Crisis of the Mosques:
State Power and Religious Authority in Tunisia's Transition, 2011–2015

by

Michael Trindade Deramo

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Institute of Islamic Studies
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ABSTRACT

What makes a "radical imam"? Following the overthrow of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, hundreds of state-appointed imams across Tunisia were expelled from their mosques, accused of complicity with the *ancien régime*. Of the new preachers who occupied the empty pulpits, many advocated a more prominent place for Islam in the public sphere; some adopted *jihādī* rhetoric; all represented a challenge to the state's strict control over religious life. In response to this wave of local mutinies — dubbed *la crise des mosquées*, "the crisis of the mosques" — the Tunisian state sought to restore its control by disciplining or removing the newly installed imams, some of whom it labeled as "radicals" and "extremists." This thesis aims to understand who was so labeled, on what grounds, and to what end. Did "radical" refer to the beliefs an imam held, the words he used, or the very fact of his unofficial means of taking office?

This rhetorical strategy reveals that the state was engaged in more than mere administrative management of physical mosques; rather, it elaborated a conformist articulation of Islam as "true" and "moderate," and excluded certain forms of dissent as impermissible deviance from that "truth." Finding empirical and theoretical shortcomings in the exclusively structural approach taken by some scholars of "official Islam," this thesis draws upon discourse theory to refocus attention from the labeled onto the labeler, whose own authority is bolstered by the very exercise of defining deviance and thus orthodoxy. Indeed, political power has been involved in the definition of orthodoxy since the beginning: the thesis takes note of recent scholarship showing how caliphs' labeling of heretics in the early centuries of Islam served to substantiate their own political and religious authority, especially in times of crisis or transition.

This perspective suggests that modern labels like "radical" function similarly to premodern labels like "heretic." To explore this parallel, the thesis follows the history of four modern Arab states as they gradually amassed both state structures and discursive systems to define and enforce the practice of "official Islam." Returning to the case of Tunisia, the thesis extends the historical analysis into the post–Arab Spring period (2011–2015), during which time an Islamist party took power and oversaw the drafting of a new constitution. This study finds that even in this environment of democratization, state elites reached a "consensus" to continue close control of mosques and preaching, going so far as to incorporate that duty into the new constitution. Religious figures who dissented from this "consensus" found themselves tagged as "radicals" and excluded from the political and spiritual life of Tunisia's *deuxième république*.

RÉSUMÉ

Qu'est-ce qu'un « imam radical » ? Après la chute du Président Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali en 2011, des centaines d'imams nommés par l'État tunisien ont été expulsés de leurs mosquées, accusés d'avoir été collaborationnistes avec l'ancien régime. Parmi les nouveaux prédicateurs qui ont occupés les chaires vacantes, plusieurs d'eux prônaient une place plus importante pour l'islam dans l'espace public ; quelques-uns adoptaient le langage djihadiste ; tous représentaient un défi au contrôle strict de l'État sur la vie religieuse. En réponse à cette vague de révoltes locales — « la crise des mosquées » — l'État tunisien a cherché à restaurer son contrôle en disciplinant ou en limogeant les nouveaux imams, dont certains ont été qualifiés par l'État comme des « radicaux » et des « extrémistes ». Cette étude vise à comprendre qui a été étiqueté ainsi, pour quels motifs, à quelle fin. Le terme « radical » fait-il référence aux croyances de l'imam, aux mots qu'il utilise, ou au fait même qu'il a pris ses fonctions de manière non officielle ?

Cette stratégie rhétorique révèle que l'État était engagé dans plus qu'une simple gestion administrative des mosquées physiques ; il élaborait plutôt une articulation conformiste de l'islam comme « vrai » et « modéré », et excluait certaines formes de dissidence comme déviance inadmissible de cette « vérité ». Constatant des lacunes empiriques et théoriques dans l'approche exclusivement structurelle adoptée par certains spécialistes de « l'islam officiel », ce projet fait appel à la théorie du discours pour recentrer l'attention de l'étiqueté sur l'étiqueteur, dont la propre autorité est renforcée par l'exercice de définir la déviance et donc l'orthodoxie. En effet, le pouvoir politique a été impliqué dans la définition de l'orthodoxie depuis le début : ce projet considère des études récentes qui ont prouvé que l'étiquetage des hérétiques par les califes au cours des premiers siècles de l'islam a servi à étayer leur propre autorité politique et religieuse, surtout en temps de crise ou de transition.

Cette perspective indique que les étiquettes modernes comme « radical » fonctionnent de façon similaire aux étiquettes prémodernes comme « hérétique ». Pour examiner ce parallèle, cette étude suit l'histoire de quatre États arabes modernes alors qu'ils accumulaient progressivement des structures étatiques ainsi que des systèmes discursifs afin de définir et imposer la pratique de « l'islam officiel ». Revenant sur le cas de la Tunisie, l'étude prolonge l'analyse historique dans la période après le Printemps arabe (2011–2015), pendant laquelle un parti islamiste a pris le pouvoir et supervisé la rédaction d'une nouvelle constitution. Ce projet révèle que même dans ce milieu de démocratisation, l'élite de l'État est parvenue à un « consensus » pour continuer à contrôler minutieusement les mosquées et la prédication, au point même d'incorporer cette fonction dans la nouvelle constitution. Ce sont les personnages religieux divergeant de ce « consensus » qui ont été étiquetés comme des « radicaux » et exclus de la vie politique et spirituelle de la « deuxième république » tunisienne.

I. Introduction

The self-proclaimed imam

On March 27, 2015, a slight, octogenarian imam climbed the *minbar* of Zaytūnah Mosque in Tunis to deliver the *khuṭbah*, the Friday sermon, much as he had done each week for more than three years. Though his presence had become routine, it was anything but assured: a moment of suspense preceded his arrival as attendees wondered whether he would, in fact, appear.[1] After all, he had been denounced by cabinet ministers, arrested by the police, and defrocked by Zaytūnah's own theological committee. He was named in no fewer than 14 lawsuits seeking to dislodge him from office.[2] Twice had the government nominated replacement imams, and twice again had it dispatched new administrators to regain control of the mosque — all to no avail. On this very Friday morning, the imam had received a court order to vacate the premises within 24 hours.[3] And yet he climbed.

Houcine Laabidi[4] had not become imam of Zaytūnah by the standard means, namely, appointment by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In Tunisia, as in many Muslim-majority countries, the state claims the exclusive right to select imams for the country's 5,000 mosques, although staffing Zaytūnah has always taken priority due to its symbolic potency. Not only is the mosque among the oldest in the world, having served as a center of devotion for well more than a millennium;[5] it had also housed one of the foremost educational institutions in the Islamic world,

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[1] Larbi Derouich, "L'imam controversé de la Zitouna : « J'y suis, j'y reste ! »," *La Presse de Tunisie*, February 16, 2015, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/95918.

[2] Muná al-Būʿazīzī, "14 qaḍīyah... niqābat al-aʾimmah tunaddidu wa-al-wizārah tabḥathu ʿan ḥall: jāmiʿ al-Zaytūnah fī yad "al-mīlīshiyāt"?," *Al-Shurūq*, August 23, 2014.

[3] Khadījah Yaḥyāwī, "Qaḍīyah jāmiʿ al-Zaytūnah: al-ʿUbaydī yuʾajjilu al-tanfīdh... bi-al-istiʾnāf," ibid., March 28, 2015.

[4] This work employs the Library of Congress/American Library Association scheme to transliterate Arabic. The names of Arab authors published in English or French, however, appear as given in their works. Similarly, the names of contemporary Tunisian public figures mostly appear as they are commonly romanized in local media, reflecting local pronunciation and French orthographic convention. This practice aids in indexing and cross-referencing: it is easy to find other works about Bourguiba, but not *Būrqībah* (let alone *Abū Ruqaybah*!). It also respects the spelling used by the individuals themselves instead of etymological pedantry. I hope it is thus an improvisation, in Professor W. C. Smith's words, "both more courteous and more correct."

