the Islamists in opposing the overthrow of Political Islam. On this basis, Copts (10% of the population), young activists, and liberals in the country backed the exclusion of the Islamic movement from political life in the country. On the other hand, Islamists did not play an active role in business, the media, or education for about 30 years before the revolution, so they could be said to have lagged behind liberals in political and social terms.³⁹² The protest demonstrations that erupted on June 30 fueled the country's political conflict. The Egyptian army had planned its preparations for action well in advance, seeing this conflict as an opportunity. Claiming that a compromise could not be reached for this reason, the army declared its seizure of power on July 3, 2013, after a 48-hour ultimatum. In such an environment, political insecurity between the Islamic and secular bases grew gradually. The army, which benefited from the insecurity, attempted to position itself within the framework of legitimacy. Besides, actors such as the media, businessmen, and bureaucrats affiliated with the old regime directly targeted social identity groups with the discourse of "security dilemmas", the purpose of which was to publicly fuel the polarization created by this vulnerability. Western countries and monarchies that are pro-democracy wanted to prevent political Islam or a similar structure because their interests in the region were endangered. For this reason, the most justified reason for the unresponsiveness of the West during the coup process was that political Islam gained legitimacy and became a political actor. In addition, the coup disrupted not only the democratization process in Egypt but also the democratization in the Middle East because Egypt was seen as an exemplary country that successfully carried out the revolution in the region, which openly threatened the monarchies in the Gulf countries. However, with the realization of the coup, the Arab Spring failed in the eyes of the people. Therefore, the perception that Islam and democracy do not fit together has gradually spread in the eyes of the public.³⁹³

³⁹² Ibid., 23.

³⁹³ Ibid., 27.

The fact that the 2011 and 2013 events in Egypt, both with the influence of the West and the power's significant influence on the behavior of the military, reduced the possibility of staying in power due to the decrease in the power of the military. Coups are likely to occur as a result of oppressive regimes in the region. Furthermore, the Middle East countries that retained a Cold War mentality, particularly Egypt's economic importance to the West, increased the likelihood of competitive elections taking place after coups.³⁹⁴ Moreover, since Egypt did not have a strong civil society, it could not prevent the armed forces from political interference and maintaining their privileges by creating public pressure, which prevented the transition to a civilian government as a result of the coup. Furthermore, in countries where the democratic process is still in its early stages, such as Egypt, where political institutions have not been established for many years, this weakness has not been able to prevent the growth of political and social uncertainties in areas such as social organizations and opposition parties. Therefore, in such an environment of uncertainty, it can be clearly mentioned that there is a lack of a mechanism that prevents the military from misusing power as it wishes. At the same time, some say that military coups can be a catalyst for rebuilding democracy in countries like Egypt, where civil society and opposition parties are weak.³⁹⁵

By the beginning of 2014, the Muslim Brotherhood had now been completely suppressed, and supporters of Morsi, who were against the military regime, were almost completely restricted from participating in the planned demonstrations. Alongside this, important leaders of Political Islam were imprisoned, and a policy of suppression of Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood) was followed largely by the military. As a result of these factors, the military's concern that the Muslim Brotherhood would strengthen and re-emerge as a threat has waned. In fact, in both 2011 and 2013, the military eliminated threats that were clearly visible to them without resorting to "governing intervention."³⁹⁶ In other words, the public supported the armed forces in 2011 and 2013 because they believed the military would bring stability to the country

³⁹⁴ Justin A. Hoyle, "To govern, or not to govern? Opportunity and post-coup military behavior in Egypt 2011–2014," *Democratization*, no. 26(6), (2019): 996.

³⁹⁵ David Kuehn, "Midwives or gravediggers of democracy? The military's impact on democratic development," *Democratization*, no. 24(5), (2017): 787,791.

³⁹⁶ Neil Ketchley, *Egypt in a Time of Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, 144.

and stop the country's growing political and economic chaos. However, it can be said that the pressure and oppression policies created by the military coup on Political Islam. At the same time, the Egyptian people were very reluctant to determine the new government through elections during the 2014-2015 parliamentary elections. In Egypt, concerned that turnout would be too low, officials declared a national holiday and had to keep polling stations open for an extra day of voting.³⁹⁷ In comparison to the 2011-2012 elections, turnout in the 2011 Constitutional referendum was 41%, turnout in the 2011-2012 parliamentary elections was a record-breaking 65 percent, and turnout in the 2012 presidential elections was 50%. However, in the aftermath of the coup, people were hesitant to vote in the elections. Despite Sisi receiving more than 90% of the vote, turnout remained below 45%.³⁹⁸

The point to be emphasized is that it is a mistake for Morsi to think that the legitimacy of the election will protect him from his political opponents after he comes to power as a result of the elections. He ignored the idea that the essence of democracy was “compromise” and “consensus” and made one mistake after another. Most importantly, he lost its power and popularity, which it gained through "elections" from the people, as a result of following bad policies such as moving away from its mission to represent the Egyptian people and only representing a certain group, the Political Islamic Organization (Muslim Brotherhood).³⁹⁹

The realization of the military coup was due to a lack of political solutions like the old despotic state in Egypt, which led to the increase of problems in the country. It also led to a serious decrease in the people's belief in democracy compared to 2011. As a result, Islamists who made little effort for democratic, political, and social change avoided collaboration with other actors. Increasing clashes between Islamist groups and the military administration have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Islamists and hundreds of security guards, known as the Rabaa Massacre, in August 2013. In addition, with the overthrow of Morsi, jihadist groups in the Sinai Peninsula increasingly legitimized violence, and their actions rapidly increased in this region.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 162.

³⁹⁸ Agence France-Presse, “Low turnout as Egyptians shun elections designed to shore up Sisi,” *The Guardian*, 19 May 2015: [Low turnout as Egyptians shun elections designed to shore up Sisi | Egypt | The Guardian](#)

³⁹⁹ Khalil Al-Anani, “The Fall of Democracy in Egypt,” *Ahram Online*, 13 July 2013.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood did not support the attacks, the organization's tolerance towards radical Islamic groups was based on increasing its political base.⁴⁰⁰ As a result of the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood had to go through some ideological and administrative changes. The arrest of high-ranking organization leaders and activists destroyed the hierarchical structure of the organization as repression aimed at decentralizing the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴⁰¹ It can be said that the policy of decentralization was successful in continuing the missionary activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as charity and proselytizing activities, after the coup, although it saved the organization from the oppressive policies of the regime. After experiencing its most violent period since the Mubarak regime's overthrow, the Muslim Brotherhood lost its leadership as the violence became an endless cycle. Although the organization's civil-military relationship was at its highest level since the Mubarak regime's overthrow, a significant portion of its base was forced to withdraw from public campaigns. The important result was that distrust among rival groups increased considerably, leading to attacks not only against the Muslim Brotherhood but also against Copts and Shiites, who were considered minorities in the country.⁴⁰²

In other words, Egypt failed in all conditions for democratization. It is obvious that the military, bureaucracy, and judiciary, namely the deep state, are in the background of the country's administration that did not aim to achieve real regime change in the country. After the Muslim Brotherhood gained power, it made a power agreement with the army, which it saw as both a threat to itself and a rival to itself, because while the revolutionary forces were marginalized, the division of power by the army meant that the Muslim Brotherhood stabilized politically.⁴⁰³ What the Muslim Brotherhood forgot was that they believed power was only in the hands of the army and the old state, whereas during the revolution power was in the hands of the revolutionary forces and the people, so the dictatorship was overthrown. For this reason, the Muslim Brotherhood, which came to an agreement with the army and the old state, wanted to get the support of the "deep state" for its constitutional and

⁴⁰⁰ Ashraf, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Future of Political Islam in Egypt*, 4.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁰² Oliver Housden, "Egypt: Coup d'Etat or a Revolution Protected?," *The RUSI Journal*, no. 158(5), (2013): 76-77.

⁴⁰³ Gamal M. Selim, "Egypt under SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood: The triangle of counter-revolution," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, no. 37(2), (2015): 184.

democratic reforms and political interests.⁴⁰⁴ The alliance of the Muslim Brotherhood with the military had negative consequences for Egypt's democratization process. The constitutional decree enacted by Morsi was an excuse to initiate the counter-revolution process, especially against SCAF and the Deep State, which led to the fueling of the protests of the people in the streets. The opposition parties (National Salvation Front) considered Morsi's breakthrough a monopolization of power. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood, which sided with the SCAF, lost the trust of liberal and leftist groups from the beginning. Therefore, cooperation and reconciliation with them became impossible. However, this alliance eliminated the idea of forming a coalition with other political parties.⁴⁰⁵ In addition, the increasing tensions within the country also caused security, economic, and social problems to come to the fore, and the polarization that flared up caused the people to protest against the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammad Morsi. Besides, the aim of the military administration was to prevent the organization's political activism. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood was prevented from re-emerging in the following years and becoming a political rival. The military regime led by Sisi has declared it a terrorist organization, claiming that it serves radical Islam by isolating it politically and socially.⁴⁰⁶

4.2.5.1 Egyptian elections in 2018

After the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood and democratically elected President Mohammad Morsi on July 3, 2013, El-Sisi transitioned from the military to the civilian order and won the presidential elections held in 2014–2018, and he was declared as the President. On the other hand, El-Sisi, who received 96.1% of the votes in 2014, although the turnout rate did not exceed 47.5%,⁴⁰⁷ was elected President for the second time with 97.8% of the vote.⁴⁰⁸ While the turnout rate decreased even more to 41.5% in the elections held in 2018.

⁴⁰⁴ Ayfer Erdogan, "Egypt's Arab Fall: Understanding the Organization and Policies of the Muslim Brotherhood," *Itobiad: Journal of the Human & Social Science Researches*, no. 9(3), (2020): 2164.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 2166.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2169.

⁴⁰⁷ Patrick Kingsley, "Abdel Fatah al-Sisi won 96.1% of vote in Egypt presidential election, Say Officials," *The Guardian*, (3 June 2014): **Hata! Köprü başvurusu geçerli değil.**

⁴⁰⁸ Ruth Michaelson, "Sisi Wins Landslide Victory in Egypt Election," *The Guardian*, (2 April 2018): [Sisi wins landslide victory in Egypt election | Egypt | The Guardian](#)

Actually, the monarchy was overthrown by the 1952 Free Officers coup, and the people who came to the head of state with it were high-ranking officials in the Egyptian army. As an exception, this military tradition was not seen only during the reign of Mohammad Morsi, because a democratic process took place in a short time. However, the leaders who have come since 1952 briefly appeared before, such as Mohammed Naguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who continues this tradition. Factors such as increasing political, economic, and social problems, human rights violations, and the collapse of political pluralism in the country since 2013 have shown that the regime in Egypt maintains its authoritarian identity and continues as before 2011 with repressive policies.⁴⁰⁹ The main component of the 2011 Arab Spring was the people's demand for democracy. With the July 3, 2013, military coup, the concept of "selective military authoritarianism," which can be called a new type, has become common in the literature. Another point that should be emphasized is that it is not surprising that Sisi won the 2014 and 2018 elections because the Egyptian military was immensely powerful in economic terms and displayed a privileged stance even during the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies from the socialist economy before 2011. First, the army, which did not want to lose its economic privileges, was extremely concerned about the increase in economic problems that would result from the regime change. As a result, it decided to take the lead in the political arena. Second, the growing power of Islamists meant a weakened secular and liberal sector. In order to put an end to this emerging ideological conflict and to maintain its weight in the economic field, it also preferred to be active in politics. Another point that should not be forgotten here is that the army approached in a pragmatic way between 2011 and 2013 and entered into "implicit cooperation" with both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Al-Nour Party.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, military rule, rather than ideological conflicts such as secularism and Islamism, has already become a strong historical legacy and tradition in Egypt since 1952. The army, which took direct control even after Hosni Mubarak's resignation in 2011, led the transition process as the main actor.

⁴⁰⁹ Özge Özkoç, "Otoriter Rejimin İnşası ve Sürekliliği: Mısır Ordusunun Siyasal Hayattaki Rolü Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, no. 51, (2020): 93.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

Therefore, a coup was carried out by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi due to the growing discontent as a result of the failure of Mohammed Morsi's Islamic policies to succeed. However, the 2012 Constitution and the Constitutional Court were suspended. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi made some changes in both foreign and domestic politics during the Egyptian Presidency, which he won as a result of the elections he entered while wearing a civilian uniform. In terms of foreign policy, the new regime placed emphasis on improving existing relations with the USA, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates because it received some financial support. The reason behind Saudi Arabia's financial support for Egypt was that they had some expectations from Egypt in return for this aid. Saudi Arabia supported the rebel groups against the Assad regime in the civil war in Syria and the Yemeni government in the Yemen civil war. However, in the civil wars that escalated in Syria and Yemen after the Arab Spring, the new regime prevented Egypt from directly getting involved in these conflicts because the Sisi regime argued that if the Assad regime collapsed in Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood could gain power, and when it supported the Yemeni government, relations with Iran would be adversely affected. Domestically, the regime implemented policies that prevented the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's main actor of political Islam for years, from regaining strength, gaining popular support, and returning to the political scene. It has some goals to stop and improve economic deterioration and stability in terms of security against rising extremism.⁴¹¹ The point that should be mentioned here is that during the years, especially during the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak regimes, authoritarian regimes did not meet with democracy in Egypt. For years, the military has followed a balance of power policy in order to avoid conflicts between secular, religious, and liberal powers in Egypt's political scene. The Muslim Brotherhood organization was perceived by Abu Dhabi and the Sisi regime as a threat because the Muslim Brotherhood has frequently emphasized that Islamic law and values have an important place in both political and public life, and the ideology of the organization won by participating in the elections held in January 2012. Thus, they could come to power again as a result of participating in the elections to be held in the following years. Therefore, they declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization to prevent them from participating in the elections and regaining the support of the

⁴¹¹ Dana Gabriela Pleșa, "Egypt's Shifting Foreign Policy Priorities (2013-2018)," *Cogito-Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, no. 2, (2020): 87.

people.⁴¹² Furthermore, when we look at Egyptian-American relations during the Sisi period, first, America did not oppose the coup. The reason for this was that Morsi's Islamic policies were concerned that they could harm regional stability in the Middle East. At the same time, the close relations between FJP and Hamas and Palestine posed a great threat to Israel. On the other hand, Egypt is one of America's most important alliances in the region, so the United States provides 1.3 billion dollars of financial aid to Egypt every year in the name of military aid. Furthermore, the leaders of the two countries, Donald Trump and Sisi, met five times between 2016 and 2018.⁴¹³

He took over the administration after Mohammad Morsi, who was overthrown by a coup in 2013 and Sisi became the president in the elections in 2014, was elected to this duty for another term, receiving 97% of the votes in the presidential elections held on March 26-28, 2018.⁴¹⁴ However, despite the short-lived democratic transition in Egypt, the low participation rate of voters in the elections showed that the participants were not interested in the elections that took place after the coup. While the turnout rate was 47% in the first round of the presidential election held in 2012 and 52% in the second round, this period can be defined as the "Democratic Transition". Compared to the participation rate, the "margin of victory" was recorded as 1% and 3%. However, while the turnout rate in the 2014 Presidential elections was 47%, the victory margin was 93%. While the turnout rate in the 2018 Presidential elections was 41%, the victory margin was 94%.⁴¹⁵ The most necessary explanation for this is that since the elections held during this period are called the "Post-Coup" period, the military regime has had equal public authority since the beginning of the democratization process with the January 25th Revolution. The second reason was that there was no political alternative to resist El-Sisi in the elections.