[5] Khalifa Chater, "Zaytūna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012). The mosque is occasionally called a *jāmiʿ maʿmūr*, evidently because "la prière collective n'y a jamais été interrompue depuis sa fondation": Rym Benarous, "Mosquée Zitouna, le joyau de la Médina de Tunis," *Le Temps*, June 10, 2016, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/97558.

a university of great renown in the late medieval[6] and Ottoman periods. Zaytūnah's political and social stature is evident in its location at the heart of Tunis's old city, where it neighbors the palaces of bygone rulers as well as the seat of Tunisia's modern government. For generations, the *shuyūkh* of Zaytūnah were leading lights of the establishment, scions of aristocratic clerical families[7] who managed the mosque as a quasi-hereditary affair.[8]

Laabidi was no such figure. He hailed from no clerical aristocracy,[9] and while he had studied at Zaytūnah, he had not gone on to serve there as a teacher or a prayer leader. His student days had coincided with Tunisia's independence from France (1956) and the secularization program of the country's first president, Habib Bourguiba (1903–2000). Zaytūnah had been absorbed into the state, its independent sources of revenue closed off, its storied university dismantled. Nationwide, all mosques had their operations restricted to a bare minimum: no one was permitted to preach or organize religious activities other than the imams appointed by the state and monitored by its agents. Consequently, Zaytūnah graduates found little opportunity in a new economy that neither valued a religious education nor, by and large, viewed preaching as a full-time occupation. Many turned to simple trades, for lack of other options.[10] Houcine Laabidi

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[6] Or, following S. D. Goitein, the "Institutional Islam" period; it is no coincidence that the influence of Zaytūnah reached its zenith during the period characterized by the dominance of "regional and mainly non-Arab civilizational complexes" (in this case, the Ḥafṣid). Fred M. Donner, "Periodization as a Tool of the Historian with Special Reference to Islamic History," *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014).

[7] The term "cleric" refers to a specific European and Christian structure that is not found in Islam. Bearing that caveat in mind, I (like other scholars) occasionally use the term to capture a diverse range of religious figures beyond the elite *'ulamā'*.

[8] Arnold H. Green, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). "In the absence of a priestly establishment, such as that of the Catholic Church, control over the Islamic knowledge systems enabled its guardians to create a kind of religious aristocracy of established scholarly families." Meir Hatina and Daphna Ephrat, "Introduction," in *Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma: Islamic and Jewish Perspectives*, ed. Meir Hatina and Daphna Ephrat (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 2.

[9] One commentator fumed: "Qui c'est ce Houcine Laâbidi pour prendre la place des Ennaifer, Djaït, Ben Achour et Mohsen Cherif?" — i.e., the famed families who had presided over Zaytūnah for the previous two centuries. Noureddine Hlaoui, "Le prestige de l'État de droit face aux Deghij, Recoba et, surtout, Houcine Laâbidi," Radio Express FM, December 25, 2014.

[10] Murād bin Muḥammad, "Jāmi' al-Zaytūnah.. khafāyā al-ghalaq," Al-Jazeera, April 22, 2012, http://bit.ly/khafaya-alghalaq. "The heirs of [important *'ulamā'*] families would train in the new secular universities becoming lawyers, politicians, intellectuals. It was the poorer classes, coming from smaller cities or rural backgrounds and trained in traditional schools, who suffered the most from such secular reforms. Having studied in the traditional system they were only fluent in Arabic, yet the official language of the administration was French." Anna Grasso, "Religion and Political Activism in Post-revolutionary Tunisia," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 39 (2016): 203.

became a television repairman.[11]

Then, in 2011, a month of intense protests forced Bourguiba's successor, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (1936–2019), to resign from office and flee the country. The first revolution[12] of the so-called Arab Spring[13] emerged abruptly,[14] yet it persisted beyond the departure of Ben Ali himself. The "street" maintained pressure until the deposed president's relatives, political allies, and other officials tainted by association had also been removed. While journalistic attention focused on the purge of the *ancien régime* from the rapidly reshuffling cabinet,[15] similar processes were underway at the level of society.[16] In particular, Tunisia's mosques, now free from invigilation by the security services, became the terrain upon which local actors struggled to root out the old order. Hundreds of imams were ousted on the grounds that their appointment by the Ben Ali government *ipso facto* called into question their Islamic credentials; new preachers of a sufficiently revolutionary orientation were installed. The state's rapid loss of control over its mosques — what Nadia Haddaoui calls "la crise des mosquées" — would take several years of

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[11] Marine Olivesi, "Tunisian Officials Are Tired of Radicalization from Within," *The World*, Public Radio International, July 13, 2015, https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-07-13/tunisian-officials-are-tired-radicalization-within.

[12] Journalists have often used the term "revolution" to refer to the 2011 uprising. The Tunisian government regularly makes reference to *al-thawrah* and *la révolution*; in some cases this is done to advance certain political claims. Scholars have debated the applicability of the term in a technical sense. This work will occasionally make reference to the event as "the revolution," for the sake of convenience. Even if we conclude that the uprising was not sufficiently successful in transforming Tunisia's political institutions to be called a true revolution, we can observe that revolutionary attitudes and behaviors were at play. (Goldstone's typology would admit the Tunisian case as a "political revolution" but not a "great revolution," in that many economic and social structures have been left conspicuously unchanged, at least thus far. Jack A. Goldstone, "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001).) On the Tunisian uprising as a "conservative revolution" or a Gramscian "passive revolution," see especially Nadia Marzouki and Hamza Meddeb, "The Struggle for Meanings and Power in Tunisia after the Revolution," *Middle East Law and Governance* 8, no. 2–3 (2016).

[13] Similarly, this work will employ the non-neutral term "Arab Spring" (and forsake the scare quotes), again for the sake of convenience.

[14] Although it was not without precedent: a number of scholars have embedded the uprising within the history of protest and opposition politics of the 2000s, while taking care to avoid a reductive teleology. See, e.g., Amin Allal, "Trajectoires « révolutionnaires » en Tunisie. Processus de radicalisations politiques 2007–2011," *Revue française de science politique* 62, no. 5 (2012); Amin Allal, "Becoming Revolutionary in Tunisia, 2007–2011," in *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Laryssa Chomiak, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia," *Middle East Law and Governance* 3, no. 1–2 (2011).

[15] The popular protests came to constitute part of the high politics of the capital, while local forms of resistance went largely unmentioned. Note how Islamic activism is observed by international media only insofar as it is mediated through party politics in David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim, "More Officials Quit in Tunisia Amid Protests," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/19/world/africa/19tunis.html.

[16] The removal of imams "was a direct continuation of mobilization from the uprising but within the religious sphere." Teije Hidde Donker, "Re-emerging Islamism in Tunisia: Repositioning Religion in Politics and Society," *Mediterranean Politics* 18, no. 2 (2013): 219.

concerted action to reverse.[17]

It was amid this environment that Houcine Laabidi returned to his alma mater, evicted its incumbent administrator, and declared himself the *shaykh* of Zaytūnah. Laabidi's actions presented a double challenge because of the mosque's special position in Tunisian history and society. First, by disregarding the educational and professional credentials expected of a *shaykh* of Zaytūnah, Laabidi disrupted the traditional organization of the *'ulamā'* (elite Islamic scholars, singular *'ālim*) and their historically close association with political power. Second, his insurrection represented a pointed commentary on the limits of government — not only the old Ben Ali regime, but *any* government — to assert dominion over religious life, especially over those Islamic institutions that far and away predated the state itself. Despite the temptation to dismiss Laabidi as quixotic or even unhinged on account of his hostile takeover — "le théologien-Rambo," scoffed one magazine[18] — conceptually, his project was not without precedent. Rather, it hearkened back to a time, still within living memory, when the bureaucracy did not penetrate quite so deeply into the fabric of society. And it reflected a real expectation on the part of some Tunisians that the events of 2011 had cleared the way for a reinvigorated and less restricted Islamic life.

Remarkably, the state's initial response to Laabidi was acquiescence. An agreement signed between Laabidi and three cabinet ministers appeared to legitimize both his self-appointment and his plans to restore some of Zaytūnah's former independence.[19] His seizure of the mosque did not preclude the government from recognizing him in writing, suggesting that Tunisia's *deuxième république* might be willing to cede more autonomy to religious figures. The state's approach toward other captured mosques did little to contradict that impression: while the Ministry of Religious Affairs consistently denounced the use of violence in the mosques, it also disclaimed any direct responsibility for physically securing them.[20] The ministry even appeared to favor the

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[17] Nadia Haddaoui, "Haro sur les mosquées : La crise de l'État séculier face au religieux," Nawaat, September 27, 2014, https://nawaat.org/portail/2014/09/27/haro-sur-les-mosquees-la-crise-de-letat-seculier-face-au-religieux/.

[18] "Qui pourra arrêter Houcine Labidi?," *Leaders*, January 3, 2013, https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/10334-qui-pourra-arreter-houcine-labidi.

[19] The document generously granted sole management of the mosque to its *'ulamā'*, describing the institution as *mustaqillah* and *ghayr tābi'ah*, independent and not subordinate — although not subordinate to *what* was unclear. Laabidi, for his part, interpreted the wording to mean that Zaytūnah had been completely released from state control. Hella Habib [Lahbib], "Le bras de fer sur la gestion de la Zitouna," *La Presse de Tunisie*, August 22, 2012, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/54273.