The National Electoral Institute prevented Ahmed Shafiq, who was the former prime minister under Hosni Mubarak, from entering the 2018 elections, assuming that the formation of a political race would negatively affect his own votes. In addition,

⁴¹² David D. Kirkpatrick, "Is the Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group?," *The New York Times*, 30 April 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/30/world/middleeast/is-the-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist.html>

⁴¹³ Pleşa, "Egypt's Shifting Foreign Policy Priorities", 96.

⁴¹⁴ Neil Ketchley, "Fraud in the 2018 Egyptian presidential election?," *Mediterranean Politics*, no. 26(1), (2021): 117.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

Shafiq, who lost the presidential election to Mohammed Morsi by remaining below 1% in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections and below 2% in the second round, was Morsi's main opponent in the elections. These developments meant that the military regime eliminated all possible political opponents in the Egyptian presidential elections, creating a mechanism that El-Sisi had too much luck, control, and a possible lack of competitiveness. As a result of these events, politicians in the country have focused on the 2019 referendum. The General Election Authority declared in 2018 that 97.08% of the votes cast for Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who extended his mandate from 2022 to 2024 through a referendum, were valid. Also, Musa Mustafa Musa of the "Tomorrow Party", his main political rival, won 2.92% of the votes in the presidential elections, losing the presidency to Sisi.⁴¹⁶

The ruling elite decided to amend the constitution by referendum to transfer the mandate from four to six years, with plans to extend the Presidency's mandate from 2022 to 2024. This change also strengthened the executive power in Egypt. All of these developments were related to increasing executive power by devaluing the state apparatus, as Hosni Mubarak did for 30 years. However, this can be seen as the primary cause of Mubarak's increasing corruption and social-economic insecurity. Furthermore, the new elective authoritarian regime began to focus on attracting the Arab Spring's main participants, the youth. As a result, the regime attempted to focus on the main interests of the youth who might vote for them in the next elections. As a result of the 2018 elections and the 2019 referendum, it can be said that Sisi adopted a youth policy aimed at solving economic and social problems and eliminating all political opponents that increased his executive power compared to the Morsi regime.⁴¹⁷

Surprisingly, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was proclaimed President for the second time by receiving similar votes in the 2018 elections as he received in the 2014 Presidential elections. During the 2018 presidential elections, all candidates stated that Egypt should prioritize the protection of its Nile interests. Also, the new constitution, adopted

⁴¹⁶ Sergey N. Volkov, "The Results of the Presidential Elections in Egypt in 2018 and of the Constitutional Referendum in 2019," *Africana Studia*, no. 31, (2020): 46-47.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-52.

in 2014, focused mostly on protecting historical rights in the country.⁴¹⁸ However, during the elections, mostly business elites supported Sisi to preserve their privileges, which showed the regime's fragility. In other words, Sisi used all the state apparatus to block potential candidates who could pose a threat to him. That is why Human Rights Watch issued a statement saying the elections were neither free nor fair, as the Sisi regime began arresting all possible candidates, such as Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, Sami Anan, Hisham Genena, and Colonel Ahmed Konsowa, due to the increasing crackdown on political dissidents. Therefore, Human Rights Watch urged the US and EU to condemn the unfair elections. Also, when we look at Egypt's recent political history, it is clear that Hosni Mubarak has established a leadership role in the country as a guarantor of stability and to preserve regional security in response to the rising Islamist threat. When Sisi came to power, he adopted a similarly hardline rhetoric to fight against Jihadist Salafi Islamism and tried to show that the best way to restore his regime's state security was through a military regime. However, it has received support from both the USA and the EU. While there has been an increase in both the growth rate and foreign exchange reserves since the regime took power, the Sisi regime's economic policies have not been able to prevent an increase in both foreign and domestic debt.⁴¹⁹ Briefly, as in the Hosni Mubarak era since 2017, the implementation of the emergency laws that are renewed every three months and the monopoly of the administration by the authoritarian regime, the adoption of security policies alone may cause new cracks in the country. At the same time, it can be said that as a result of the discontent of the people, it could lead to a counter-revolution like the Arab Spring.

Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, who was re-elected in the 2018 Presidential Elections, draws attention with some of his discourses in this process. The most striking rhetoric of these is "Fighting terrorism is a human right". Similarly, he adopted the rhetoric of "Security is the only solution" by changing the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan "Islam is the only solution."⁴²⁰ This rhetoric can be interpreted as a response by the Sisi

⁴¹⁸ International Crisis Group, "High Anxiety in Egypt," *Bridging the Gap in the Nile Waters Dispute*. International Crisis Group, (2019): 13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31344.6>.

⁴¹⁹ Bárbara Azaola Piazza, "The Consolidation of Authoritarianism in al-Sisi's Egypt," *IEMed: Mediterranean Yearbook* 2018, (2018): 217-218.

⁴²⁰ James Moran, "Egypt after the presidential election," CEPS Commentary, (2018): 1.

administration. They specifically target those who criticize the regime's oppressive and ineffective administration, particularly foreigners and some Egyptians.

In terms of security in the country, it can be said that El-Sisi has been successful in establishing security in the country in a stable way, except for the conflicts in the "North Sinai" region and the conflicts on the Libyan border. The Egyptian armed forces, which have taken active measures since 2016, have relatively reduced the number of terrorist incidents in the Nile Valley and Delta. Although the Egyptian public criticizes El-Sisi, his power in the eyes of the public is increasing due to the increasing security developments. In addition, repairing the vulnerability created after the Arab Spring can be called the right move by the government. However, if the military regime does not provide "political participation," which is the prerequisite for its steady progress in the following years, and there is no economic development, the administration will gradually lose its power and similar popular movements will be seen again.⁴²¹

In the light of these developments, "the protection pact" established by Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi actually explains the main reason why the elites support the regime. The Protection Pact is not mainly based on patronage or material interests, which focuses on the "perception of shared threat." The reason is that "the provision pact" is based on the patronage network and material interests that the Mubarak regime bought the support of elites. Although the new regime aimed to stop the disintegration that started in Egypt, it became more difficult to manage the country in this sense. For this reason, unlike the Mubarak regime, the new regime has become more vulnerable to violence and possible revolts. The military regime's protection pact aims to strengthen state security while also suppressing opposition groups. Thus, the prevention of growing threats to public order in the country and the use of excessive force are directly proportional to the pact's implementation.⁴²² In other words, the implementation of this pact also means increasing the power of the army, making some changes in the Constitution and resources of the army, reducing the role of the ruling party, and applying more repressive policies.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 2-4.

⁴²² Bruce K. Rutherford, "Egypt's New Authoritarianism under Sisi," *The Middle East Journal*, no. 72(2), (2018): 185,187.

In addition, in Egypt's recent history, the army has had great economic gains. In economic terms, the army directly manages companies such as construction, agriculture, food production, oil, and tourism in the country.⁴²³ With Sisi's coming to power, he issued the Presidential Decree No. 466, which allowed the Armed Forces Land Projects Authority to establish commercial enterprises with private companies economically. With this regime, the role of the military in the economy is gradually expanding. Major infrastructure projects such as the Suez Canal Regional Development Project and the Toshka (New Valley Project) are major infrastructure projects targeted to stimulate the economy. Thus, the military leadership became involved in politics in order to become a more effective actor in both the economic and legal order.⁴²⁴ Since it was directly controlled by the military regime, the parliament passed a law under Sisi that increased state intervention in the media, restricted civil society and public assembly, and expanded executive power in judiciary appointments.

Moreover, all varieties of political Islam, be it the Muslim Brotherhood or Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, ISIS, or Sisi, consider all of them threats in the same category. With the incomplete Protection Pact, the Sisi administration reduced the possibility of cooperation with the elites through patronage and encouragement, unlike in the Mubarak era. The pact's goal, however, is to protect the ruling elites from the threat of political Islam. As a result, in the event of a popular uprising, as in 2011–2013, the masses could be suppressed by repression, fueling the country's increasing violence.⁴²⁵

With the involvement of the army in Egyptian politics, along with the Abdel Fattah al-Sisi administration, many people in the country emphasize that organs such as the police, media, judiciary, and intelligence are part of the "deep state", but that the army, with the greatest influence, will play a role again in the political arena. It can be said that the Egyptian army continues its activities with the understanding of the state within the state. During the Hosni Mubarak period, the Mubarak regime was heavily criticized because the military's monopoly on the economy was decreasing due to the

⁴²³ Shana Marshall, *The Egyptian armed forces and the remaking of an economic empire*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015, 4-6.

⁴²⁴ Rutherford, "Egypt's New Authoritarianism under Sisi", 191-192.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

liberalization policies of the economy.⁴²⁶ The most obvious policy of the regime in the post-coup period was to combine religion with state propaganda. The reason for implementing this was to prevent religious leaders from intervening in the political arena. At the same time, it was to render religious institutions discredited in the eyes of voters and opposition parties.⁴²⁷

4.3 The Tunisian Case

When the protests of the Arab Spring started in Tunisia in 2010, they were caught in this fear again, but the main reason for the divisions in the Islamic world was not the opposition to the "dictators." On the contrary, it was due to the oppression of those who were not religious but used religion as a tool to an unacceptable level. Furthermore, divisions occurred in the Islamic world as a result of the region's dictators destroying the concept of the middle-class, the imbalance between the rich and the poor, the gradual deterioration of the economy, and the young population constantly comparing themselves to their peers living abroad as a result of the region's developing integration.

4.3.1 Rivalry between Ennahda Movement and Salafism in Tunisia

It can be said that after the Arab Spring, the Ennahda Movement had to make a difficult decision both to get rid of the oppression and to return to politicization due to the anxiety caused by the increasing marginalization in the country. In the post-2011 period, the Ennahda Movement has determined a political project that aims to seize state power, gain power in the eyes of the people, and solve the political, social, and economic problems in the country. In countries with semi-authoritarian regimes, Islamist groups are often said to have some political advantages, even if they are under political pressure. However, in countries such as Tunisia, where power was shifting away from the authoritarian regime and toward the democratization process, the Salafi Parties and the Ennahda Movement developed an unexpected rivalry.⁴²⁸ In the period before 2011, the Ennahda Movement could not actively carry out the activities of the

⁴²⁶ Mehdi Zibaei, "Deep State in Egypt: From Revolution to Dictatorship," *Political Studies of Islamic World*, no. 8(3), (2019): 98.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴²⁸ Rory McCarthy, "When Islamists Lose: The Politicization of Tunisia's Ennahda Movement," *The Middle East Journal*, no. 72(3), (2018): 367.

association due to the excessive pressure policies of the Zine El-'Abidine Ben' Ali regime, as the Mubarak regime in Egypt imposed on the Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, in the post-revolution period, liberal-secular media criticized both the Salafi parties and the Ennahda Movement for their mission of Islamic charities. For this reason, the Ennahda Movement had to restrict its activities during this period. On the other hand, the Ennahda Movement inspired by Justice and Development Party (JDP) in Turkey as they defined themselves as “Muslim Democrats.” Although the Ennahda Movement received 34.8% of the votes in the 2011 elections and had 89 out of 217 seats in the National Constituent Assembly, as a result of some radicalization in the country in the process leading up to the 2014 elections, divisions began between both the Ennahda Movement and the Salafi parties, and it was exposed to some criticisms.⁴²⁹ In addition, the issues were subjected to a lot of criticism due to the fact that the party could not complete the preparation of the constitution at the time promised, and similarly, the promises made to correct the social and economic deterioration in the country before the elections were not fully fulfilled. Overall, after the killing of opposition politicians Chokri Belaïd and Mohamed Brahmi by the radical Jihadi Salafists in 2013, the Ennahda Movement decided to leave the government in January 2014, just after the constitution was ratified by Parliament. Therefore, the most important actors, like non-governmental organizations, were trying to prevent the increasing political crisis after the assassination of two opposition politicians in 2013. The formation of a new technocratic government, the completion of the new constitution, and the electoral law were all accepted by both the opposition and the ruling party. In the period of 2011–2014, the Ennahda Movement both lost votes and lost the support of the public. The overall voter turnout decreased from 51% to 45% due to the growing disillusionment of the people.⁴³⁰ However, the common feature of Islamist movements in Tunisia is that it is difficult for them to control their ambitions by keeping each one in balance in terms of politics, religion, and social and cultural aspects. The establishment of political parties in the democratization process, especially by the Islamists, is an important indicator that the authoritarian regime has

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 374.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 375.

changed under the new conditions. However, these Islamists, who struggled to balance their political ambitions, had to face some difficulties during this transition.⁴³¹

The origins of the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia date back to the 1970s. Although it was influenced by an important political Islamic movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the movement adopted the principle of avoiding imitation. The contributions of important figures such as Abdelfattah Mourou, Hamida al-Naifar, and Salah al-Din Jourchi in the formation of Ennahda are indisputable, but Rached Ghannouchi has always attracted attention with his leadership in Tunisia before and after 2011. He was in constant contact with structures such as the Salafists, the Ikhwan movement, and Hizb-ut Tahrir.⁴³² In the period before and after 2011, innovation and reform movements in Tunisia were supported mainly by some moderate Salafists and the Ennahda Movement, under which the party adopted some aims such as economic welfare, improvement of sustainable development, democratic construction process, and the fight against terrorism. However, "modernization" and "westernization" views were frequently criticized as contrary to innovations and reforms. For this reason, Tunisia was closed to the idea of westernization that would occur with the intervention of external dynamics. Furthermore, the methodical differences could be perceived as weaknesses, fueling the emergence of internal divisions, as the Ennahda movement included people of many different dispositions within the party. The group defining the Islamic Left opposed the ideas of Sayyid Qutb, the Ikhwan and the Salafi movements. Groups that define themselves as modern Islamists, such as al-Naifar and Salah al-Din Jourchi, opposed the idea that the movement would take a political form in the future.⁴³³ Moreover, the Ennahda Movement came under extreme criticism from the Salafis after it declared that it embraced Islam as the main reference source of the Islamic party, because they thought that the rhetoric and practices of the Ennahda movement, which had to make many concessions after the Arab Spring, did not confirm such an explanation. Thus, the Ennahda Movement's rhetoric and practices differ from those of Jihadist Extremist Salafists. Unlike Salafists, the movement has different views on the establishment of the Islamic state, Sharia rules, human rights,

⁴³¹ Ibid., 384.

⁴³² Ramazan Yildirim, "Transformation of the Ennahda Movement from Islamic Jama'ah to Political Party," *Insight Turkey*, no. 19(2), (2017): 189.

⁴³³ Ibid., 192-194.

and minorities. Therefore, the Ennahda movement preferred to stay away from any kind of polarization, as it thought that political and ideological polarization would drag Tunisia into irreversible chaos. Instead, it emphasized political and social goals such as freedom protection, democracy construction, pluralism, and reconciliation.⁴³⁴

With the rise of political Islam in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, the Tunisian people began to be seriously concerned about the positive attitude of Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi towards the Salafists. After the events in Manouba, the secular and liberal side criticized the Ennahda movement a lot for keeping silent on the increasing radicalization in the country. In return, the Ennahda Movement claimed that it refused to defend radical and extremist views by rejecting the Islamic Law in Article 1 of the new constitution approved by the National Constituent Assembly in order to show that it is ideologically distant from the Salafi Parties. With this step, the Ennahda Movement tried to prove that it was the main actor in ensuring economic, political, and social stability in Tunisia and it distanced itself from the Salafi parties. For this reason, Salafists, who had more radical views, defined the Ennahda Movement's strategy of suppressing radical views as the “re-establishment of the old dictatorship regime” and began to declare the Ennahda Movement “anti-Islamic.” In addition, these statements made by the Ennahda Movement increased the ideological conflicts between the Salafist groups and the Ennahda Movement due to political and radical views. Nevertheless, it can be said that the Ennahda Movement gained legitimacy in the international arena to give it an advantage, as it mobilized itself against radicalization in the international community and its sole purpose was to ensure the stability of the country.⁴³⁵

Although political forces in Tunisia have avoided direct confrontation since the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, there has been some mistrust between parties with Islamist ideas and non-Islamists within the country. In addition, although Salafis have the idea of political Islam, they are generally thought to pose a threat to both the Ennahda Movement and Tunisia. Despite the fact that Tunisia achieved an agreement on the constitution between Islamist and non-Islamist groups after the revolution, the continuation of economic and security problems causes the people to approach Islamist

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 210,212.

⁴³⁵ Roberta Lusardi, “Tunisia's Islamists: Ennahda and the Salafis: Is a Divorce Underway?,” (2013): [Tunisia's Islamists: Ennahda and the Salafis | Middle East Policy Council \(mepec.org\)](http://www.mepec.org)

groups hesitantly. Despite the Ennahda Movement's pragmatic approach, reaching an agreement with non-Islamist liberal segments is difficult. As the Ennahda Movement, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, faced years of exile and oppressive policies in Tunisia, it was forced to establish an appropriate strategic plan and consensus in its transition to the political arena in record time. However, it did not support the article about the rules of Sharia during the constitutional amendment, paving the way for the Ennahda Movement to be perceived as a "modern Islamic party." Nonetheless, many Islamic groups and Salafists challenged the Ennahda Movement for not advocating the inclusion of Sharia rules in the constitution. As a result of the increasing conflict between the Salafists and the Ennahda Movement, the Salafis accused Ennahda of betrayal of Islamic values as a result of the great disappointment they experienced, the position of the Ennahda Movement in the process of changing the constitution, and the transfer of power to a technocratic government.

On the one hand, Salafists, who had a voice in the parliament thanks to the Ennahda Movement, organized and united faster against it due to resentments. On the other hand, non-violent Salafist groups got the idea that the Ennahda movement was not the appropriate political party for Tunisia, and some of these groups began to support the ideas of Jihadist Salafists with the growing dissatisfaction.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, the Egyptian coup in 2013 had a negative impact on Tunisia as well. The Ennahda Movement was forced to make numerous concessions following Morsi's ouster, despite emphasizing the importance of pluralism and reconciliation in the political arena. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ennahda movement enabled other Islamic groups to become active in politics. As for the Salafists, who have had a significant influence in Tunisia's domestic politics since January 2011, the Ennahda Movement thought that the Salafists were Islamic groups that could cooperate through education and dialogue. The relationship between the Salafists and the Ennahda Movement has become somewhat complicated. The reason for the rise of Salafism in the first place was the repression of the Ben Ali regime against the Islamists and the Ennahda Movement's support of the Salafists in establishing political parties. The reason for this was that the Ennahda Movement believed that the Salafists would modernize over

⁴³⁶ Hardin Lang, et al, "Tunisia's struggle for political pluralism after Ennahda," *Center for American Progress, Working Paper*, (2014): 2-3. (1-31)

time.⁴³⁷ Apart from political Salafism, groups adopting the Jihadist Salafist ideology have begun to carry out violent acts frequently in Tunisia. Therefore, Ansar al-Sharia (AST) tried to take advantage of the growing disillusionment within the country after Ennahda's withdrawal from power and the enactment of the new constitution.

In the process until 2014, the Ennahda Movement played a role in the administration, along with some important coalition partners, apart from being a pioneer in creating the new constitution of Tunisia. In addition, the relationship between religion and politics has been shaped in a significant way as a result of the relationships the party has established with both secular and conservative parties that are actively involved in Tunisia. This multi-faceted approach resulted in some changes in the party, both ideologically and organizationally. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it had a positive attitude towards conservative Salafi parties and secular actors. For this reason, the strategy of the Ennahda Party in the political arena resembles the strategy of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is still in power in Turkey, in the early 2000s.

First, although the Ennahda Party's decision to partner with Nidaa Tounes expired in January 2018, this decision can be considered a strategic move. However, this partnership also coincided with the gradual dissolution of the relationship between Islam and politics. As a result of this partnership, the support for the Ennahda Party by the Salafi parties and the public decreased. Therefore, this partnership did not bring great gains in political terms. The reason why the Salafists criticized the Ennahda Movement's coalition government with Nidaa was Ennahda's reconciliation with the actors from the old regime. As a result of Ennahda's radical change, religious freedoms were included in the new constitution, and the party ceased to be both a political party and an Islamic social movement. This shift resulted in Ennahda's support, as it pursued a different strategy than the Muslim Brotherhood in the eyes of the West. However, there were still those within the party who argued that Islam had an important role in politics. For this reason, they argued that the party should break the partnership with Nidaa and emphasize the importance of Islam in politics.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴³⁸ Sarah Yerkes, "Too Strategic for the Base: How the Nidaa-Ennahdha Alliance Has Done More Harm Than Good," *Issue Brief*, no. 4, (2018): 1-2.

Although Salafi parties were established with the support of the Ennahda Movement after the revolution, the Ennahda Movement monopolized power over the Islamist electorate without much political rivalry with the Salafis. The Salafis and members of the Ennahda Movement differed on the Qur'an and Sunnah as the basis of legislation. Therefore, people also did not welcome the Ennahda Movement's departure from the understanding of political Islam as a result of these conflicts. The growing resentment in the country as a result of Ennahda's increasing concessions increased the party's concerns, as the public's preference for parties with a tougher stance grew.⁴³⁹

In fact, political actors believed that the process of democratization would solve organizational and ideological problems. Despite important steps toward democratization, they have not prevented the marginalization of youth and the exclusion of Salafism, which represents this marginalized group. Furthermore, the main reason for the thought that the Ennahda Movement betrayed the Salafists is that, although the ideological and political evolution of the Ennahda helped to ensure some stability and relieve the conflict between the Islamist and secular sections, these policies also prevented the Salafists from expressing their radical discourse and actions. As a reaction to the Ennahda Movement, the participation rate of the youth decreased by 11% in the 2011 and 2014 elections. The point to be noted here is that the main reason why this group, most of which consists of marginalized Salafi youth, does not participate in the elections is that the Salafists, who are marginalized in the ideological framework, could not take an active role in the political and social arena. On the contrary, the Ennahda Movement and the Salafist Parties initially decided to act jointly because the main goal of both was the Islamization of Tunisia in line with Sharia rules. Although the Ennahda Movement's strategy in supporting Salafists and acting together was to expand its vote base, cooperation was achieved in this process. Besides, the reason why the Ennahda Movement did not want to cooperate with the Salafi parties after 2013 was that it thought that it would secure itself as a result of the completion of the democratization process.

After the coup in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement's rejection of the Sharia rules in the draft constitution, there were divisions between the two political Islamist

⁴³⁹ Sharan Grewal, "Where are Ennahdha's competitors?," *Issue Brief*, no. 4, (2018): 1-4.

bases as a result of the Ansar al-Sharia's (AST) increasing violence in the country. The relationship between the Salafists and the Ennahda Movement was contentious from the very beginning. While Salafists represented the working class in Tunisia, the Ennahda Movement more represented the "bourgeois class". Thus, the Ennahda Movement, whose relations with the Salafi parties deteriorated as a result of the banning of Ansar al-Sharia in 2013, began to be accused by the Salafis of being a puppet of Israel and America.⁴⁴⁰ Furthermore, some people think that the Ennahda Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood were created within exactly the same ideological framework. However, since the 1970s, the Ennahda Movement has moved away from classical Islamic goals such as the creation of an Islamic State based on Sharia rules and has come to the fore with its target more "liberal" attitudes towards the revival of Arab-Islamic culture, women's rights, and minorities.⁴⁴¹ It can be said that the minimalist and pragmatic approach adopted by the Ennahda Movement is related to the low obvious gains in the elections and the later deterioration of the good relations it established with the Salafi parties. However, the main goal of the Ennahda Movement was to support proportional representation and marginalize its electoral base. Moreover, radical groups adopting Salafi ideology such as Ansar al-Sharia, Hizb al-Tahrir, Oqba ibn Nafa, and ISIS took an active part in Tunisia after the revolution. All religious, secular, or radical Salafist groups were completely against any dialogue or coalition with the secular segments.⁴⁴²

To summarize, the Salafi parties' frequent criticism of the Ennahda Movement is related to Ennahda's decision to become a purely political party. As a result of both internal and external factors, the party adopted such a strategy and shifted away from duties such as religious missionary work and the concept of the Islamic Project. During Ennahda's Ninth General Congress in 2012, party members split into two camps due to differences in opinion. Members of the first group, called hard-liners, argued that the Islamic State, which mostly Salafists advocated, should be established through Sharia rules and that Sharia rules should form the basis of Tunisia's constitution. On

⁴⁴⁰ Sabrina Zouaghi, and Francesco Cavatorta, "A Doomed Relationship: Ennahdha and Salafism," *Issue Brief*, no. 4, (2018): 1-5.

⁴⁴¹ Monica Marks, "5. PURISTS AND PLURALISTS: Cross-Ideological Coalition Building in Tunisia's Democratic Transition," *Democratic Transition in the Muslim World*, Columbia University Press, 2018, 93. (91-120)

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 105-112.

the other hand, Pragmatics argued that Tunisia should complete the post-revolutionary transition period through more democratic means. Since 2016, Ennahda has been making efforts to include Islam in its political project, this time to put an end to these criticisms. On the other hand, one of Ennahda's most important promises, aims such as ensuring reform and eliminating corruption, began to lose both its legitimacy within the country and the support of the people, with the coalition it formed with members of the old regime and the effect of neo-liberal economic policies.⁴⁴³

4.3.2 Formation of political parties by Salafists

The first successful free and fair elections held in Tunisia in January 2011 showed that important steps were taken towards democratization. Compared to other countries in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, where changes were experienced after the Arab Spring, Tunisia today has completed most of its democratization phase. After the Arab Spring, everyone's common view was that democracies with liberal and secular views should be built in a short time in the region. However, as in Egypt, Islamic parties and movements achieved great success in the elections in Tunisia. Before Salafists formed political parties and entered the political arena legally, thousands of Salafist activist groups held rallies in and around Tunisia. As a result of the fear that the coalition formed after the Ben Ali regime would be unable to solve the country's problems, the Salafists emerged as a political and social power in Tunisia. Moreover, with the overthrow of the dictatorship, the level of openness increased tremendously, and the Ennahda Movement, led by Rachid Ghannouchi, led the formation of the tripartite coalition, with 89 of the 217 seats in the Assembly in the January 2011 elections. During this period, many claimed that the Ennahda Movement would monopolize power since it was a political party with an Islamist view and had no political rivals. However, it meant that the cards would be redistributed in Tunisia as a result of Salafist actors taking a more conservative stance in both the social and political arenas, unlike Ennahda, and opposing the monopoly of power.⁴⁴⁴ Salafists were not legally permitted to form political parties during the

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 1-2.

⁴⁴⁴ Stefano M. Torelli, Fabio Merone, and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafism in Tunisia: challenges and opportunities for democratization," *Middle East Policy*, no. 19(4), (2012): 141.

January 2011 elections. However, as a result of the elections, the Ennahda Movement took the first steps toward integrating the Salafists into the political system.

Therefore, on March 29, 2012, the Jabhat al-Islah party became the first official Salafi party that was founded by Mohamed Khouja, who was a member of the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI) during the 1980s. The party mostly focused on the Islamization of Tunisia through reformist ways. Therefore, it adopted pragmatism and a reformist strategy to become active in the political arena of the state. Even though Jabhat al-Islah frequently emphasizes the importance it attaches to the principles of pluralism and reciprocity, its basic party principles have been towards the establishment of an Islamic state and the implementation of Sharia rules.⁴⁴⁵

Another Salafi political party, al-Rahma, or the Mercy Party, which aims to establish a government that adheres to the rules of Sharia, was founded by Sayd al-Jaziri on July 31st, 2012. In addition, the third Salafist party, al-Asala, or the Authenticity Party, was also founded by Mouldi Mujahid. The point that should be made here is that the Salafi parties did not have as much popularity as the Salafi parties in Egypt, but the Salafi or Islamist parties became institutionalized years later and had a chance to have a say in the state.

With the downfall of the Ben Ali regime on January 14, 2011, Tunisia has clearly undergone significant changes and transformations, particularly in political and social terms. The Ennahda Movement and Salafi parties, unlike other secular and secular parties, used "mosques" (masjid) as a platform in order to reach wider segments of the people and gain the support of the people. However, the emergence of Salafism as a new political force against secular and liberal parties in Tunisia necessitated the Ennahda Party to reconsider its strategy and perspective. Thus, the Ennahda Party preferred to adopt the mission of a mediator between secular groups and Islamic groups. The sudden rise of Salafism in the country actually exposed the Ennahda to criticism and challenge from many different segments of society. While Salafi groups criticized the Ennahda Movement as anti-Islamic due to its pragmatic approaches, secular groups criticized the movement for its betrayal of democracy because it followed a policy of tolerance towards Salafis. For this reason, we can state that the Ennahda Movement is divided into two groups: religious conservatives and pragmatic

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 146.

politicians. While the religious discourses that it has adopted politically and the promotion of religious identity worry non-Islamic groups, pragmatic policies also alienate Salafis and other voters from the Islamic group, which alienates them from the Ennahda Party. Therefore, both policies actually lead to a dilemma.⁴⁴⁶

After 1979, it aimed to revive Islam in Tunisia, to establish social justice based on Islamic rules, and most importantly, to reform the entire Arab and Muslim world. There are uncertainties regarding the Islamic identity of the Ennahda Movement. For these reasons, it recognized the significance of democracy as well as political pluralism. Since the Ennahda Movement already had internal problems, it adopted a policy of supporting but not excluding various Islamic movements.⁴⁴⁷

In fact, the modern form of Salafism first emerged during the reigns of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Although there were harsh repressions against them, they were tried like other Islamists in the country. With the Jasmine Revolution, three Salafi parties, such as the Reform Front led by Mohamed Khoudja, the Authenticity Party led by Mouldi Moujahed, the Party of Mercy led by Sad Al Jaziri, and some associations, such as Ansar Al Shari'a led by Abou Yadh and chaired by the Centrist Association of Awareness and Reform, were formed that had connections with them. Therefore, it can be said that Salafism has two forms: reformists who seek to enforce Sharia rules and reject both democracy and violence, and Jihadists who want to establish an Islamic State with more violent aims. In addition, after the Revolution, some alliance signals such as Salafists and Ennahda were seen among the Islamists. Although during the 2011 October elections and the establishment of the Troika government, Ennahda supported the Salafists' right to express their ideologies politically. The relations between the Salafists and the Ennahda Movement began to decline and become tense. Moreover, it can be said that the three Salafi parties represent only 10% of Salafis by political means. For this reason, most people argued that there would be no fierce competition between Ennahda and Salafism. However, with the aim of withdrawing from political Islam by focusing on the specialization policy and the party's secular (or old regime actors) relations, the members of Ennahda

⁴⁴⁶ Mohammad Dawood Sofi, "Hizb al-Nahdah: from revolution to government and to a second referendum," *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, no. 8(3), (2015): 401.