[20] "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses : Les enseignantes religieuses jouent un grand rôle," Tunisie Numérique, September 27, 2011, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/le-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses-les-enseignantes-religieuses-jouent-un-grand-role/76067.

insurgent activists by recommending that "disputed imams" from the time of Ben Ali be replaced.[21] Politicians voiced concerns that the ministry had not taken a sufficiently firm stance against "anarchy" in the mosques, nor initiated any plan of action to restore the government's writ.

In mid-2012, however, Laabidi used inflammatory language during a sermon to condemn artists who had, in his view, blasphemed the prophet Muḥammad.[22] The Ministry of Religious Affairs immediately announced that he was banned from preaching. When Laabidi refused to comply, the ministry took the matter to the judiciary, setting off a three-year political and legal feud over his occupation of the *minbar*. In court, the government argued that Laabidi lacked the proper credentials to preach and that he had not been duly appointed to the office in the first place. Elsewhere around the country, the ministry had begun to use a similar, procedural rationale to dismiss other self-proclaimed imams: that, lacking formal appointment, they were illegal workers.[23] On the other hand, the timing of Laabidi's dismissal clearly communicated a judgement that the content of his sermon was transgressive, which in turn implied that the state conceived of rhetorical boundaries that religious figures were meant to respect. Thus, while the legal arguments for their removal rested on their alleged lack of professional qualifications, the public justifications offered by politicians and the media often made reference to the imams' rhetoric. Through such statements, state elites elaborated a normative vocabulary that stigmatized certain forms of Islamic speech as radical, extremist, partisan, and foreign. In contradistinction, they inscribed other forms as moderate, enlightened, apolitical, and Tunisian, insinuating that this was everything the nonconforming preachers were not.

In this study, I aim to understand how the Tunisian state conceptualized, and reacted to, "radical imams" in the wake of the 2011 uprising. How did the state define and detect these individuals? How did state elites speak about them? Houcine Laabidi forcefully countered his designation as a radical, and the government's case against him, by insisting that he himself was the moderate, a bulwark against both Wahhābī ideas imported from the East and the Westernization of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Laabidi's characterization demonstrates that the

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[21] "Respect de la sacralité des mosquées," *La Presse de Tunisie*, February 23, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/23240.

[22] "Muniʿa imām al-Zaytūnah fī Tūnis min al-khaṭābah," Al-Jazeera, June 15, 2012, http://bit.ly/muni3a-imam.

[23] "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses appliquera la loi contre tout travailleur illégal dans les mosquées": "Un imam prédicateur imposé de force par des salafistes à Sidi Bouzid," Business News, August 5, 2012, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,520,32678,3.

categories of "radical" and "moderate" were relational and highly contested. What, then, did these terms convey, as the state used them? I examine the enforcement actions taken against Tunisia's dissenting preachers because the pattern of exclusion — i.e., which forms of expression the state chose to punish — begins to illuminate the rhetorical boundary between licit and illicit, and thereby the meaning with which labels like "radical" and "moderate" were charged. I also contemplate why the state relied on this characterization and assess its impact upon contemporaneous conceptions of religious authority and the legitimate exercise of state power. For, in confronting *la crise des mosquées*, the state did not limit itself to normalizing the regulatory situation of physical spaces but worked more broadly to "neutralize" the speech produced in those spaces.

I find that, in Tunisia as elsewhere, the deployment of a label like "radical" refers less to an imam's beliefs than to his dissent against the state's claims to religious authority and its delineation of religious and political spheres. Labeling is an advantageous tactic for the state because it operates informally, as the divergent justifications for Laabidi's dismissal demonstrate. Rhetorical boundaries are intimated rather than codified, meaning that they can be tailored to incentivize conformity in various contexts, depending on the state's needs. The practice is not in itself novel: I identify precedents in many Arab states during the nationalist era and indeed as far back as the caliphate in the first centuries of Islam. What the Tunisian case reveals, however, is that these dynamics can find purchase under a democratic regime, even one in which an Islamist political party is in government. Following the moment of reconfigurability offered by the Arab Spring, the persistence of these patterns points to the durability of the modern state as the arbiter of legitimate political and religious expression, as well as (some) Islamists' acquiescence to it.

As for Houcine Laabidi, the state did finally succeed in removing the self-proclaimed imam from his pulpit in 2015. On the following Friday, the minister of religious affairs himself ascended Zaytūnah's *minbar* to deliver the *khuṭbah*, a powerful visual statement of the state's triumph.[24] But what were the terms of that triumph? In allowing a political figure to occupy a religious platform while concurrently punishing religious figures for engaging in politics, the state confirmed its own supremacy as the guardian of secularity. Yet disputation by those religious figures would not cease; rather, it would increasingly be channeled through authorized institutional pathways, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, trade unions, and parliamentary politics. In this sense, the upshot of

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[24] "A la mosquée Ezzitouna," *La Presse de Tunisie*, April 4, 2015, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/98168.

la crise des mosquées, in terms of political philosophy, may be that the secular Tunisian state has defeated Islamism as a revolutionary program by successfully defining it as outside the bounds of a new democratic "consensus."

Structure of the work

Labeling is at once a question of linguistics and of authority. Seeking to understand how and why states engage in labeling, I turn to discourse theory, which studies the systematic structures of ideas through which power authorizes truth and defines deviance. Through this lens, I am able to refocus attention from the labels themselves onto the actors who deploy them. I notice that the construction of a discursive framework of "true," "moderate" Islam does not involve a change in *substance* (doctrine) so much as a change in *authorities*, namely, the state's assumption of the religious authority formerly held by the *'ulamā'*. Change engenders resistance, which the state rhetorically excludes as impermissibly deviant. Because the resistance is continual, so must be the state's assertions, both of its definition of normativity and of its ability to set that definition. The establishment and maintenance of discursive boundaries substantiate the state's authority and shape compliant social relationships.

Returning to the context of the Arab Spring and its aftermath, I examine how an understanding of discourse enriches the literature in political science that is concerned with "official Islam." I find that scholars of a strictly political-institutional mode fail to comprehensively explain why the state expends energy to elaborate a conformist articulation of Islam because of their narrow preoccupation with structural aspects of the phenomenon. Structures tell an important part of the story, but their forms do not necessarily change along with shifts in the discourses that animate them. Scholars who marry structural factors with a discursive analysis, by contrast, are better able to track the migration of religious authority to the secular state and the concomitant exclusion of Islamist dissent as radical or extreme. They also perceive that "official Islam" is not a static set of dogma, but rather fluctuates according to the state's political objectives in a given situation. As anticipated by discourse theory, the net effect is to further the state's consolidation of hegemony.

Similar conclusions emerge from the literature on medieval persecution and inquisition, institutions through which dissenters were labeled for exclusion ("heretics") and the buttresses of a particular social order ("orthodoxy") reinforced. Whereas the bulk of this literature deals with

premodern Europe, I am eager to highlight a sophisticated contribution in an Islamic context: John Turner's recent reappraisal of the Miḥnah, the famous inquisition of the ninth century CE. Albeit distant, this episode is instructive because of the powerful norms it set (or is perceived to have set) for subsequent Islamic tradition. Turner demonstrates how the vocabularies employed during the Miḥnah to define heresy, and thus orthodoxy, served to strengthen the caliph's political and religious authority — his social roles — at a time when both were under assault. Turner is also keenly attuned to the figure of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the *'ālim* who, according to tradition, defied the (unjust) inquisition out of great personal piety — an act that lionized him as a defender of Islam against political interference and imbued him with forms of authority quite separate from, and alternative to, that of the ruler. Notably, in the wake of (though, Turner contends, not proximately due to) the Miḥnah, the relationship between the caliphs and the *'ulamā'* decisively shifted, as doctrinal and legal authority migrated from the former to the latter.

The inquisition literature suggests that the contemporary category "radical" functions as an analogue to the medieval category "heretic," and that similar strategies underpin the construction and deployment of both labels. To explore this question, I survey the trajectories of four modern Arab states as they took control — gradually, in proportion to their administrative capacity and in response to political events — of the mosques and imams in their respective territories. Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and Syria all faced strong, often violent Islamist opposition and regularly combatted it by asserting their own Islamic credentials. These states employed both formal mechanisms and informal vocabularies ("radical," "extremist") to discipline religious figures so as to attenuate potential nodes of contestation. This finding holds true across differences in the type of regime governing the four countries, and has only intensified in order to counter the potential (in some cases the *fait accompli*) of Islamists' acceding to power during the Arab Spring.

I proceed to the distinctive case of Tunisia, which helps us understand both continuity and change in the use of these disciplinary tools. I trace the origin of Tunisia's specific regime of secularity, both its state structures and its discursive strategies, to the governing practices of the colonial period. After independence, these tools became the repertoire through which modernizing governments sought to confer religious legitimacy upon their political programs and the state more generally. As an example of the mutability of the category "radical," I highlight the figure of Abderrahman Khelif, a popular imam whom the state excluded as deviant (rendering him a "martyr") only to later resuscitate him in an attempt to defuse an Islamist challenge.

These patterns of enforcement persisted beyond the 2011 revolution and into *la crise des mosquées* as state elites chose to re-establish control over, rather than liberalize, the religious field. Continued (indeed redoubled) state control of religion became a key pillar of "consensus" among elites — including, crucially, the governing Islamist party al-Nahḍah — regarding the nature of the *deuxième république*. Although such "consensus" was depicted as encompassing the breadth of society, in reality it pointedly excluded dissenting Islamist voices, with deep implications as to the parameters of Tunisian democracy. The constitutional process (2011–2014) thus not only enshrined the state as the guardian of religion but also appropriated new discourses from the religious field, especially that of *takfīr* (excommunication), in a marked expansion of the state's regulatory power. I assess these changes through the career of Ridha Jaouadi, another popular preacher whose notorious sermons tested the limits of *takfīr* as a legal standard. Labeled a radical and removed from the *minbar*, Jaouadi parlayed his experience of persecution into political capital and was elected to Parliament, in some ways accepting (as al-Nahḍah did) the secular state as the framework for deciding the limits of inclusion and the place of Islam in society.

II. Review of Literature

(Un)defining the radical: labels, discourse, and authority

This study does not seek to define labels like "radical" in any absolute or universal sense. For one thing, such an attempt would quickly be caught in complications of language, along multiple dimensions. We cannot unproblematically treat the English terms "radical" and "extremist" as precisely coterminous with their French counterparts *radical* and *extrémiste*, for instance. English has been the dominant language giving voice to the zeitgeist of securitization (politically and academically) after September 11, 2001, giving new, particular meanings to terms like "radicalization"; and while this concept is no less relevant to contemporary speakers of French, the language and its accompanying cultures nonetheless carry their own set of associations with *radicalisme* and *radicaux*, as products of their own histories. (A benefit to the *mcgillois* is that a bi- and indeed multicultural environment prompts constant re-examination of the different interpretations of ostensibly shared concepts.)

Similar effects of diglossia are constantly at work in Tunisia, and similar caution must be taken in assuming that the *extrémiste* printed in French by a newspaper editor maps exactly to the *mutaṭarrif* spoken in Arabic by an army officer or a parliamentarian. Not only might the meanings diverge, but even the choice of language itself is laden in any given situation with the significant social implications of code-switching. Internally to Arabic, the choice of *mutaṭarrif* over, say, *mutashaddid* may be more or less meaningful, as both terms find currency in journalistic and political parlance; on the other hand, words like *ghālin* and its nominal form *ghulūw* also convey excess or transgression, but with important resonance within Islam. (Writing on Saudi Arabia, Roel Meijer notes that "extremism," rendered as *ghulūw*, "has a long history and is preferred to 'terrorism,' which is regarded as a Western, alien term that fails to capture the religious dimension. Extremism is related to other classic concepts, such as deviation (*inḥirāf*) and misguidance (*ḍalāl*)."[25]) The gulf between concepts of Western origin and their proximate Arabic nomenclature

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[25] Roel Meijer, "Saudi Arabia's Religious Counter-Terrorist Discourse," Middle East Institute, February 15, 2012, https://www.mei.edu/publications/saudi-arabias-religious-counter-terrorist-discourse. Romanization adjusted.

is a motif in Islamic studies — consider "orthodoxy,"[26] "secular,"[27] and "religion" itself.[28]

Of course, English is far from immune to synonyms, connotations, and semantic shifts. George Joffé offers a definition of "radicalism" by drawing a careful distinction with "extremism": the former "involves dissent over the normative and hegemonic assumptions behind the definition of the state" whereas the latter aims "to both delegitimise and then to eliminate the state and its associated elites through violence."[29] Yet he is candid about the forces to which such attempts at definition are subject:

> On the face of it … there would appear to be an obvious correlation, if not interlinking, of the two concepts [radicalism and extremism]. But this, in itself, raises a series of further questions, both over the nature of the interlinkage and over the mechanisms by which it occurs, if indeed it does take place. The questions themselves have been transformed by politicians into a series of given assumptions … and they have also been reified into visions of existential and systemic threat.[30]

State elites may conflate radicalism and extremism because "the state is unwilling to accept [radical] challenges, regarding radical criticism as innately illegitimate and criminal," or because "the state receives external support for its refusal to deal with a radical critique. Such a development tends to support the view that the critique itself is essentially illegitimate and criminal — a securitising attitude typical of the decade after 11 September 2011."[31] Conflation is "frequently the dominant normative view such that states feel justified in penalising both [radicalism and extremism] in similar terms."[32]

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[26] Robert Langer and Udo Simon, "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies," *Die Welt des Islams* 48, no. 3/4 (2008).

[27] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 206–9.

[28] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Conception of the Term *dīn* in the Qur'ān," *Muslim World* 64, no. 2 (1974).

[29] George Joffé, "Introduction: Radicalisation and the Arab Spring," in *Islamist Radicalisation in Europe and the Middle East: Reassessing the Causes of Terrorism*, ed. George Joffé (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 2–3. Cf.: "There is a vast difference between mainstream Islamists and jihadis. Only the jihadis deny outright the legitimacy of the state and threaten, as a matter of doctrine, unremitting violence until they have their way." Cole Bunzel, "Jihadism on Its Own Terms: Understanding a Movement," Hoover Institution, 2017, 5, https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/jihadism_on_its_own_terms_pdf.pdf.

[30] George Joffé, "Introduction: Antiphonal Responses, Social Movements and Networks," in *Islamist Radicalisation in North Africa: Politics and Process*, ed. George Joffé (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

[31] Joffé, "Introduction: Radicalisation and the Arab Spring," 3–4.

[32] Joffé, "Introduction: Antiphonal Responses, Social Movements and Networks," 2.

Differently focused, the linguist Paul Flanagan remarks on the peculiar ordering in journalistic writing of phrases such as "a Kenyan radical cleric," rather than the expected construction "a radical Kenyan cleric." He cites this structure as evidence that "radical cleric" has become a common turn of phrase, a "collocation which has a particular interpretation" — namely, that "radical" is an intrinsic quality of a certain classification of cleric.[33] Likewise we find the phrase "a local radical imam,"[34] whereby "radical imam" is understood to represent a somewhat coherent subset of the category "imam." These shifts in meaning and expectation take place over time, although they are neither autonomous nor spontaneous. As evinced in both Joffé's and Flanagan's works, dominant patterns of speech construct and manipulate categories in order to characterize certain concepts and behaviors in certain ways. These processes of characterization reflect the subjective nature of terms like "radical," but they also speak to something larger: the effort of those who employ these dominant patterns of speech to assign purportedly objective definitions to such terms.[35] It is more fruitful, therefore, to examine those attempts at definition, and to track precisely what is being excluded via categorization, than to argue for one or another definition as "correct" in its own right.

In this regard, we might recall Nietzsche's statement that "it is only that which has no history, which can be defined."[36] Concepts that have a history, that change through time and space, cannot be assigned an absolute definition, but only contextual understandings. Applying this dictum to the concept of justice, R. Kevin Hill writes that

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[33] Paul Flanagan, "A Cross-linguistic Investigation of the Order of Attributive Adjectives" (PhD diss., Edge Hill University, 2014), 11–12, http://worldcat.org.

[34] Laurent Vinatier, "Islamist Trends in the Northern Caucasus," *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (2006): 2.

[35] Angel Rabasa (rightly) decries that "the terms 'radical' or 'moderate' are often used in a subjective and imprecise way, without going through a process of critically examining what these terms mean," yet then goes on to commit the category error by treating as essential something that can only ever be contingent. He claims to have rectified subjectivity by developing "a framework to differentiate Muslim religious and political currents according to their overarching ideologies; their preferred forms of government … their political and legal orientation … [and] their attitudes toward the rights of women and religious minorities…. Based on their positions on these marker issues, as we call them, Muslim groups and even individuals fall within a spectrum that has, at one end, moderates who advocate democracy and tolerance and reject violence as a means to attain political goals and, at the other end, radicals who oppose democratic and pluralistic values and embrace violence." The phrase "marker issues" evokes the image of a chemical test, or genetic sequencing — an indelible and scientifically irrefutable diagnosis. Angel Rabasa, "Moderate and Radical Islam: Testimony Presented Before the House Armed Services Committee Defense Review Terrorism and Radical Islam Gap Panel on November 3, 2005," Defense Technical Information Center, United States Department of Defense, November 2005, https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a440170.pdf.