⁴⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, "An-Nahda and Salafi Preaching," Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge, International Crisis Group, (2013): 25, 34. (25-34)

split into two, and about half of them started to get closer to the Reformist Salafists. The Ennahda Movement did not take kindly to the issue of competition and conflict with the Salafists because the support of the Salafist base at the time of the election was particularly important for the party to gain political power. Similarly, the main aim of the coalition attempts with secular-liberal actors between 2013 and 2018 was not to lose the support of the secular base. However, the failure to gain the support of both bases at the same time caused the Ennahda Movement to face heavy criticism from both Islamists and secular segments from time to time.⁴⁴⁸

The October and December elections of 2014 actually signaled the successful progress of Tunisia's democratic transition. The stable establishment of the political order following the revolution, on the other hand, shaped the balance of power within the country following the increasing protests. The common point of these demonstrations and counter-demonstrations was that those who support and oppose the Ben Ali regime, civil society activists, leftists, intellectuals, and some civil society organizations such as the General Union of Tunisian Students, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, and Doustourna (Our Constitution), came together and united against the monopoly of political power of the Islamist Ennahda Movement and the Troika Government. The Salafists and the Protection of the Revolution (LPR) also played an important role in these protests. It can be said that the main motivation behind the Salafis' participation in the demonstrations was economic reasons. The main target of these protests is youth; the elites were seen as culturally and socially superior, and the Salafists wanted to show that the practices under the name of secularism are wrong. The Ennahda Movement, on the other hand, followed a policy that preferred to benefit from their activities rather than exclude these Salafi groups. On the other hand, participation in the Political Movement under the Ennahda Party, which had a wider Islamic value among Salafis, would protect them from police violence.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, the relationship between Salafis, especially Protection of the Revolution (LPR) and the Ennahda Movement, albeit for a while, can be described as

⁴⁴⁸ Alaya Allani, "Islamism and Salafism in Tunisia After the Arab Spring," *Right to Nonviolence Tunisia Constitutional E-Forum*, (2012): 1-6.

⁴⁴⁹ Amel Boubekeur, "The politics of protest in Tunisia: instrument in parties' competition vs. tool for participation," (2015): 1-2. (1-8)

a mutually dependent relationship to plan counter-protests towards strikes that were organized by UGTT.

4.3.3 Elections in October 2011: Rise of Islamists

The national elections held for the Constitutional Assembly on October 23, 2011, were Tunisia's first free and fair elections since its independence in 1956 and can be expressed as an important expression of the dedication of the people to the democratization process after the Arab Spring. As a result of the Arab Spring, authoritarian hierarchies and their supporters fought to maintain the old regime in the face of a unified democratic process that would establish itself through more peaceful and democratic means against corrupted and despotic regimes. Apart from the free and fair elections, Tunisia witnessed the start of a new process, including the establishment of a coalition government with Islamic and secular parties, and then the constitutional reform process. In addition to many political, economic, and social conflicts, it can be clearly said that Tunisia has been successful in the democratic transition process against the increasing Salafism and extremism in the country when compared to other Middle Eastern countries.⁴⁵⁰ Therefore, from the perspective of the West, it was thought that with the emergence of the Arab Spring, it would bring democracy with it. Autocratic leaders, especially in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, were dethroned one by one. While this was happening, Salafist thought also began to gain strength in this chaos. The Arab Spring's idea of spreading the idea of democracy may have only been valid for Tunisia because countries such as Yemen, Syria, and Libya were plunged into civil war.⁴⁵¹

Mohammed Ghannouchi's government, which was formed on January 17 as a result of Ben Ali's exile in Saudi Arabia, lacked legitimacy and power. Protesters demanding radical reforms in Tunisia and its surrounding cities continued to have an impact on the streets in such an environment. To stop these increasing negative events as soon as possible, the Ghannouchi government promised that the elections would take place within six months. Ghannouchi, who later left politics, thought that although the existing corrupt system inherited from Ben Ali was gradually reformed and

⁴⁵⁰ Emma C. Murphy, "The Tunisian elections of October 2011: a democratic consensus," *The Journal of North African Studies*, no. 18(2), (2013): 231-232.

⁴⁵¹ Sazonov, and Ploom, "Some Remarks on the Ideological Core," 62.

accelerated the democratization process, in essence, such a system would fail to achieve national reconciliation. As a result, he agreed that constitutional amendment should be prioritized and that it would result in widespread agreement.⁴⁵²

In fact, media and financial restrictions before the political elections prevented many political parties from organizing election campaigns. The Ennahda Movement, on the one hand, had the mission of an association/charity organization in Tunisia before 2011, and although its activities were restricted during the Ben Ali regime, the general public was moderate towards this Islamic movement. As a result of the election restrictions, the secular parties and segments thought that the Ennahda party would drag the country into a new form of authoritarianism and theocracy as a result of its coming to power, and even impose restrictions on the rights of women, clothing, and alcohol use, which would negatively affect the country's tourism and its perception in the eyes of the West. Although the political campaigns of political parties were limited, protests increased within the country as a result of the depiction of God as a human in the movie *Persopolis*, broadcast on Nessma Television channel. The Ennahda Movement, on the other hand, announced that these protests were planned by liberal sections to prevent and provoke the Islamic movement. However, in the local and foreign press, the argument was put forward that the protests were organized and spread to large masses by the Salafi party, Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁴⁵³

With the shocking effect of the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisia gave great signals of its transition to a democratic political order in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially in the 2011 elections. The UGTT tried to influence other Arab peoples so that the revolution could resonate throughout the Middle East region. Looking at the results of the revolution that took place in Tunisia, it is understood that it is different from Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The reason is that the revolution was a success, accelerating the democratic transition process. Despite its involvement in Egypt's democratization process, it can be concluded that, as a result of the 2013 military coup, the Arab Spring reverted to authoritarianism over Egypt. On the other hand, the civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen prove that the democratization process in these countries has failed.

⁴⁵² Murphy, "The Tunisian elections of October 2011", 234.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 238.

In fact, the elections that took place in Tunisia in 2011 after the Arab Spring were an election that both the outside world and the people of the Middle East were curious about the future of Tunisia. The reason for this was that when Ben Ali came to power on November 7, 1987, his first job was to amend the constitution and impose limitations on presidential powers. Later, he removed these restrictions and paved the way for a lifetime presidential system. He was re-elected periodically, as he had had no other candidate to compete against for years, as he had eliminated potential presidential candidates who would participate in the elections. The name given to such elections is often called "electoral authoritarianism" or "new authoritarianism".⁴⁵⁴ Therefore, the Ben Ali regime blocked a democratic channel through which other parties could express themselves by gaining 90% of the votes and winning all legislative seats for his party (the Republican Democratic Party). For these reasons, it would be more accurate to say that the 2011 Tunisian elections were different from those held during Ben Ali's presidency, and that political pluralism was also realized with the resurgence of Islamists, who had been under pressure for years. Following the revolution, the military was given the authority to provide security within the country while remaining outside of the political process. In addition, the CPR party, the offices of the State Security Service, and the political police were dissolved. Besides, the members of the High Commission listed important steps such as revising the constitution, eliminating the inequalities of checks and balances, and holding democratic elections as the first things to be done in Tunisia's transition process. The Ennahda Movement promised that Sharia Law is not the main source of the constitution, that it will bring equality to all citizens, and that it will not change the Personal Status Law of 1957.⁴⁵⁵ It promised new rights to Tunisian women and won the elections with 41% of the votes (89 out of 217 seats) in the Constituent Assembly elections held in 2011. However, since Ennahda could not get an absolute majority in parliament, it formed a coalition with the CPR—Congrès pour la République and

⁴⁵⁴ Yahia H. Zoubir, "The democratic transition in Tunisia: a success story in the making," *Conflict Trends* no. 2015(1), (2015): 11.

⁴⁵⁵ The Personal Status Law (CPS) (Arabic: مجلة الأحوال الشخصية) is a Tunisian law that aims to ensure equality between men and women in many fields.

Ettakatol—and Forum démocratique pour le travail et les libertés (Secular parties) and the "troika" government was formed as an interim government.⁴⁵⁶

Table 5. Final Results of National Constituent Assembly Elections in 2011

Political Party	Number of Seats	Percentage of Votes
Ennahda Movement	89	41 %
Congress for the Republic (CPR)	29	13.4 %
Popular Petition (Al Aridha Al Chaabia)	26	12 %
Ettakatol	20	9.2 %
Democratic Progressive Party (PDP)	16	7.4 %
The Initiative (Al Moubadara)	5	2.3 %
Democratic Modernist Pole (PDM)	5	2.3 %
Afek Tounes	4	1.8 %
Al Badil Althawri	3	1.4 %
Democratic Socialist Movement (MDS) 2 0.9 percent	2	0.9 %
Movement of the People (Haraket Achaab) 2 0.9 percent	2	0.9 %
16 independent lists	1 each	0.5 %
TOTAL	217	

Source: Carter Center⁴⁵⁷

According to Table 5, people with secular-leftist views demanded the establishment of a secular alliance against the Ennahda Movement within the assembly. For this reason, they were against any coalition with the Islamists. However, the CPR and FDTL parties had to form a government with the Ennahda Movement and the Troika because the Ennahda Movement had become the most important political force in Tunisia as a result of the elections. The Ennahda Movement adopted the JDP in Turkey as a model, arguing that religion and state should be kept separate. However, with the Ennahda Movement having won the majority of votes, secular-liberal sections of the country became concerned that the Ennahda Movement would drag Tunisia into medieval autocracy. The Ennahda Movement, on the other hand, recognized that modernization is a necessary component of Tunisia's progressive democratic process. For this reason, in the following years after the 2011 elections, it set aside its Islamic identity and supported more secular views, garnering the reaction

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 12-13.

⁴⁵⁷ Carter Center, "National Constituent Assembly Elections in Tunisia: Final Report," (2011):

of most Islamist members and Salafists, with the result that Ennahda lost the support of its Islamic base.⁴⁵⁸

Although Tunisia maintains its democratic success based on free and fair elections, problems such as increasing structural inequalities, political agitation, and the public's perception of corruption in the state in the last 12 years since the Arab Spring cause difficulties in maintaining democratic stability. The continuation of reconciliation between political actors in parliament, the opposition, and non-governmental organizations is the most important mechanism for the effective execution of the democratization process. Problems such as the political and economic crises that took place between 2011 and 2021 and the political parties' being at war with each other hinder reconciliation, which is the prerequisite for the continuation of democratization.⁴⁵⁹

Nine governments established since 2011 have had to face political, economic, and security problems. Based on the principle of pluralism, nearly 200 political parties competed with each other in legislative (in 2011, 2014, and 2018), executive (in 2014 and 2019) and municipal elections (in 2018).⁴⁶⁰ In other words, since the Arab Spring, Tunisia has been governed by parties with different ideologies (Islamist and secular) since 2011 and has achieved a political consensus. However, following the formation of the tripartite coalition government (Troika), increasing tensions and failures in the administration caused these three parties to clash ideologically, resulting in splits. As it can be understood from here, although the Ennahda Movement has brought its ideological framework closer to a more liberal-secular perspective, it has caused political conflicts with secular parties since it was perceived as a movement with an Islamic ideology over the years.

Despite the participation of over 100 political parties in the 2011 elections, the major parties received 72.1 percent of the popular vote and 90.8 percent of the seats in the National Constituent Assembly. The most obvious of the factors that can be considered the main reasons for the Ennahda Movement's victory in the elections can

⁴⁵⁸ Stuart Schaar, "Democracy Triumphs in Tunisia's First Free Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly*, (2011): 24-26.

⁴⁵⁹ Laryssa Chomiak, "Tunisian democracy 10 years after the revolution: A tale of two experiences," no. 6, Briefing Paper, (2021): 2.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

be expressed as Ennahda's convincing the people that Tunisia will preserve its Arab and Muslim identity and that the identity will not be Westernized. As mentioned before, it gained support in the eyes of the public as a "moderate" political party, apart from its discourses aiming to protect women's rights (Personal Status Law), promising to adopt a more modern and secular form of government, and most importantly, being an Islamic party.

Furthermore, the Congress for the Republic Party (CPR) was founded in 2001 by Moncef Marzouki but banned by the Ben Ali regime in 2002. The CPR party and its key leaders were exiled to France. While the CPR party was advancing along a center-left line in terms of its political views, it also avoided conflict with the Ennahda Movement. Also, the Ettakatol Party was founded by Mustapha Ben Jafar in 1994 and started its official political life in 2002 as a center-left party. Like the CPR party, it followed a policy that gave centrist messages and was far from politically conflicting with the Ennahda Movement. Moreover, the Al Aridha Party was founded by Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi in March 2011 after the revolution. In contrast to other parties, it has party programs for economic and social reform. However, when compared to other parties, it took a weaker stance on issues such as democracy and the constitution.