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, trans. Horace B. Samuel (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1913), 93–94.

we can better clarify the sense behind such expressions as "justice" by examining the history of the practices that have shaped our disposition to classify some acts as just. According to Plato, we apprehend an unchanging, independently real *eidos* of justice, and it is our capacity to intuit the presence of justice in an act that accounts for our linguistic dispositions.… On the genealogist's view, however, there is no such *eidos*…. For the genealogist, history itself moulds and shapes our practices and institutions over time; in an account of what moulds the history, we will find nothing but competing and cooperating forces, interpretations, interests.[37]

By "genealogy," Hill refers to the philosophical method proposed by Nietzsche that "explains changes in systems of discourse by connecting them to changes in the non-discursive practices of social power structures."[38] Foucault embraced this method as a way to build upon his own approach, which he called archaeology, an "intellectual excavation" of the ways in which "systems of thought and knowledge (epistemes or discursive formations, in Foucault's terminology) are governed by rules, beyond those of grammar and logic, that operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities that determines the boundaries of thought in a given domain and period."[39] Foucault's archaeology is thus "an alternative mode of history which holds discourse (rather than man) as its object of study."[40] What can this approach clarify about the expression "radical" in an Islamic context? It suggests that if we examine the history of the practices that have shaped the disposition to classify some acts (or speech, or thoughts) as extreme or radical, we, too, will find that no *eidos* of the radical exists, no "*one* feature that is common to all cases,"[41] such that the concept itself must be contextualized and historicized rather than defined.

Making discourse the object of study requires the understanding that "discourse" in Foucauldian parlance refers to more than "ordinary language use."[42] As Foucault himself explains, discourse should be treated not as "groups of signs" (i.e., *words*, which represent *things*), but as

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[37] R. Kevin Hill, "Genealogy," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[38] Gary Gutting, "Foucault, Michel," ibid.

[39] Gary Gutting and Johanna Oksala, "Michel Foucault," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2019).

[40] Rachel Adams, "Michel Foucault: Archaeology," Critical Legal Thinking, November 16, 2017, http://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/11/16/michel-foucault-archaeology/.

[41] Dorothea Frede, "Plato's Ethics: An Overview," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2017).

[42] Charles Lemert, "Discourse," in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

"practices that systematically form [or 'shape'] the objects of which they speak."[43] Put another way, discourse is not itself text, but *sanctions* text (to include writing, speech, and even concepts).[44] The study of discourse pulls apart words and things to illuminate, through the gap, the rules that determine which texts are in fact permitted.[45]

> A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving. Thus, we can assume that there is a set of discourses of femininity and masculinity, because women and men behave within a certain range of parameters when defining themselves as gendered subjects. These *discursive frameworks demarcate the boundaries* within which we can negotiate what it means to be gendered. It is these discourses which heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transvestite subjects engage with when coming to understand themselves as sexed: when a lesbian takes up a "femme" position, it is her perception of the discourse of heterosexual femininity that she is actively modifying and reworking and ultimately destabilising.[46]

Boundaries — "the boundaries of thought" — are an indispensable feature of discourses. Foucault was much concerned to elucidate "the social context in which certain knowledges and practices emerged as permissible and desirable,"[47] whence his notion of the "essential connection between knowledge and power" and his portrayal of their unity, *le pouvoir-savoir*.[48] For Foucault, it is through discourses that power structures behavior,[49] sanctions knowledge and separates it from error,[50] and delimits spheres of inclusion and exclusion.

> Foucault's focus is upon questions of how some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems that have gained the status and currency of "truth," and dominate how we define and organize both ourselves and our social world, whilst other alternative

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[43] Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 66–67.

[44] Sara Mills, *Discourse*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 15. Adams notes: "Following Derrida, I use 'text' to denote both the written and the spoken word." Rachel Adams, "Michel Foucault: Discourse," Critical Legal Thinking, November 17, 2017, n7, http://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/11/17/michel-foucault-discourse/.

[45] "En analysant les discours eux-mêmes, on voit se desserrer l'étreinte apparemment si forte des mots et des choses, et se dégager un ensemble de règles propres à la pratique discursive." Foucault, 66.

[46] Mills, 15–16. Emphasis mine.

[47] Jennifer Anne Pinkus, "Foucault," Massey University, August 1996, https://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/theory/foucault.htm.

[48] Gutting.

[49] Hill.

[50] Devereaux Kennedy, "Michel Foucault: The Archaeology and Sociology of Knowledge," *Theory and Society* 8, no. 2 (1979): 270.

discourses are marginalised and subjugated, yet potentially "offer" sites where hegemonic practices can be contested, challenged and "resisted." … Thus, there are both discourses that constrain the production of knowledge, dissent and difference and some that enable "new" knowledges and difference(s). The questions that arise within this framework are to do with how some discourses maintain their authority, how some "voices" get heard whilst others are silenced, who benefits and how — that is, questions addressing issues of power/empowerment/disempowerment.[51]

Empowerment and disempowerment, the construction of the boundary between knowledge and error, is achieved through the exercise of *pouvoir-savoir* that determines which new statements are taken to belong to the authorized discourse[52] — "that is, their acceptance as statements of truth"[53] — and which are rejected.

As a discourse fixes text with a specific meaning, it disqualifies other meanings and interpretations.… By fixing the meaning of text, and by pre-determining the categories of reason by which statements are accepted as knowledge, a discourse creates an epistemic reality and becomes a technique of control and discipline. That which does not conform to the enunciated truth of discourse is rendered deviant, that is, outside of discourse, and outside of society, sociality or the "sociable."[54]

The essence of the project undertaken by the Tunisian state — indeed by all Muslim-majority states and, increasingly, some European states — is precisely the formation of a set of discourses: "moderate Islam," empowered as truth/knowledge, and "radical Islam," marginalized as outside of sociality. The "moderate" discourse logically precedes, for it represents the assertion of the very authority *to* create an epistemic reality, to control and discipline, *and its acceptance*, whereas the nonconforming response becomes the "radical." We will see this pattern play out in several case studies, wherein the placement of government imams in (formerly) private mosques generates resistance, which the state labels "religious extremism" and meets with force. What distinguishes this new discursive structure, its emblematic "systematicity of … ways of thinking and behaving," is not the imams themselves nor any beliefs they may espouse, although doctrine and rhetoric are certainly implicated. Rather, it is the change in authorities (*instances de*

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[51] Pinkus.

[52] David Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 70.

[53] Adams, "Michel Foucault: Archaeology."

[54] Adams, "Michel Foucault: Discourse."

délimitation) who fix texts with meaning, delineate boundaries of thought, and formulate true and false;[55] the novel configuration of power that that change embodies and which, in turn, the discursive structure substantiates;[56] and the characteristic practices of governing it authorizes (governmentality). Underlying this entire complex is a historically specific "regime of rationality,"[57] a particular form of secularity, in which religious authority (in the view of the state at least) is no longer rooted in fidelity to tradition (*turāth*) and its endogenous pathways of expertise but derived from the state, which now functions as both source and arbiter of Islamic legitimacy.

Religious authority, however, is generally understood to be non-coercive (Weber's *Autorität*), relying on acceptance by its objects.[58] Hence Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke's definition of religious authority as

> the ability (chance, power, or right) to define correct belief and practice, or orthodoxy and orthopraxy, respectively; to shape and influence the views and conduct of others accordingly; to identify, marginalize, punish or exclude deviance, heresy and apostasy and their agents and advocates…. Religious authority can be ascribed to individuals, groups of people, or institutions. While it rests on certain qualities and/or qualifications, inherited or acquired, it is the willingness of *others* to credit any given person, group or institution with religious authority that ultimately renders it effective. Like any kind of authority, religious authority does not denote a fixed attribute, but is premised on recognition and acquiescence. Put differently, it is relational and contingent.[59]

The states under discussion in this study clearly envisage such a role for themselves and behave accordingly. They are not dispassionate regulators of religious spaces, stewards of the *awqāf*, but

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[55] "True or false formulation": Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 79. He says: "my problem is to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth (I repeat once again that by production of truth I mean not the production of true utterances, but the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent)."

[56] "Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct and constitute them." Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 3.

[57] "To understand power as a set of relations, as Foucault repeatedly suggested, means understanding how such relations are rationalized. It means examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices and systems of practices." Gutting and Oksala. "After all, one cannot govern rationally if one does not work with a form of reasoning that prescribes what it means to do so: this, of course, is precisely the point conveyed by the notion of power-knowledge." Lars Cornelissen, "What Is Political Rationality?," *Parrhesia* 29 (2018): 143.

[58] As with any authority operating in any discursive field: "The qualification for any authority to [identify, name, and classify an object] is simply that it can, and that its doing so is accepted and taken up by others." Webb, 65.

[59] Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke, "Introduction: Religious Authority and Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies: A Critical Overview," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, ed. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–2.

claim the right to define Islamic normativity and to punish deviance as a component of their *power* (Weber's *Macht*) — that is to say, backed by their coercive apparatuses. At a theoretical level, this dynamic means that "in the present context … authority and power are not always easy to distinguish,"[60] and raises important questions in light of the well-known Qur'ānic pronouncement that "there is no compulsion in religion."[61] At the level of praxis, it suggests that the state's coercive power (its ability to define and enforce Islamic normativity through legislative, administrative, and judicial actions) and its religious authority (its ability to have its definitions perceived as proper by its Muslim citizens) will not always correlate.

Marc Gaborieau and Malika Zeghal describe as much in their conceptualization of the *'ulamā'* and political power (alongside the Ṣūfī experience) as separate but ceaselessly interacting poles of religious authority.[62] The sovereign, they explain, possesses

> une autorité religieuse qui lui permet de réprimer les excès et les hérésies, et d'arbitrer les conflits des deux autres pôles religieux…. En ce sens le pouvoir politique revendique l'autorité religieuse suprême, les oulémas et les soufis lui étant juridiquement subordonnés, et dépendant souvent de lui pour leur financement…. Mais, en un autre sens, le pouvoir est dépendant d'eux pour sa légitimation et sa protection spirituelle, car les religieux … ont beaucoup de ressources pour déjouer ses tentatives de mainmise…. Entre les trois pôles de l'autorité religieuse il n'y a donc pas de hiérarchie univoque fixée une fois pour toute, mais une dialectique incessante qui joue sur plusieurs points de vue et brouille les rôles sans qu'il y ait réellement de vainqueur.[63]

This "dialectique incessante" is what constitutes "Muslim politics," Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori's term for "the competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, formal and informal, that produce and sustain them."[64] Quintan Wiktorowicz reformulates: "Muslim politics involve attempts to monopolize 'sacred authority' — the right to interpret Islam and religious symbols on behalf of the community."[65]

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[60] Ibid., 1.

[61] *The Qur'an: English Translation and Parallel Arabic Text*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43.

[62] Marc Gaborieau and Malika Zeghal, "Autorités religieuses en islam," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no. 125 (2004): 5–8.

[63] Ibid., 7–8.

[64] Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.

[65] Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 45. "The political struggle for the monopoly of the

Like Wiktorowicz, many scholars of religious regulation in the Muslim world speak in terms of the state's pursuit of hegemony or monopoly over religious affairs. Ann Marie Wainscott writes of "state attempts to monopolize the religious field" in Morocco,[66] Robert Bianchi of the Egyptian state's "quasi-monopoly in religious censorship and interpretation,"[67] and Sarah Feuer of "states' pretension to a monopoly on religious interpretation and practice" in the Arab world generally.[68] Also like Wiktorowicz, these scholars take care to refer to a *process* rather than a *fait accompli*. Wainscott explains why: "states are not monolithic actors capable of fully taking control of Islam in theory or in practice…. The state may flood the religious sphere with content, but it still cannot fully control that sphere. Morocco's bureaucratization of religion is impressive in scope, but it is not totalizing."[69] Peter Mandaville notes simply that "the state's monopolization of Islamic normativity is never complete."[70] Even when monopoly is depicted more firmly (as when Mohammed Tozy writes of "a government monopoly of the interpretation of religious precepts" in the postcolonial Maghreb,[71] or Vincent Geisser and Éric Gobe of Tunisia's "monopole étatique de la production de la norme islamique"[72]), the statement is accompanied by a discussion of the continual negotiations and reassertions that substantiate the state's claim. Competitors, who may be *'ulamā'* or entrepreneurial figures like Houcine Laabidi, pose counterclaims — sited in marginalized discourses — also in continual fashion. Hence Geisser and Gobe depict the state as constantly exerting itself to "consolider son monopole" or "réaffirmer son monopole."[73] Zeghal

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religious discourse is extremely important, as religion is one of the main sources of mobilization in Tunisia as well as in other Arab States." Grasso, 198.

[66] Ann Marie Wainscott, *Bureaucratizing Islam: Morocco and the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 96.

[67] Robert Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism: Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 180, quoted in Wiktorowicz, 48.

[68] Sarah J. Feuer, *State Islam in the Battle against Extremism: Emerging Trends in Morocco and Tunisia*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Washington, 2016), 2.

[69] Wainscott, 18. "The space that religion may properly occupy in society has to be continually redefined by the law because the reproduction of secular life within and beyond the nation-state continually affects the discursive clarity of that space." Asad, 201.

[70] Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007), 148.

[71] Mohammed Tozy, "Islam and the State," in *Polity and Society in Contemporary North Africa*, ed. I. William Zartman and William Mark Habeeb (1993), 102.

[72] Vincent Geisser and Éric Gobe, "Un si long règne… Le régime de Ben Ali vingt ans après," *L'Année du Maghreb* 4 (2008).

[73] Ibid. These dynamics are very similar to those that produced the monopoly on violence, generally regarded as a *sine qua non* of the modern state. States substantiated this authority not only through the accretion of *institutions* but also through the construction of *discourses* distinguishing legitimate and illegitimate uses of force. See Charles

perhaps puts it most ably in describing the crosscurrents at work in Morocco, whereby

> the religious authority of the monarchy and the power of regulation of religious institutions it has appropriated for itself are at one and the same time a resource and a constraint for the king. If the monarchical state strives to appropriate, demarcate, and use Islamic language and institutions, it also works at circumscribing Islam to precisely delineated realms where religious narratives used by its political competitors cannot threaten the monarchy's control over the Moroccan state…. The monarchy does mobilize religion and acts as a religious actor. However, this instrumental relationship between the monarchy and Islam is not always effective in enabling the monarchy to secure its own power. Indeed, non-state actors also build such a relationship and might compete with the monarchy on religious terms. This is why the monarchy painstakingly works at devising and redesigning the unstable boundaries between what can be allowed to be religious and what has to manifest itself as an activity in which religion does not intervene…. Hence, the Moroccan state is presenting itself and deploying its authority as a "Muslim state" while at the same time — without ever enunciating the word "secular" — establishing and imposing specific spaces of secularity.[74]

Thus the state asserts (consolidates, reaffirms) its claim to hegemony through definition. Both Krämer and Schmidtke's and Gaborieau and Zeghal's explications above point to the definition of orthodoxy and the exclusion of heresy as activities integral to the exercise of religious authority.[75] The medieval resonance of these terms may at first seem incongruous against the activities of modern and "secular" states;[76] moreover, as the contributions of Benjamin Bruce and Vish Sakthivel will illustrate, the content of official Islam is not a static set of doctrines, what we might readily label "orthodox belief" and counterpose to other doctrines called "heresies." Talal Asad, however, understands orthodoxy differently: it is "not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship — a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace

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Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[74] Malika Zeghal, *Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism, and Electoral Politics*, trans. George Holoch (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2008), 268–69.

[75] "While power is a fact authority is a construct, and one to whose construction that of deviance is nearly allied." Robert Ian Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007), viii.

[76] I have in mind Nawal El Saadawi's quip: "There are no secular states. All states are religious." Quoted in Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1.

incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy."[77] Asad views Islam itself in similar terms: it "is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition."[78] Gregory Starrett agrees that traditions are not "bounded capsules of observed behavior and recorded belief," but rather "segments of larger-scale social relationships that are constantly in the process of being created, renewed and dissolved…. So it is precisely the *processes* of creating relationships of orthodoxy that are at stake … rather than the finished product."[79] Ahmed El Shamsy writes:

> Orthodoxy as a social phenomenon is not a "thing" but rather a process. For theological doctrines to become established as orthodox, they must find a place in the constantly changing net of social relations and institutions that constitute society. This is a two-way process: ideas can reconfigure these relations and institutions, but the social context also actively receives ideas and promotes, channels and/or suppresses them. Thus the history of orthodoxy cannot be simply a history of ideas, but a history of how, in particular situations, claims to truth came to be enshrined in social practices, such as rituals, and in institutions, such as the "community of scholars."[80]

The opposite must then also be true, that heresy inheres in the processes of creating (negative) relationships of power rather than in "bounded capsules" of (dis)belief. To borrow from R. I. Moore's study of persecution in medieval Europe:

> From the point of view of the faithful … the heretic is self-defined, and indeed self-proclaimed, as the person who by his own deliberate choice denies the authority of the Church. But by the same token to put it in that way is to be reminded that heresy exists

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[77] Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 15. "[Sherman A.] Jackson holds that all it takes to establish and sustain an orthodoxy is authority, which may be formal or informal. All the more as there is no institution that defines right belief, issues of orthodoxy and heresy are debated topics of public interest." Langer and Simon, 277.