The Democratic Progressive Party (PDP) was founded by Ahmed Nejib Chebbi and Maya Jribi in 1983 under the name Progressive Socialist Rally and was declared an official party in 1988. The name of the party was changed to the Democratic Progressive Party (PDP) in 2001. The left-wing PDP party displayed an oppositional stance against the Ennahda Movement. However, this political polarization did not help the PDP; on the contrary, it fueled the Ennahda Movement's further popular support. The Afek Tounes party has more discourses on secularism and personal freedoms on the right side of the political spectrum. The PDM party, on the other hand, focused on the separation of religion and state affairs, as well as on issues such as gender equality and personal rights and freedoms.⁴⁶¹

In a research article presented by Hababou and Amrouche (2013), the analysis in the article argues that the motivation behind the Ennahda Movement's winning the

⁴⁶¹ Moez Hababou, and Nawel Amrouche, "Misconceptions and realities of the 2011 Tunisian election," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, no. 46(4), (2013): 741-742.

votes of the people in the elections was not only from the poor rural governorates of Tunisia, but also from the urban areas. By comparison, the Ettakatol party was mostly supported by elderly and wealthy voters. In the same way, while the governorates that support the CPR party are defined as the regions with a high level of education and a high youth population, this region also stands out as a place where industry and free healthcare services are abundant. However, in terms of the main factors of the votes received by the Al Aridha Party, it received support from regions with more agriculture governorates, low education levels, and high unemployment. The secular elderly population, with good education and wealth, was decisive in the fact that the Progressive Parties (Afek, PDM, and PDP) received close to 51% of the total votes.⁴⁶²

4.3.3.1 The loss of power of Islamists

Tunisia, which has made significant progress in terms of democratization since the Jasmine Revolution, adopted a new constitution in 2014, and then, as a result of the national elections held in October and November 2014, the secular party Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia's Call), which was founded in 2012, won most of the seats in the parliament, and party leader Béji Caïd Essebsi was elected as the president for a five-year term. These developments meant that the Ennahda Movement and the Islamic movement gradually lost power in Tunisia. Furthermore, although Nidaa Tounes stated that they have important goals to fight against terrorism and improve the economy, significant progress has not been achieved because there are still high levels of unemployment that lead to threats to public safety and anxiety. Besides, consensus was somewhat more difficult to achieve, as Nidaa Tounes was basically made up of different groups united against Islamism. The Nidaa Tounes also faced some criticism, as did the Ennahda Movement. The most general of them stated that the Ben Ali regime was restored in the new transition period of the Nidaa Tounes in Tunisia. Critics emphasized that Nidaa Tounes adopted policies that were far from democratizing in areas such as security sector reform, transitional justice, and checks and balances. Internal security threats are mainly terrorist incidents close to the Algerian border and in the far south, and Tunisians constitute a significant part of the "foreign fighters" in the civil war in Syria. Internal security issues such as the establishment of Ansar Al-Sharia, which was founded in 2011 and has a Salafist ideology, and the subsequent

⁴⁶² Ibid., 745,746.

attacks on the American Embassy and American School in 2012, as well as the assassination of two secularist leftist politicians in 2013, can be cited as examples.⁴⁶³ More importantly, Nida Tounes has frequently used those who support the Ennahda Movement in its statements to paint them as terrorists. We have stated that the Salafi parties in Egypt, especially the Al-Nour party, gained strength by gaining the support of the people. In Tunisia, unlike in Egypt, Salafi parties established political parties and had a voice. In Tunisia, however, the Al-Nour Party took over the Freedom and Justice Party, which had been established as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The main reason for this was that the Salafi parties that were established stood with the support of the Ennahda Movement. However, Salafist parties thought that their influence in Tunisia would increase as a result of cooperation with Ennahda rather than competition. In fact, Salafist groups, which are more religiously conservative, were against the Ennahda Movement's lack of reference to Sharia in the 2014 constitution and its consensus with secular sections. In fact, these Salafi groups supported the establishment of an Islamic state in Tunisia. They often staged protests and even acts of violence against the government, unions, journalists, and women.⁴⁶⁴ Moreover, as mentioned, some Salafi groups have legally registered with support from the Ennahda Movement. Many Salafist groups, however, chose to remain outside of the official political system. The control, service, and security of mosques, which are most widely known in the way of the organization of Salafis, took place in Tunisia as well.⁴⁶⁵

The Tunisian revolution, along with the strengthening of the Ennahda Movement in the political arena and the establishment of the Salafist political parties, had a significant impact on the relationship between state power and Islam. The Tunisian revolution, along with the strengthening of the Ennahda Movement in the political arena and the establishment of the Salafist Political Parties, had a significant impact on the relationship between state power and Islam. Islam has been an important source of motivation for many political actors, as well as an important tool not only for Islamists but also for non-Islamists. Since the relationship between Tunisia's state power and Islam was accepted as an important factor in the democratization process,

⁴⁶³ Alexis Arieff, and Carla E. Humud, *Political transition in Tunisia*, Vol. 15, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011, 1. (1-19)

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶⁵ Aaron Y. Zelin, "Meeting Tunisia's Ansar Al-Sharia," *Foreign Policy*, March 8, 2013.

Following the revolution, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, along with the political conflicts between the Ennahda Movement, Salafi Parties, and Liberal-Secular Parties, initiated the work for the reform of religious institutions in the state administration.⁴⁶⁶

The years from January 2011 to 2012 can be called a period in which the state authority is seriously weak, and chaos takes place. After that, the period when political and religious efforts accelerated can be called the institutionalization path as a result of the Islamic actors' gaining power in public spaces after the establishment of the temporary Troika government, in which the Ennahda Movement formed the coalition government with Social Democratic Ettakatol and the Arab-nationalist CPR party. In this period, people were divided between Islamists and non-Islamists, which led the state to focus on drafting a new constitution. However, in the January 2014–February 2015 period, it can be said that state control was restored as a result of the successful policies of both the technocrat government and the National Unity Government. Political polarization, the succession of interim governments, trade unions, and the loss of support for Islamic and Salafi movements were all important factors in this process.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, the Ennahda Movement, which defined itself as representing all Islamic groups during the revolution, and as a result of the rapid increase in Salafi activism and religious extremism, especially during the Troika government in 2012 and 2013, the Ennahda Movement abandoned its policy of representing itself within this broad framework and preferred to adopt harsher policies against Salafi groups. As a result of the 2014 October elections, Nidaa Tounes became the leading political party, receiving 38.2 percent of the votes, as the popularity of the Ennahda Movement declined in the eyes of the people. The Ennahda Movement, on the other hand, became the second party with 31.3 percent of the vote due to its close relationship with the Salafists and its weak policies against the increasing jihadist-radical terrorism in the country. This resulted in the formation of the National Union Government as a coalition government in January 2015.⁴⁶⁸ The rise of Salafists in Tunisia after the revolution could be related to the release of imprisoned Salafists, the return of expelled Salafists to Tunisia, and criticisms against the Ennahda administration due to economic

⁴⁶⁶ Teije Hidde Donker, and Kasper Ly Netterstrøm, "The Tunisian Revolution & Governance of Religion," *Middle East Critique*, no. 26(2), (2017): 2. (1-21)

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

problems like high unemployment and inflation. However, the faster the rise of the Salafist parties, the faster they lost political power, and they did not win a single seat in the 2014 parliamentary elections. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, the al-Karama coalition won 21 seats in the parliament, which led to a rise in religious populism because anti-elite sentiments increased within Tunisian society. Thus, people started to talk about the betrayal of revolutionary ideas by Ennahda, Nidaa Tounes, and the elites.⁴⁶⁹

We must say that the increased freedoms and democratization in Tunisia after the revolution brought some concerns. These new freedoms did not only mean that Salafists were more active in the political arena by establishing political parties. It also meant that Salafi groups could stage uncontrolled demonstrations within the country and that some radical Islamic views could have an impact on the population. For this reason, after the revolution, especially the liberal and secular sections' desire for Tunisia to be more liberal and democratic, made them very worried about these increasing Salafist views. The Ennahda Movement believed that through democratization and moderation, it could integrate Salafists and radical Salafists into the new political project without resorting to repressive policies.⁴⁷⁰ As concepts such as freedom of expression, democracy, and pluralism began to be seen frequently in Tunisia after the revolution, the democratic transition process made it inevitable for all kinds of actors to take part in the newly established system. Ansar Al-Sharia is a Jihadist Salafist movement that can be given as an example. Besides, Abu Ayadh, the leader of Ansar Al-Sharia, was an important actor before the revolution, and it is stated that he made preparations for the new Jihadist project during his imprisonment. The Salafists, who obtained freedom of expression after the revolution, are now free in the political sense by taking advantage of this democratization process. In other words, political Islam was revived in Tunisia as well as in Egypt.⁴⁷¹ However, the banning of AST in 2013 can actually be considered an important decision taken in Tunisia's

⁴⁶⁹ Jasmine Lorch, and Hatem Chakroun, "Salafism meets populism: The Al-Karama Coalition and the malleability of political Salafism in Tunisia," *Middle East Institute*, (2020): [Salafism Meets Populism: The Al-Karama Coalition and the Malleability of Political Salafism in Tunisia | Middle East Institute \(mei.edu\)](https://www.mei.edu/publications/salafism-meets-populism-the-al-karama-coalition-and-the-malleability-of-political-salafism-in-tunisia)

⁴⁷⁰ Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafism, liberalism, and democratic learning in Tunisia," *The Journal of North African Studies*, no. 20(5), (2015): 2. (1-14)

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

democratization transition. Thus, the concept of "strong state" re-emerged and signaled the re-emergence of the oppressive policies of the state.⁴⁷² Due to increasing pressure, Salafists began to frequently use discourses such as human rights and individual rights. In essence, although AST was against tolerance, the democratic order, and liberalism, some of its former members had these thoughts and started to voice them in all areas of society.

4.3.4 The rise of democratization attempts

Tunisia, which made great efforts to build a new political system based on democracy and the rule of law, reached a consensus to lay the constitutional foundations, although both Islamic and secular parties had conflicts from time to time. In terms of democratization, Tunisia has taken important steps in the name of democratization against the views that the Arab Spring has revealed in the whole MENA region. Before the revolution, Tunisia was defined as a politically authoritarian and socially progressive country. From this period until 2011, both autocratic leaders, such as Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, increased the pressure against Islam in the name of the social modernization of Tunisia, which resulted in some human rights violations.⁴⁷³ When Ben Ali came to power in 1989, members of "The Movement of Islamic Tendency" were released, creating a free environment for Islamists for a short time. However, in the following years, after Ben Ali monopolized power, Ennahda gained the appreciation of the people because the Ennahda Movement acted as a charity organization in the country. For this reason, similar pressures were also applied towards the Islamists.

As an example of the democratic developments in Tunisia, the excitement of the people and their desire for democracy were expressed during the revolution, and the Islamist and secular parties in Tunisia declared that their first job was to draft a new constitution. Although we are talking about democratization, Islamist and secular parties in politics have tried to use power among themselves for their own interests. During this period, there was growing skepticism among both Islamists and liberals.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁴⁷³ Sarah R. Loudon, "Political Islamism in Tunisia: A history of repression and a complex forum for potential change," *Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Multidisciplinary Studies*, no. 4(1), (2015): 7-8. (1-23)

The main reason for this is that the violent acts carried out by extremist Islamists like Ansar al-Sharia, especially in 2012 (the attack on the American Embassy) and 2013 (the assassination of two liberal politicians), cast a shadow over the "reconciliation" that was successfully established after the revolution.

In terms of democratization, the post-revolutionary attitudes of the Ennahda Movement can be seen as the main source of important developments. First, the Ennahda supported the precondition of democratization by believing that all ideologies should be in the political arena and therefore supported the inclusion of conservative religious or Salafi groups in this political environment by establishing political parties. However, the increasing violence in the country as a result of the Ennahda Movement's support of all religious ideologies and Salafists caused the Ennahda to be criticized by both the public and secular political parties which led Ennahda to a dead end. Thus, Ennahda resigned and left the administration to the temporary technocrat government.

Furthermore, as another attempt at democratization, the victory of Nidaa Tounes, which ran on a secular platform in the 2014 elections, can be viewed as a result of the Ennahda Movement's failed policies.⁴⁷⁴ Another remarkable act of democratization is that the Ennahda Movement, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, has a more pragmatic approach to politics, sharing power with secular parties and having a broader discourse on human rights, women's rights (Code of Personal Status or CPS), equality, and as a result of all of these, the Ennahda Movement argued that the "Tunisification" process would be parallel with the process of democratization.

According to Freedom House, Tunisia has had "exceptional success" in the wake of the Arab Spring. However, according to 2014 data, it took its place in the category of "free" countries in the world. Before 2011, Tunisia was evaluated in the "Not Free" category. However, it has a monopoly in terms of democratization compared to many Arab countries after the Arab Spring. Among the main reasons for this democratization process and its inclusion in the free country category are both the improvements in the constitution and the free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014, in addition to the 2011 NCA elections. Therefore, Tunisia stands out as an important model for Arab countries in conflict with authoritarian regimes in

⁴⁷⁴ Fethi Mansouri, and Riccardo Armillei, "The democratic 'transition' in post-revolution Tunisia: conditions for successful 'consolidation' and future prospects," *Revolutions: global trends & regional issues*, no. 4(1), (2016): 159.

Middle East countries where democracy is still lacking.⁴⁷⁵ Another factor behind Tunisia's exceptional success story is the many ideologically diverse groups of the Nidaa Tounes party. It can also be said that different segments, such as former members of Ben Ali's RCD Party, members of labor unions, left-wing groups, non-governmental organizations, and groups advocating human rights and equality, act in common consensus.⁴⁷⁶

In addition, the strategic partnership between the Ennahda Movement and the Nidaa Tounes party is important in terms of maintaining democratization and preventing ideological polarization. However, in terms of sustaining Tunisia's democratic transition process, political actors' efforts to solve problems such as corruption, internal security problems, and economic and social problems can be seen as a prerequisite for democratization.⁴⁷⁷ Nonetheless, two political parties received approximately 70% of the public vote in the 2014 elections. Among these parties were the moderate Islamist Ennahda Movement and the secular Nidaa Tounes, resulting in an ideologically bipolar political environment.⁴⁷⁸ Although the stability of the Ennahda resulted in the loss of confidence of some of the people in the moderate Islamic party after the increasing violence in the country, Also, it was reflected in the 2014 elections when Rached Ghannouchi, who spent decades in exile in Britain, showed a more pragmatic approach, moving away from the political approach like the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammad Morsi in Egypt. Thus, he managed to keep his party in the political arena.

During the revolution, there were calls for its closure due to the lack of public confidence in the “Rassemblement Democratique Constitutionel (RCD)” party. However, observers were concerned that the country's opposition force, which had been weakened by the Ben Ali regime's deliberate suppression over the years, would be unable to act together, and that democratization would be hampered by the country's

⁴⁷⁵ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World," (2015): 6-7.

⁴⁷⁶ Anne Wolf, *Can secular parties lead the new Tunisia?*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014, 15. (1-34)

⁴⁷⁷ Eric Reidy, “Report designates Tunisia first 'free' Arab country in decades,” (2015): Read more: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/02/tunisia-free-arab-judiciary-political-challenges.html#ixzz7IjDfjVqQ>

⁴⁷⁸ Mansouri, and Armillei, "The democratic 'transition' in post-revolution Tunisia", 168.

underdeveloped civil society.⁴⁷⁹ For many years, many scholars argued that the Middle East, the subject of their research, did not meet the important prerequisites for democracy. Political and economic variables play an important role in the basis of this approach. From another perspective, the reason for the successful establishment of democracies could be related to culture and religion.⁴⁸⁰ However, an important condition for the successful establishment and maintenance of democracy can be considered as the increase of labor unions like the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and strong non-governmental and CSO organizations such as Bawsala and iWatch in Tunisia. The rise of democracy is about both the relationship between the state and civil society, as well as the state's and society's ability or desire to achieve democracy. Power is becoming more difficult to obtain, particularly as a result of the uprising. However, it can be stated that once power is obtained, the process of transforming civil society and opposition power into democracy becomes easier, albeit not smoothly, as demonstrated by the Tunisian example.