[78] Asad, *Idea*, 14.

[79] Starrett, 12–13. "Josef van Ess emphasizes the processual character that leads to the establishment of orthodoxy. In his view, it is the expression of a consensus but also of a network of power. Its modern consolidation was generated by the omnipresence of public control and the rise of the media." Langer and Simon, 279. In a very different context: "'Orthodoxy' figures here not as a stable category describing either transcendent truth or doctrine sanctioned by prior articulation within the Protestant tradition, but as a mutable, socially produced category — a description of the official structures and codes designed to mark lawful from illegitimate opinion in Puritan New England. Its contents were polemically constructed to set boundaries and establish dominance, in terms of defining both key words and practices." Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 4–5.

[80] Ahmed El Shamsy, "The Social Construction of Orthodoxy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97. On the "two-way process," cf.: "[Heresy] has social origins but in turn influences social arrangements." Lester R. Kurtz, "The Politics of Heresy," *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 6 (1983): 1087.

only in so far as authority chooses to declare its existence. Heretics are those who refuse to subscribe to the doctrines and acknowledge the disciplines which the Church requires: no requirement, no heresy. Heresy (unlike Judaism or leprosy) can arise only in the context of the assertion of authority, which the heretic resists, and is therefore by definition a political matter. Heterodox belief, however, is not. Variety of religious opinion exists at many times and places, and becomes heresy when authority declares it intolerable.[81]

And so in contemporary sociology:

> social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label…. In addition to recognizing that deviance is created by the responses of people to particular kinds of behavior, by the labeling of that behavior as deviant, we must also keep in mind that the rules created and maintained by such labeling are not universally agreed to. Instead, they are the object of conflict and disagreement, part of the political process of society.[82]

Thus John Turner states that "the rhetoric of heresy is concerned not with the heretic, important though he may be, but rather with the orthodox and how and by whom that is defined, and, of most importance, who is included within that label."[83] Turner's work on inquisitions, explored below, demonstrates that a label such as "heretic" does not merely describe; it asserts the labeler's own role as an authority, and makes claims as to the target's exclusion from the community as a social and political matter. In Maribel Fierro's words: "The adoption of heresy and the imputation of heresy to others were statements about communal membership and exclusion."[84]

Here we find clear parallels between the labeling of heresy in the medieval context and that of radicalism in the contemporary. In both cases, political elites deploy labels under certain

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[81] Moore, 64.

[82] Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1963), 9, 18.

[83] John P. Turner, *Inquisition in Early Islam: The Competition for Political and Religious Authority in the Abbasid Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 25.

[84] Maribel Fierro, "Religious Dissension in al-Andalus: Ways of Exclusion and Inclusion," *Al-Qanṭara* 22, no. 2 (2001): 464. The "discursive tradition [of Islam] is constituted and reconstituted not only by an ongoing interaction between the present and the past … but also by the manner in which relations of power and other forms of contestation and conflict impinge on any definition of what it is to be a Muslim." Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 6.

circumstances to demarcate inclusion in and exclusion from society. However, religious discourses cannot be completely institutionalized or monopolized by the ruler or the state because new, unlicensed sources of authority emerge from within discourses alternative to the authorized/orthodox/hegemonic.[85] As Robert Langer and Udo Simon note, "the power of orthodoxy is not necessarily allied with political power or bound to offices and institutions as it rests upon the hidden rules that determine what can or cannot be said and thought."[86] The negotiation and (perhaps violent) contestation over the authority to set such "hidden rules" — informal "red lines" — give shape (that is, contextualized meaning) to the categorical dyads of orthodox/heretical and moderate/radical.

Official Islam between structure and discourse

The foregoing discussion established that labels serve as a discursive tool deployed iteratively to substantiate religious authority — to construct the social relationships that constitute orthodoxy. I contend that this framework opens a more nuanced understanding of state behavior than the conventional dichotomy of "official" and "unofficial" Islam. This is because "official Islam" is often conceptualized as elite, formal institutions, a vestige of the ways in which previous generations of scholars used the term. For example, "official Islam" once referred to the "establishment" mode of the literate *'ulamā'* as distinguished from the "popular" mode of folk, and especially Ṣūfī, tradition.[87] In this usage, "official" meant "juridical" or "legalistic," and while *'ulamā'* did maintain privileged relationships with rulers (e.g., by holding high office), there was no suggestion of a distinct formulation of Islam for their benefit.[88] As Patrick Gaffney emphasizes,

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[85] "Because any language that can command attention is an 'authorized language,' invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated. This is true not only of establishment language but also of the heretical discourses which draw their legitimacy and authority from the very groups over which they exert their power and which they literally produce by expressing them: they derive their power from their capacity to *objectify* unformulated experiences, to make them public — a step on the road to officialization and legitimation…. Heretical power … rests on the dialectical relationship between authorized, authorizing language and the group which authorizes it and acts on its authority." Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 170–71.

[86] Langer and Simon, 281. Cf. Peter Berger's description of religion "as both a 'world-maintaining' and 'world-shaking' force capable of legitimating or challenging power and privilege." Dwight B. Billings and Shaunna L. Scott, "Religion and Political Legitimation," *Annual Review of Sociology* 20, no. 1 (1994): 173, https://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.20.080194.001133.

[87] Patrick D. Gaffney, "Popular Islam," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 524 (1992).

[88] "This is not to say that states and sovereigns did not contribute to the dissemination of the [legal] schools by extending support, employment, and patronage to specific jurists or did not in practice shape doctrine." Guy Burak,

the official/popular binary in Islamic historiography does not map to the contrast between government and private mosques that crystallized in the 20th century.[89] In a related sense, "official Islam" found currency in reference to the religious bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire, encompassing, in Bernard Lewis's phrase, "the Caliphate and the rest of the panoply of official Islam."[90] In this context the term conveyed something like "officialdom" and plainly had elite state structures in mind (Lewis was writing about the abolition of Ottoman institutions by the new Turkish republic in 1924).

In borrowing forward the term "official Islam" into contemporary political science, we risk adopting the predispositions inherent in these earlier renditions. A review of scholarship on official Islam after the Arab Spring bears out this concern: a strictly political-institutional orientation foregrounds elite structures of state, overshadowing the ways in which discourses are deployed at the level of society to shape and enforce a conformist (i.e., state-supporting) articulation of Islam. On the other hand, works that pair an awareness of structure with a subtler analysis of discourse are able to explain why states rely upon categorizations and red lines to achieve their disciplinary aims. To date, however, this approach has only been applied to cases in the nationalist era and under the Global War on Terror. In studying the Tunisian case, I aim to extend the analytical advantage of discourse theory into the period following the Arab Spring, during which time states' reliance on informal rhetorical controls only intensified.

The political-institutional approach: the subfield of "official Islam"

Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin, who count themselves among the vanguard of a "newly burgeoning field of study of the role of state religion in the Arab world,"[91] illustrate the terminological problem. Writing in the wake of the Global War on Terror and the Arab Spring, they set out a reasonably expansive definition of official Islam as "the elements of religious

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The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Ḥanafī School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9. Yet even the development of a state *madhhab* (as in the Ottoman example that Burak explores) worked within the discursive tradition, whereas the rupture represented by official Islam changes the bases of authority entirely.

[89] "It gravely oversimplifies matters to say that this distinction between [government and private] mosques reproduces the contrast of official and popular Islam." Gaffney, 47.

[90] Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Revival in Turkey," *International Affairs* 28, no. 1 (1952): 41.

[91] Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin, "The Ascendance of Official Islams," *Democracy and Security* 13, no. 4 (2017): 367.

authority that are under the direct or indirect control of the regime."[92] This statement reflects the fact that contestation over Islamic *authority* is underway. However, the authors also gloss the term "more concretely" as "state-sponsored religious institutions" — that is, "the state religious institutions that support the political order or local political authority and its interests which are tied up with the interests of the state."[93] Of course, institutional arrangements can signal where authority resides and how it is exercised, but the selection of institutions under study will determine the range of observations possible. Although there is no reason why "religious institutions" here cannot include mosques and preachers (they, too, are institutions[94]), Robbins and Rubin make clear through their case studies that they conceive official Islam to include only elite state bodies. This restricted focus results in theoretical and empirical blind spots.