In other Middle Eastern countries except Tunisia, especially in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Yemen, the uprisings did not bring the process of democratization with them. This is because, in comparison to Tunisia, both the anti-democratic opposition and the pro-democratic advocates are scarce or non-existent in these countries. From a more general perspective, another factor that makes the democratization in Tunisia different from other Arab countries is that although Tunisia came to the fore with corruption during the Ben Ali regime, the elite of the administration and his relatives close to Ben Ali ensured that the government was ruled by his family. In fact, there was relatively little bribery in the Tunisian administration compared to the other Arab countries. This meant that Tunisia's state institutions could more easily adapt to democratization. Hence, both moderate Islamist parties and liberal parties would be able to adapt existing institutions to democracy more easily than they would create these state institutions from scratch.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Rym Ayadi, et al, "The Tunisian Revolution: An Opportunity for Democratic Transition," MEDPRO Commentary, (2011): 4. (1-5)

⁴⁸⁰ Jason William Boose, "Democratization and civil society: Libya, Tunisia and the Arab Spring," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, no. 2(4), (2012): 312. (310-315)

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 313.

In addition to the 2011 and 2014 elections in Tunisia, the presidential and parliamentary elections held in 2019 are among the initiatives that can be considered an important step in terms of liberal democratization. It cannot be said that it provides a solution to problems such as unemployment, regional inequalities, and corruption. Nevertheless, the democratization process can be associated with the joint action of both the people and the state. The lack of political and economic reform plans can also undermine stability in every sense. Since 2011, ten governments have changed (Prime Ministers in order of date: Mohamed Ghannouchi, Beji Caid Essebsi, Ali Laarayedh, Mehdi Jomaa, Habib Essid, and Youssef Chahed). Many terrorist incidents have taken place. Therefore, the public's trust in and belief in political actors was shaken.⁴⁸² In 2011, reconciliation was achieved, albeit partially, when the Ennahda Movement won the majority of the votes. However, the political polarization during the transition period in 2012 and 2013 was even higher than in the previous phase, as Islamists on the one side and secularists on the other faced disagreements during the drafting of the new constitution. Following the increase in terrorist incidents organized by extremists in 2013, the Ennahda Movement pursued politics in a pragmatic and wise manner, avoiding dragging the country into chaos and deciding on a path to reconciliation. In the light of these developments, first the new constitution was adopted in 2014, and then the second national elections were held through democratic means. The new consensus was achieved by the Ennahda. However, the anticipated reconciliation between the Ennahda Movement and Nidaa Tounes did not occur, resulting in ideological polarization. This was resulted in increased social and economic problems in the country, as well as some laws that could be described as reactionary, casting a shadow over democratization, which was not the goal of the revolution. An example of these laws can be defined as the 2017 Economic Reconciliation Law and the law granting amnesty to officials involved in corruption during the Ben Ali period. Another law is the Emergency Law, which was enacted in 1978 during the Ben Ali regime. With this law, it can be associated with the administration's pressure on civil society, freedom of the press, and taking decisions such as stopping all kinds of protests.⁴⁸³ For the Congress for the Republic (CPR), Nidaa Tounes, and the Ennahda Movement,

⁴⁸² Sarah Yerkes, and Zeineb ben Yahmed, *Tunisia's Political System: From Stagnation to Competition*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019, 1. (1-23)

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

democracy is difficult to progress properly in party systems that depend on leaders because it has to be within the parties in their social movements. For this reason, the party members emphasize that Caid Essebsi, the leader of Nidaa Tounes, does not believe in democracy, but that they support Essebsi because they do not want the Ennahda Movement to gain strength.⁴⁸⁴

In the democratization process, both structural and policy choices have a significant impact. With this, factors such as Tunisia's political history, the way the regime changed, the decisions taken by new political actors in the transition period, the state and social cohesion process, economic structures, foreign policy decisions, democratic elections, and making a new constitution have a significant impact on the democratization after the Arab Spring.⁴⁸⁵ While Tunisia was planning to hold its first fair and free elections after the coup, the delay and the conflicts between political actors and the transitional government meant that the democratization process was not without problems. With the integration of parties with Islamist tendencies into the political system, democratization cannot be said to have been fully achieved because of the increasing terrorist incidents in the country that resulted with the end of the new government established by the Ennahda Movement, as the extremist Islamists gradually gained power. In addition to the Islamic and secular ideological conflict, another important problem for Tunisia is the inequalities within the country, especially in the interior-coastal areas.⁴⁸⁶ Egypt and Tunisia, on the other hand, are two Arab countries that are held up as models in the democratization process. The reason for this is that the "state" continues to exist despite the dismissal of the two countries' leaders and ruling parties as a result of the uprisings. However, we cannot talk about a strong bureaucracy, economically or militarily, or a strong army, as seen in the examples of Libya, Syria, or Yemen. For this reason, although the democratization process in Egypt was interrupted after the 2013 military coup, and there was a conflict between Islamists and secular groups in Tunisia, compared to other MENA and Middle Eastern countries where the Arab Spring was affected, both countries were ideologically, historically,

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸⁵ Laurel E. Miller, and Jeffrey Martini, *Democratization in the Arab World: A Summary of Lessons from Around the Globe*, RAND NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INST SANTA MONICA CA, 2013, 5. (1-42)

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 29.

and culturally more advantageous. Furthermore, although Tunisia has some disadvantages in this democratization process, it has a more flat democratization transition than Egypt. However, the most important risk that will undermine this process in Tunisia is that the administration, which came to power through democratic means, adopts non-democratic policies that can both disrupt this long transformation process in Tunisia and cause the Tunisian people to be frustrated.⁴⁸⁷

After the re-emergence of Islamic powers, countries such as Tunisia and Egypt had to adapt to their historical relationship between religion and state by focusing on their perspectives on democracy in a more local way. After the re-emergence of Islamic powers, countries such as Tunisia and Egypt had to adapt to their historical relationship between religion and state by focusing on their perspectives on democracy in a more local way.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed the Ennahda Movement declaring itself "Muslim Democrats" in order to achieve this adaptation is directly related to both pluralism and liberal democracy. In a way, Tunisia has become a country that better manages the democratization process and acts more independently, thanks to both civil society and the intelligentsia. What was required for this process was the breaking of links with the past. Tunisia somehow succeeded, but people were worried about it. Unlike other Arab countries, Tunisia achieved this gradual process by adopting a consensus-based liberal system. Furthermore, the Ennahda Movement's hesitant attitudes toward the construction of a management system based on Islamic Law are among the positive decisions made in this process to preserve Tunisian identity.⁴⁸⁹

Unlike Egypt, the transition of political actors to the reform process in Tunisia gave confidence in the construction of the new order. In addition, veto actors were prevented from re-voicing the interests of the old regime indirectly. However, veto actors from the old regime in Egypt still played an active role in the political arena, which led to political polarization and the targeted democratic construction process being interrupted. Greene and Jefferis (2016) called the transitional mode in Tunisia's democratization process as "destruction or replacement," and this process of change took place under the leadership of the opposition and the overthrow of the

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁸⁸ Leila Hilal, "Charting Transitions in the Middle East: Lessons Learned from Tunisia and Egypt," *Insight Turkey*, no. 14(2), (2012): 6. (1-12)

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 11.

existing regime. In terms of the general characteristics of the collapse phase, it can be said that the administration is removed from the reform process, the interests of the existing order are not protected, and there is no cooperation with the existing state institutions.⁴⁹⁰ In order to make this process successful, first the RCD party, which was Ben Ali's party, was banned, the role of the elites remaining from the previous regime in the new political process was eliminated, and the new political order was brought into an order in which all segments could participate in a wider framework. All these first developments were the signals of a transition from the old authoritarian order to a more democratic and pluralistic order. It is unthinkable for this process to happen suddenly, unexpectedly, or unplanned. For this reason, when we examine the activities of opposition groups, the opposition in Egypt stands out as Islamic and unplanned revolutionaries. However, there is evidence that parties such as the Ennahda Movement, CPR, PDP, and Ettakatol have collaborated on the democratization of the country and the role of religion in government since the 2000s.⁴⁹¹

In other words, factors such as the increase in the level of education, official and unofficial non-governmental organizations, and the widespread use of social media can be analyzed under Modernization Theory as structural-centered, and the increasing consensus among political actors and political community, which can be regarded under the agency approach, are among the important pillars of democracy in Tunisia.⁴⁹² The weak labor market and the increase in the level of education are not only harbingers of political change, but are also among the main factors in the planning of protests. In addition, with the widespread use of the internet and the fact that Tunisia has more internet use compared to other Arab countries, and the fact that the people follow what is happening all over the world and democratization from a broader framework, the new actors, whether they are Islamist or liberal, could not ignore the people's demands for democracy. As a result of the negotiations between the Ennahda Movement and the Liberal parties, Tunisia has neither been a state that puts religion at

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 9,11.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁹² Mary Zaia, "Democratic Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: A Case Study of Tunisia," (2017): 16. (1-32)

its center nor a country that is completely isolated from religion. Instead, Tunisia preferred the middle way by adopting the concept of a "civil state."⁴⁹³

4.3.5 Challenges to democracy in Tunisia

With the overthrow of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali as a result of popular uprisings and protests, ideological polarization and political, economic, and social tensions gradually increased within the country. However, Tunisia made an effort to do its best for democratization. The first examples of this were provided by the reconciliation provided by the Islamists and the secular segments after the revolution. After the coalition government formed by Islamist and liberal parties in 2011, the determining factors of politics and democratization in Tunisia were realized by the occasional reconciliation and conflict of ideology, pragmatism, and freedom discourses. With the consensus they made on institutional foundations, the democratic transition process tried to be provided with a pragmatic approach. This has also brought together the cooperation of two different ideological groups who have not trusted each other over the years. Despite the fact that their gathering prevented their political conflicts, their disagreements over religion and personal rights remained heated.

Between November 2011 and January 2014, the increasing power of some Islamic groups, together with the government led by the Ennahda Movement, fueled the criticism of the liberal-secular segment against Islamists. This, in turn, disrupted the previously established political consensus and led to the emergence of political conflict between the Islamists and secular groups in the ideological sense. In addition to political uncertainty, the country's growing socioeconomic challenges have fueled widespread distrust of politicians. In addition to these issues, which will be viewed as a direct danger to the democracy process, extremist Salafism has been on the rise in Tunisia's economically depressed regions. The rise of radicalism first began to show itself in 2013 with political assassinations, suicide bombings, and violent actions in various regions. The constant conflict between new political actors who could not come together on a common point among themselves had caused the public to worry about the course of the country. While the secular segments accepted that Islamism

⁴⁹³ Greene, and Jennifer Jefferis, "Overcoming transition mode", 19.

was a reality in the social sense, they thought that in the absence of consensus, political and social chaos would prevail in Tunisia. The Ennahda Movement and Ghannouchi, on the other hand, were of the opinion that the faster the democratization process took place, the more beneficial it would be for their parties.⁴⁹⁴

The main obstacles to democratization were the main socio-economic problems and the radicalization caused by these problems. The political inexperience of the Islamists failed to prevent the increasing marginalization of the people and the state. For this reason, young people were trying to find solutions to these social and economic problems by joining radical Salafi groups that were not aware that jihadist Salafists were threatening Tunisia's security and democracy from within. In addition to these successive conflicts between Islamists and secular groups on the issues of Sharia, the role of women, criminalizing blasphemy, etc., the differences of opinion on the extent to which freedom of expression should be diversified, as well as the increased freedoms after the revolution in Tunisia, and these ideological-cultural conflicts within the country, are seen as the greatest threats to the democratic transition, as well as shaking the trust of both groups in each other.⁴⁹⁵ However, Rachid Ghannouchi stated that "the country's religion is Islam and its language is Arabic" in the previous constitution, which would be sufficient to protect Tunisia's Islamic identity. On the other hand, some supporters of the old regime advocated the rise of Salafist groups to undermine the democratization process. Furthermore, countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have financially and politically sponsored radical Salafists in attempt to disrupt the transition process, since they see Tunisia's democratization as a threat to the entire Middle East.⁴⁹⁶ In fact, Salafism and radicalization were preferred by Tunisia's youth groups as alternatives because they thought that democratization did not provide employment and social justice to young people. For this reason, economic problems have brought social problems.

⁴⁹⁴ Anouar Boukhars, *In the Crossfire: Islamists' Travails in Tunisia*, Vol. 13. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014, 1-3.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Christophe Ayad et al., "Le 'grand jeu' de Riyad pour étouffer les 'printemps arabes,'" *Le Monde*, (2014): [Le « grand jeu » de l'Arabie saoudite pour étouffer les « printemps arabes » \(lemonde.fr\)](http://www.lemonde.fr)

Although it is often stated that Tunisia has been successful in democratization steps compared to other countries affected by the Arab Spring, behind these democratic developments, Tunisia's education is more developed compared to other countries, and its population and ethnic distribution are more homogeneous, which maintains good economic relations with Europe, placing Tunisia in a more advantageous position than other countries. In countries such as Tunisia, where these conditions are met, democratization is more easily achieved. However, these inferences do not mean that Tunisia did not face any difficulties in the democratization process, because the structural uncertainties of democratization were also quite evident. The fact that the army, which is one of the important factors to be examined in this process, has been away from politics for years, has revealed that the army did not support the Ben Ali regime in the popular uprisings in 2010-2011, but was in favor of democracy. Therefore, the perception that the army generally poses a great threat to the democratization process couldn't be applied to the Tunisian case. Another factor is the political elites' attitudes on some issues; Ideological conflicts such as gender equality, freedoms, and Islamic law can be included in the category of difficulties towards democratization. However, both secular and Islamist groups have sought to find common ground to destroy the role of the RCD in the country.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, political parties that preferred to act on the principle of inclusion meant that all kinds of political parties had the right to speak in Tunisia, although it seemed risky on the one hand, and the slow constitution-making process is seen as a result of this. The fact that ideologically different groups come together and reach consensus does not mean that every segment will support these negotiations. The most obvious example of this is that the Salafis strongly criticized the Ennahda Movement for moving away from the Islamic movement and getting closer to the liberal segments. Although non-violent actions have taken place up to a point, this dissatisfaction has made it possible for security problems and radicalization to arise within the country.

Another issue that caused conflicts in the democratization process was the acceptance of insults to religion as a punishable crime in the constitution's third article (blasphemy law) and the use of the phrase gender complementarity instead of equality in the 28th article, which led to an increase in conflicts between liberals and the

⁴⁹⁷ Eva Bellin, "Drivers of Democracy: Lessons from Tunisia," *Middle East Brief*, no. (75), (2013): 1-5.

Ennahda Movement. Ennahda took a step toward preserving internal harmony in the country by incorporating the notion of equality into the constitution and repealing the principle of punishing religious insults.⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, the long process of drafting the constitution has created political uncertainties and ideological conflicts that have led to violence. In addition, the failure of the successful implementation of the security sector reform did not bring the expected economic developments.

In addition, there have been some popular attitudes towards political parties that have been democratically elected in Tunisia since 2017. Among these attitudes, supporting the weak party system, the UGTT and the military are out of it, and more authoritarian alternatives can be considered obstacles to the democratization of Tunisia. Among these obstacles, military interventionism, supporting non-governmental organizations against political parties, that is, seeing non-governmental organizations like the UGTT or the military as an alternative by the public, will both increase the internal security issues of the country and deal a great blow to the democratic transition process. Furthermore, the UGTT had an important role in the post-2011 period as a mediator between political parties that were mostly engaged in political issues.⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, the parliament's decision to suspend its duties two years after Kais Said was elected President in the 2019 Presidential elections is a clear example of it.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, although Tunisia has come to the fore in its democratization and stability compared to other countries, the increase in discourses against the system and political order within the country in recent years and political polarization have brought about political uncertainties. In short, anti-system sentiments, which can be related to supporting military intervention and anti-political sentiments that can be associated with favoring influential civil societies and eclectic attitudes, are among the main factors that jeopardize democratic consolidation. When the majority of people's faith in democratization, the legitimacy of the regime, and the institutionalization of the party system is challenged, democratic consolidation suffers greatly. However, if support for anti-system alternatives as a prerequisite for democratization is minimal,

⁴⁹⁸ Monica Marks, "Speaking on the Unspeakable: Blasphemy & the Tunisian Constitution," *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, September 4, 2012: [Speaking on the Unspeakable: Blasphemy & the Tunisian Constitution - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

⁴⁹⁹ Holger Albrecht, et al, "Popular support for military intervention and anti-establishment alternatives in Tunisia: Appraising outsider eclecticism," *Mediterranean Politics*, (2021): 8.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1

the regime could open the way for the country to take significant steps toward democratization.⁵⁰¹ In addition, although the Nidaa Tounes won the majority of the votes and 86 seats in parliament in the 2014 legislative elections, there were differences of opinion within the party about forming a coalition with the Islamist party, and these conflicts raised question marks about the political stability of the country. At the same time, Nidaa Tounes found common ground in its attitudes towards the Ennahda Movement, while it was again divided on issues such as economic planning and issues of justice.⁵⁰² Tunisia, on the other hand, signaled that a balance could be established in the country's democratization consolidation by following the moderate policies of the secular party and the Islamist party. However, since the public's trust in the political system was shaken in the 2019 elections, the public did not support either Nidaa Tunisia or the Ennahda Movement, as in the 2011-2014 elections, and instead chose to support Nabil Karoui and Kais Said in the Presidential Elections of 2019. Using data from the Arab Barometer to express the public's disbelief in the democratization process would improve understanding of the subject matter.

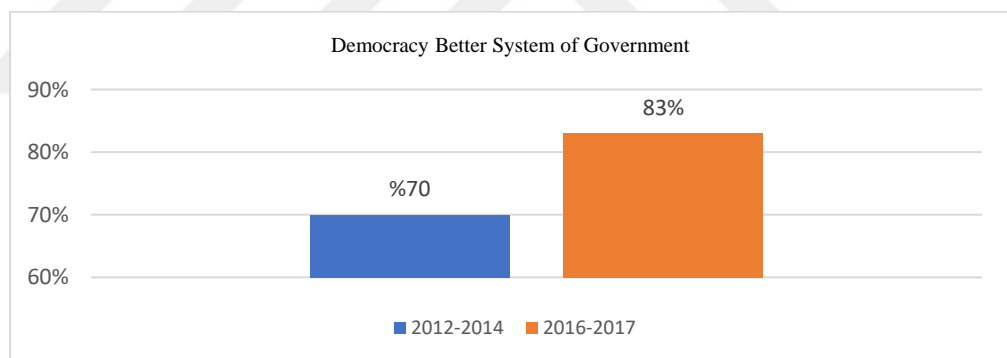


Figure 2. Democracy: A Better System of Government

(Source: Arab Barometer, 2018)

⁵⁰¹ Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe*, jhu Press, 1996, 5-8.

⁵⁰² Albrecht, "Popular support for military intervention", 7.

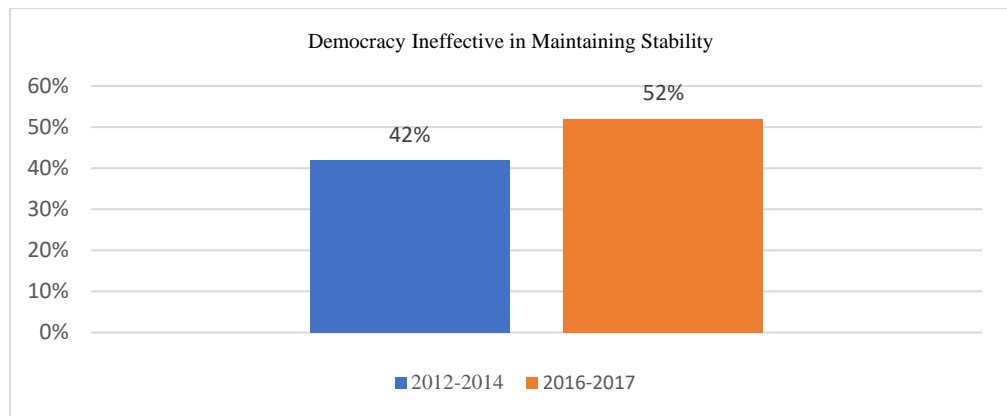


Figure 3. Democracy Ineffective in Maintaining Stability

(Source: Arab Barometer, 2018)

According to Figure 2–3 based on the Arab Barometer data, the views of the Tunisian people on the democratic transition and consolidation process have changed between 2012–2014 and 2016–2017. The main reasons for this are the increasing political tensions within the country, the failure of economic reforms to achieve sufficient success, and problems such as internal security and increasing radicalization that have led to the public's concern that democracy will bring more problems due to the difficulties in the democratization process. For this reason, some people preferred to support non-governmental organizations while others supported the anti-system administrations and the military regime. The general conclusion that can be obtained from this data is that factors such as Tunisia's efforts to democratize its process for many years, which set an example for other countries, may have a negative effect for a while due to increasing dissatisfaction.⁵⁰³

4.3.5.1 Presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019 in Tunisia

After the September and October 2019 legislative and presidential elections, a new political group has emerged in Tunisia supporting "national sovereignty." The populist discourses of the new political actors who gained power after the elections threatened the emergence of problems that would cause the polarization of politicians and the public, both socially and politically. As a result, conflicts arose regarding the consolidation of the country's economic and internal security issues, which it had been attempting to resolve since the Arab Spring. A new government took nearly four

⁵⁰³ Natalya Rahman, "Democracy in the Middle East and North Africa: Five years after the Arab Spring," *Arab Barometer October* (2018): 3-7.

months to create, which was a considerable loss of time. After becoming Tunisia's new President, Kais Saied appointed Elyes Fakhfakh, a member of the Ettakatol Social Democratic party, as the country's new Prime Minister. This signaled the growing polarization between Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of the Ennahda Movement, and the new government.⁵⁰⁴ Nidaa Tounes had 86 seats out of 217 in the 2014 elections, however this number has dropped to 41 in the 2019 elections. Similarly, while the Ennahda Movement attained the rank of the second political party in 2014 with 68 seats, it did not lose its number of seats in the 2019 elections and participated in parliament with 68 MPs. However, in September 2019, the coalition between Beji Caid Essebsi's Nidaa Tounes party and Ennahda Party broke down. Since the Troika government was not very successful in solving economic, political, and social problems between 2013 and 2019, new actors who gained power after the 2019 elections stated that national sovereignty was damaged for this reason, causing an increase in populism.

With the increasing strong state discourses in the country, Nidaa Tounes tried to fulfill the concept of a strong state, and, at the end of 2014, it decided to cooperate with the Ennahda Movement. However, the discourses within the country suggest that Tunisia is not ready for democratization, and they emphasize that the new political order only benefits some groups of politicians, which brings corruption with it. The Nidaa Tounes claimed that the proportional distribution of seats in the parliament, which emerged with the 2014 constitution and election, caused the authority problem. Therefore, these two basic elements can be shown as the most general reasons for increasing corruption and social and economic unrest. For this reason, they emphasized that the only way to get Tunisia out of this quagmire is to centralize power.⁵⁰⁵ In addition to the obstacles encountered prior to the 2019 elections, a number of additional issues, including Tunisia's economic autonomy, gender equality, the abolition of the death penalty, and national identity, were raised by both political players and the general public.

Table 6. Official Results of the 2019 Presidential Elections (First Round)

Candidates	Votes	% of Valid Votes
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⁵⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, "Avoiding a Populist Surge in Tunisia," (2020): 1. (1-15)

⁵⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, "Avoiding a Populist Surge in Tunisia", 3.

Kaïs Saïed	620,711	18.40%
Nabil Karoui	525,517	15.58%
Abdelfattah Mourou	434,530	12.88%
Abdelkarim Zbidi	361,864	10.73%
Youssef Chahed	249,049	7.38%
Safi Saïd	239,951	7.11%

(Source: Carter Center, 2019)

Table 7. Official Results of the 2019 Presidential Elections (Second Round)

Candidates	Votes	% of Valid Votes
Kaïs Saïed	2,777,931	72.71%
Nabil Karoui	1,042,894	27.29
Total	3,820,825	100%

(Source: Carter Center, 2019)

According to Table 6-7, on September 15, 2019, Kais Saïed and Nabil Karoui ran independently as the two winners. On the contrary, Abdelfattah Mourou, the candidate of the Islamist Ennahda Party, took third place with 12.88% of the votes. The governments that came between 2011 and 2019 failed to solve the social, political, and economic problems that were the basis of the revolution. Further, with the increasing legitimacy crisis, the unemployment rate of young people is about 35%, while this rate is higher in economically poor regions. For these reasons, while young people were marginalized, inter-party conflicts among political elites and politization between Islamists and secularists came to the fore instead of keeping the promises made in economic and social terms by not complying with the promises of the revolution. As a result of all of these developments, people believed that the independent candidates were promising for Tunisia's future, as their trust in the traditional political parties had been undermined. The Ennahda and the Nidaa Tounes did not hesitate to define themselves as pro-reconciliation parties. However, the compromises they actually practiced were often controlled by the elite, so compromises based on self-interest emerged. The most obvious example of this is the inclusion of former actors from the Ben Ali regime in the political scene, and as a natural consequence of this, the Islamist-Secular coalition has been exposed to extreme criticism.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶ Anne Wolf, "In search of 'consensus': the crisis of party politics in Tunisia," *The Journal of North African Studies*, no. 24(6), (2019): 883-884.

The recognition of the two independent candidates by the Tunisian people would have given them an advantage in winning the elections. Nabil Karoui was known to the Tunisian people through Khalil Tounes, which was founded by Karoui in 2016. The non-governmental organization acting as a charitable organization rushed to the aid of poor and disadvantaged people. Karoui is a prominent media magnate, also CEO of Karoui & Karoui World and owner of the Nessma television channel. At the time of the election, it was claimed that these aid actions were unfairly buying votes in return for their aid. Kais Saied, on the other hand, displayed a more conservative image due to his ideas. To give an example of his conservative views, he adopted views such as supporting the re-introduction of the death penalty and not supporting the equality of men and women in inheritance law. Furthermore, Saied argued for lessening the role of party politics and consolidating power, believing that the current system did not represent the entire community.⁵⁰⁷

Kais Saied, who received 18.40% of the votes in the Presidential elections held on September 15 and received 72.71% of the votes in the second round held on October 13, became the new leader of Tunisia, where people hoped that Saied would bring the country to a better position. As a result, Saied believed that the role of the people in politics, which he had frequently used during election propaganda as "the people's desire," had been limited following the Arab Spring, and he argued that the people should once again be the central actor in the political arena. He stated that the implementation of equality before the law is the most necessary thing and that social service areas such as education, health, and transportation should be improved. However, he emphasized that achieving economic sovereignty would result in a fight against corruption with the elite. To counteract the growing inequalities between Tunisia's regions, the proportional distribution of political power to the poor regions could well ensure economic sovereignty as well as freer economic policies by removing external pressures. Furthermore, Saied, who was vehemently opposed to the 2014 constitution and the mixed parliamentary system, said that the constitution and voting method primarily benefitted specific groupings of political parties, ignoring popular opinion.⁵⁰⁸ In fact, Tunisia is more split than the government formed in 2019

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 885-886.

⁵⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, "Avoiding a Populist Surge in Tunisia," 6.

and the coalition government formed in 2014 by the Ennahda Movement and Nidaa Tounes. The reason for this is that the increasing division between Islamists and non-Islamists in the country following the coalition in 2014 was mitigated to some measure by the alliance of secular and Islamist parties. After the 2019 elections, splits in the political arena and distrust among the parties started to increase. The reason why the government could not be formed for 4 months after the election is due to this insecurity and polarization between Islamists and anti-Islamists. The political discourses of new political actors such as "strong state, national sovereignty, and anti-corruption policies" confront both the Ennahda and the Nidaa Tounes with the concern that populist discourses will increase, and freedoms will be restricted. This increasing populist political discourse means that Tunisia could experience economic problems and its national economy will suffer due to populism. Thus, the reconciliation established between Islamist and non-Islamist groups after the Arab Spring should be re-established among actors such as political parties, civil organizations, and trade unions.

Tunisia's democratization fueled the country's return to autocracy until the 2019 elections, according to some, and they expressed their concerns about the fragility of democratization due to the lack of an independent judiciary system, corrupted economic elites and a patronage economic system inherited by Ben Ali, and the veto power of old actors in the security sector due to their quasi-veto power. In fact, the hybrid democratic system represents a semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic system rather than full democracy. The main reason for this is the fact that the old political, economic, and administrative networks inherited from the Ben Ali regime are still being implemented, and the traces of these authoritarian approaches are seen in the political arena. Although many people have a common view that democracy has succeeded in Tunisia, this hybrid system will eventually become authoritarian again. While there was a thought that the people would celebrate the anniversary of the revolution in January 2019, on the contrary, protests, strikes, and conflicts regarding power sharing among the actors in the political arena dominated.⁵⁰⁹ We can say that the 2014 constitution was quite successful in terms of democratization and preparing for the process leading to the 2019 elections. When the constitution is

⁵⁰⁹ Max Gallien, and Isabelle Werenfels, "Is Tunisia Really Democratising?," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, no. 13, (2019): 1.

examined in general terms, it ensures the equality of men and women, while at the same time, it limits the role of the army in Tunisian politics, unlike Egypt. However, it includes a series of articles such as the independence of the judiciary, the clear separation of religion and state, and the sharing of executive power between the Prime Minister and the President.⁵¹⁰ Contrary to popular belief, this hybrid democracy should not be perceived as bad, but this system will not be sufficient for the realization of the developments and reforms aimed at both the domestic and foreign policy of Tunisia, and it may hinder the continuity of its democratization. Surprisingly, Tunisia held elections in a similar way at the end of the 1980s, however, signaling that it attaches importance to concepts such as human rights, equality, and freedoms. For this reason, when it is evaluated with the view that history may repeat itself, it is common to worry that the populist approaches of Saied, who became President in 2019, may undergo a short democratization process, as in the 1980s, and then the old authoritarian order may prevail again.

Tunisia was able to strike a compromise following legislative elections in 2014 by gathering at a single spot. This reconciliation, known as a policy agreement, was officially signed by nine political parties and two unions in 2016. The elite-level reunion of the Ennahda Movement and the Nidaa Tounes eroded popular trust in the country's political institutions. For this reason, after the 2014 elections, the people expressed their frustration with administrative and economic corruption, the lack of social and transitional justice, and the increasing unemployment and lack of rights by organizing protests.⁵¹¹ Furthermore, it significantly reduced Islamist and non-Islamic polarization among political actors on the basis of consensus until the 2019 elections, but it could not prevent the emergence of prejudices about ensuring economic stability in the transition period due to Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda's conservative stance on the implementation of economic reforms. These social and economic developments in the country, as well as the people's protest demonstrations, represent the difficult transition period. Furthermore, the Ennahda Movement became the most vocal proponent of reconciliation and repeatedly underlined the importance of implementing security and

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁵¹¹ Rory McCarthy, "The politics of consensus: Al-Nahda and the stability of the Tunisian transition," *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 55(2), (2019): 261-262.

technocracy programs in order not to lose popular support.⁵¹² However, this moderate approach of the Ennahda Movement did not prevent an independent candidate.

With the death of President Beji Caid Essebsi on July 25, the Presidential Elections, which were planned to be organized in November, were held on September 15, 2019. In this election, which was called an important election since it was the second presidential election held since the overthrow of Ben Ali, the turnout rate was not as high as in other parliamentary and local elections. On the contrary, the participation rate in the elections was 48.98% in the first round and 55.02% in the second round of the presidential elections.⁵¹³ Because as majority of young people decided not to vote in the elections. Since no candidate received a majority of votes or 50% of the vote in the first round of presidential elections (Saied-% 18.40, Karoui-% 15.58 percent, Mourou-% 12.88), the second round of elections was held on October 13th. The second round was held between two independent candidates. Kais Saied was proclaimed President with the majority of the votes (72.71%).⁵¹⁴ Nabil Karoui came second with 27.29% of the votes in the second round of the elections. Even though Abdelfattah Mourou, who participated in the elections as the candidate of the Ennahda Movement, followed moderate politics during Ben Ali's term, Mourou, who was affected by political pressure and bans until 2011 due to his oppositional views towards the government, became the third candidate in the first round of the presidential elections with 12.88% of the votes.⁵¹⁵

Table 8. Official Parliamentary Election Results for 2019

Party	Seats	% of Votes
Ennahda Movement	52	19.63%
Heart of Tunisia (Qalb Tounes)	38	14.55%
Free Destourian Party	17	6.63%
Democratic Current	22	6.42%
Dignity Coalition (Al-Karama Coalition)	21	5.94%

⁵¹² Ibid., 272.

⁵¹³ The Carter Center, “2019 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Tunisia,” Final Election Report, (2019): 75.

⁵¹⁴ Abdullah Aydın, and Ömer F. Kahraman, “Arap Halk Hareketlerinin Ülke Demokrasilerine Etkisi Üzerine Bir Analiz: 2019 Tunus Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi Örneği,” *UBAK Uluslararası Bilimler Akademisi*, (2019): 242.

⁵¹⁵ The Carter Center, “2019 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Tunisia,” Final Election Report, (2019): 75-76.

People's Movement	15	4.53%
Tahya Tounes	14	4.08%
Republican People's Union	3	2.10
Nidaa Tounes	3	%1.51
Popular Front	1	1.13%
Other Parties / Total	217	100.00%

(Source: Carter Center, 2019)

According to Table 8, the outcomes of Tunisia's legislative elections in September and October 2019 were highly surprising. It reawakened a political elite that had forgotten the spirit and concerns of the Jasmine revolution of 2011. Furthermore, as the Ennahda Movement transitioned from an Islamist party to a Muslim Democratic party in 2016, discontent in the country grew. One of the key concerns expressed by the public was whether a new right-Islamic party would arise to confront the Ennahda Movement. As a result, in the absence of political Islam, fundamentalist groups and Salafist movements would have been able to exploit this void. For example, after the 2019 elections, Itilaf al-Karama (Dignity Coalition), which has a Salafist orientation, emerged as a new political group in the parliament with 21 seats, the 4th largest power after Ennahda Movement (52 seats), Qalb Tounès (38 seats) and Democratic Current (22 seats).⁵¹⁶ The main aim of the party was to create a camp where those with revolutionary ideas were brought together again. The members who left the Ennahda Movement due to discontent and cooperation with the actors of the old regime also started to support this party. Besides, Itilaf al-Karama (Dignity Coalition) also fiercely opposed the "Administrative Reconciliation Law," enacted in 2017, which allowed supporters of the old regime to return to Tunisia. The Al-Karama Coalition includes human rights defenders, the CPR party, former members of LPR, the Tunisian Organization for Work, some "scientific" Salafists, and the Jabhat Al-Islah Party.⁵¹⁷ The mission of this coalition is to bring together political actors who are dissatisfied with the current administration because of political purposes rather than religious ones. For this reason, the main motivation for ex-members of Islamic-based organizations/parties such as the Ennahda Movement to

⁵¹⁶ Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillò, "Beyond the 'Islamists vs. Secularists' cleavage: the rise of new challengers after the 2019 Tunisian elections," (2019): 1-2. (1-6)

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

join this coalition is based on both political and socio-economic reasons, and focusing on Tunisian identity rather than religion.



CONCLUSION

The concept of "Salafism" has started to take its place in the literature in the 21st century. A lot of research has been done on the concept of fundamentalism in the Islamic sense during this period, with the most influential representatives of this tradition being Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Muhammad Rashid Rida, who lived in the 19th century. The idea of Islamism, which flared up with the Arab Spring, has started to show its effect in many Arab countries, especially Tunisia and Egypt. Along with this, whether Islamist thought has a direct relationship with both modernity in terms of democracy and globalization has become the focus of theoretical discussions. After the attack by Al-Qaeda on the twin towers in America on September 11, 2001, a great war was started against both terrorist attacks, Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabi tradition by the Western public. Furthermore, the political, ideological, and financial support of Saudi Arabia lies at the beginning of the main motivations that are effective in the rise of Salafism as a trend. The gradual strengthening of Jihadist Salafism in the Middle East, which increased during this period, coincided with the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the USA. The fact that Salafis classify themselves as "purist, political, and jihadist" against increasing negative perceptions.⁵¹⁸ It can be said that with the effect of the Arab Spring, political Islam and Salafism rose through elections and legally established parties, as in Tunisia and Egypt, while Jihadist Salafism emerged as an armed struggle in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Salafism was already waiting for an opportunity to rise in many countries. On the basis of this, the increasing rivalries among the Salafists, internal dynamics, mutations and important changes since the Arab Spring and their changing relations with the state play an important role. Important Islamic institutions that accept the main mission of their activities with da'wa and charity, especially Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia, both aimed to protect the Islamic identity and exerted political power

⁵¹⁸ Itzhak Weismann, "CONCLUSION: SALAFISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY," *Salafi Social and Political Movements: National and Transnational Contexts*, edited by Masooda Bano, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, 272-273. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv21ptsbm.18>.

against secularist groups. Hence, these organizations played a very important role in the emergence of a Salafi-Islamist bloc against the Secular-bloc.⁵¹⁹

Furthermore, poverty, lack of fundamental rights and freedoms, lack of democracy, corruption, high inflation, and unemployment rates were among the key causes for the Ennahda Movement and the Freedom and Justice Party to come to power following the Arab Spring. In contrast to Egypt, the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia advocated the formation of Salafist parties and their participation in politics, believing that power sharing was essential.⁵²⁰

Organizations such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Algeria's Islamic Liberation Front, and Iran's Shiite Islamist movement all played a role in the development of Islamist doctrine in the Middle East during the twentieth century. With the Iranian Islamic Revolution that took place in Iran in 1979, the eyes of the whole world were suddenly turned to the Middle East, and concerns about the future and stability of the region increased. Similarly, the fact that Islamists gained political power as a result of the popular support after the 2011 Arab Spring gave the impression that some stones would move in global politics. Concepts such as cultural dependence, neo-fundamentalism, and jihadism have been frequently mentioned in the literature since the beginning of the 2000s, especially after the terrorist incident that took place in the USA on September 11.⁵²¹ The ideas of Islamism and Jihadism have become even more important with the rapid spread of the Arab Spring to other Arab countries. It is undeniable that Islamist thought failed to reach its objectives. The main reason for this is that although the Arab Spring did not emerge as an Islamic movement at first, in the second stage, Islamic organizations made all kinds of democratic promises to gain control. Aside from unfulfilled promises, the Arab Spring was unable to halt the rise of turmoil and violence in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Although Islamists gained political power in Tunisia and Egypt through democratic elections, the crucial point was to keep that power. Mohammed Morsi, was unable to preserve his political authority in Egypt. The Ennahda Movement in Tunisia, on the other hand,

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 279.

⁵²⁰ Ahmet Uysal, "Insights for Egypt's and Tunisia's Islamists from Turkish Experience of Democratic Transition," *Insight Turkey*, no. 15(4), (2013): 70. (69-76)

⁵²¹ Md Muddassir Quamar, "Islamism and Political Challenges in the Middle East," *India Quarterly*, no. 73(2), (2017): 259-260.

did not insist on keeping power in order to prevent the danger of dragging the country into possible chaos after the allegations that it supported the Jihadist Salafism ideology and transferred its power to the technocrat government. Although the Ennahda Movement defined itself as Muslim Democrats, its attempts to form a coalition with the liberal wing caused great criticism from both within the party and from Islamists. Furthermore, after Post-Islamism, it began to be seen that secularism and religious concepts were used together. In particular, some of the Salafi parties expressing that they will adopt modernity and democracy can be shown as examples of these contradictions. Olivier Roy defined the Islamic movements in the Middle East as the failure of Islam, as Islamists continued their missionary activities away from politics and mostly on religious issues. The inability of the Islamists to come together to cooperate can be cited as another reason for this failure.⁵²² However, following the Arab Spring, Islamists, particularly the FJP party and the Ennahda Movement in general, collaborated with both Salafi and secular parties. The difficulty to preserve political stability was primarily due to political inexperience. Although Islamist organizations continued to operate in Egypt and Tunisia in underground for many years, they stayed out of politics.

After the Arab Spring, Islamist groups could not unite and fell short of political participation and democratic transition. Although Tunisia is evaluated in the category of a successful transition process, the view that Islam should be taken as the main resource in the management of the country, combined with the political inexperience of the Islamists, means a completely successful transition has not occurred. In the void left by the Arab Spring, Islamists attempted not to appear as a threat to those in the secular group in order to fulfill their Islamic desires from the past. Therefore, in the statements that the Al-Nour Party or the Ennahda Movement made, too many concessions to secularism and democracy have been given and this was the main point of criticism held by the Islamists. These concessions drew a reaction not only from Islamists, but also from old guard figures and some revolution supporters, who attempted to put the Islamists in a bind by claiming that the Islamists' rhetoric was

⁵²² Ermin Sinanovic, "'Post-Islamism: The Failure of Islamic Activism?'" [Review of *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, by O. Roy], *International Studies Review*, no. 7(3), (2005): 434.

unrealistic.⁵²³ As a result, cooperation between Islamist and non-Islamist groups remained limited.

Salafism ideology resurfaced near the end of the twentieth century in the Middle East and South Africa, with Islam becoming a powerful discourse in the region. However, an analysis of Salafism reveals that it frequently wields significant power not only in the religious sense but also in state administration. While it provides a political and social alternative, it also poses a threat to current administrations.⁵²⁴ On the other hand, the adoption and support of the Salafist ideology by young people, as in Tunisia and Egypt, in socioeconomic terms, while the negative conditions caused the youth to despair, they adopted the Salafist ideology, which was the only way out of this crisis, and saw it as an alternative savior for themselves.

In the 21st century, uncertainties have increased in both Egypt and Tunisia because neoliberal economic policies have had the opposite effect, rather than solving economic problems, leading to increased corruption, unemployment, inflation, and social unrest in these countries. Following that, as the Arab Spring emerged in Tunisia and spread to other Arab countries in a domino effect, people began to confront and express these issues more openly as the country's socioeconomic problems worsened. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Salafist groups, particularly political and Jihadist Salafists, emerged with ideological purity and strong religious ideas to challenge the status quo.

It is not a coincidence that Salafi groups that did not play an active role in Middle East politics in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring gained power by organizing after the revolution. Among the political issues that have grown in importance over the last decade are the Arab Spring and the spread of the Salafism movement in the Middle East. Expectations in the region shifted over time, and the Salafists decided to shift their policies accordingly. In terms of Salafis' desire to play an active role in politics, it is clear that ideologies could change and evolve over time. The Salafi groups, who founded political parties in Tunisia and Egypt, had a moderate

⁵²³ Shadi Hamid, William McCants, and Rashid Dar, "Islamism after the Arab Spring: Between the Islamic State and the nation-state," *The Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World-US-Islamic World Forum Papers 2015*, (2017): 3. (1-20)

⁵²⁴ Abdoulaye Sounaye, "Salafi Revolution in West Africa," ZMO Working Papers, No. 19, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), (2017): 1. (1-15)

approach towards the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement before the revolution. However, they emphasized that they were different in terms of their strategy and ideology. After the Arab Spring, Salafi groups aimed to implement “da’wah” (spreading Islam), “tazkiyya” (purification of Islam) and “tarbiyya” (religious education), which are one of the pillars of their ideology.

While the people were ruled by a dictatorship prior to the revolution, a lack of political alternatives was the primary reason they supported Political Islam in post-revolutionary elections. They believe that political Islam will deliver them from political, economic, and social difficulties. While studying Salafist groups under Political Islam, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ennahda Movement, their economic and social assistance to the public, beginning in the pre-revolutionary period, caused them to be perceived as a "charity organization" rather than a political structure. Furthermore, Salafist attitudes toward the West are an important factor in gaining popularity among the general public. The Salafists' main motivation for supporting democratization, however limited, was to lay the groundwork for the political parties they founded to gain power. As a result, Salafist groups gained political power by garnering a sizable share of the vote during elections. Salafists were popular for a variety of reasons, including the Arab-Israeli War in the 1960s and 1970s, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks. These negative developments not only shattered people's hopes for the future but also undermined regional democratization efforts and boosted the popularity of such groups.

The Salafism movement has taken its place in the Islamic world in general and continues its activities in many countries, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. The presence of Salafists spread rapidly with the support of Saudi Arabia, which is the representative of the Wahhabi tradition. Although the Salafism movement seems to be losing its political influence in recent years, it is at the forefront of the security problems in the region in a radical sense.

The unresolved social and economic problems show that the actions of radical Salafi groups will become more and more extremist. The general conclusion that can

be drawn from this study is that the Salafi groups, fed by the relationship between religion and tradition, will experience in the coming years, not for religion, but for sociological reasons. The interventions of the Salafists in the democratization processes in Tunisia and Egypt will also show what kind of policy these countries will follow against the Salafists in the coming years.



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TURNITIN REPORT

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