In their work on Jordan, Robbins and Rubin criticize "much of the scholarship" for a preoccupation with social movements and for thereby "overlooking the role of the state in affecting religious space."[95] They draw a very — perhaps imperceptibly — fine distinction between Quintan Wiktorowicz's work on Jordan (as examining "the state's use of religious instructions to regulate the religious public space"[96]) and their own (intending to analyze "the relationship between the state and religious actors"[97]). While social movement theory does inform Wiktorowicz, the aim of his study is precisely to explore how "the Jordanian state utilizes an array of administrative techniques to limit the scope and content of civil society organizations."[98] Wiktorowicz does not overlook the role of the state; he places the state at the center of his analysis, but he views it through its multifarious bureaucracy. Wiktorowicz is therefore able to detect trends and changes in state behavior at its contact points with society. Robbins and Rubin, eager to "[bring] the state back

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[92] Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin, "The Rise of Official Islam in Jordan," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 1 (2013): 61.

[93] Ibid., 60–61.

[94] "What are institutions? The most common definition for institutions is: rules…. Whether we mean formal institutions or informal rules and norms, they are important for politics because they shape who participates in a given decision and, simultaneously, their strategic behaviour." Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism," in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, ed. Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 123–24.

[95] Robbins and Rubin, "Rise," 67.

[96] Ibid., 60n5.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Wiktorowicz, 3.

in,"[99] pitch their analysis high and confine it to "three pillars" of official Islam: the Ministry of Awqāf, the Qāḍī al-Quḍāh (head of the so-called *sharī'ah* courts), and the Dār al-Iftā' (the central *fatwá* body).[100] These institutions matter, but they do not convey the totality of the state's activity in a way that fulfills the authors' stated aim of "demonstrating how some authoritarian states manage public spaces through the development of institutions to counter significant threats."[101]

Consider Robbins and Rubin's view of the Ministry of Awqāf: they note that it "oversees the mosques, shrines, and holy sites. It also employs imams, khateebs, and mosque personnel and means [*sic*] they are civil servants."[102] This is indeed the ministry's remit, but its capacity to project that authority has not been uniform across time and space. The Jordanian state has had to actively "develop" these local institutions (by way of the ministry as well as other means) to further its interests and counter its perceived threats. This development, too, should serve as evidence of the expansion of official Islam, whereas Robbins and Rubin rely almost exclusively on the rate of *fatwá* issuance by the Dār al-Iftā'. They correlate rises in *fatwá* publication with periods of Islamist strength in Parliament, which is a useful antiphony to explore. However, they present no comparable metric relative to the Ministry of Awqāf; in fact, they scarcely analyze the ministry at all. Only in passing do they mention mosques and preachers, the most pervasive "elements of religious authority" in society, and do not address the mechanisms by which these have been brought "under the direct or indirect control of the regime."

Consequently, a gulf opens between Robbins and Rubin's interpretation of events and Wiktorowicz's. Robbins and Rubin posit that the Jordanian regime had "limited interest in the public religious space" until the Iranian revolution in 1979, whereas Wiktorowicz anchors his historical analysis on the increased tempo of state control over preaching beginning in the 1960s.[103]

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[99] The allusion is, of course, to Theda Skocpol's notion of the "explanatory centrality of states as potent and autonomous organizational actors." That is to say that states are not merely sites for contestation among social groups, but in fact possess their own interests and "pursue their own goals." (Dessouki's invocation of the "will" of the state also echoes this outlook.) Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6, 8–9. However, the latter position need not always be true, nor exclusively true in a situation: Lisa Anderson more skeptically recommends that "whether the state in any given case acts as an independent causal factor, autonomous from social forces, or serves simply as a vessel for social conflict and domination is more appropriately the subject of empirical investigation than *a priori* assumption." Lisa Anderson, "The State in the Middle East and North Africa," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 1 (1987): 1.

[100] Robbins and Rubin, "Rise," 61.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 62.

[103] Ibid., 64. Cf. Wiktorowicz, 57.

Robbins and Rubin omit the formal expansion of the Ministry of Awqāf "from the late 1960s onward," whereas Wiktorowicz is able to address the import of the ministry's "functional differentiation," by which "departments were set up to regulate the minutia[e] of religious activity, including the *khutba*."[104] The meticulous detail implicated in this type of regulation signals a broader *social* project to arrogate religious authority than is revealed in the interactions among the "three pillars" at the level of the cabinet.[105] Furthermore, Robbins and Rubin do not take stock of the rhetorical red lines imposed by the state, which define exactly where "public religious space" lies and who is empowered to patrol its boundaries. They appear to accept the state's grand policy initiatives in response to the Global War on Terror — a conference on "moderation in Islam" in 2004, the Amman Message of 2004, a *fatwá* forbidding *takfīr* in 2005, and Parliament's passage of a law in 2006 restricting which *'ulamā'* could issue a *fatwá* — on the state's own terms, concluding that their objective is "to counter Islamic extremism."[106] A holistic analysis would couple the creation of "moderate Islam," its contraposition to a particular portrayal of "extremism," and the identification of "moderation" with a set of state-endorsed *'ulamā'* on one hand, with the types of enforcement unfolding in the mosques on the other hand, to illuminate the full import of official Islam *qua* centralization of religious authority (not merely forms) in the state.[107]

Similar issues arise in Robbins and Rubin's investigation of the Tunisian government's deployment of official Islam after 2011. They group Tunisia with Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco as states that "responded to the initial rise of popular Islam as well as the threat from extremist groups by enhancing their support for official Islam," then endeavor to explain how the four states pursued "similar goals" but took "distinct approaches" to realize them.[108] Again the authors distance themselves from a "dominant focus … on a bottom-up approach studying Islamist groups" and

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[104] Wiktorowicz, 57.

[105] Cf.: "Moroccan religious policy is so detailed that it articulates how long citizens should linger on particular vowels when reciting the Qur'an. It is so sophisticated that it employs a team of bureaucrats to produce beautiful, colorful, and detailed content on state-sponsored religious websites. Such a well-financed, well-organized policy is intended to address multiple objectives, of which fighting terrorism is only one." Wainscott, 2.

[106] Robbins and Rubin, "Rise," 70. Contrast this approach: "In analyzing recent religious reforms, many observers take the state's word at face value, assuming that reforms are intended to curb religious extremism. This book approaches Morocco's reforms to the religious sphere with a more critical eye, treating them as something in need of explanation, rather than as an obvious response to religious extremism." Wainscott, 1.

[107] Curiously, Robbins and Rubin end their study of Jordan with an attempt to measure the "success" of official Islam through survey data, wherein respondents were asked whether "men of religion (*rijāl al-dīn*) should influence decisions of government." The more perspicacious question might have been whether government should influence decisions of men of religion. Robbins and Rubin, "Rise," 71–73.

[108] Robbins and Rubin, "Ascendance," 364.

"seek to redirect attention to … the role of state religion."[109] And again this constraint leads them to locate "the state" among elite structures: Robbins and Rubin only address the state's relationship with "traditional centers of religious learning or power such as al-Azhar in Cairo, al-Karaouine in Morocco, or Hawzah Qom in Iran."[110] In the Tunisian case, the authors can only hold up Zaytūnah for inspection and, owing to its historical diminution, label the country's "inherited religious institutions" *in toto* as "weak."[111] Even the Ministry of Religious Affairs falls outside the definition and cannot factor into the analysis.[112]

As a result, Robbins and Rubin assess that the Tunisian state "did not initiate a massive period of upgrading official Islam" in response to the Arab Spring (despite their own premise that the four states were selected for having "[enhanced] their support").[113] The authors are instead impressed by Tunisia's cooperation agreement with Morocco regarding the training of imams; on this basis, they suggest (in their "contribution … to theory-building") that Tunisia's strategy to harness official Islam relied solely on "outsourcing" or "importing religious legitimacy."[114] Such a conclusion is only possible if one neglects the state's sustained campaign of enforcement against preachers and the integral role it played in the (re)assertion of its religious authority. In reacting to *la crise des mosquées*, the Tunisian government undertook a conspicuous and persistent effort to reassert discipline locally by establishing red lines for permissible religious expression and then dismissing, coercing, or arresting nonconforming imams. This effort was *nothing if not* a "massive period of upgrading official Islam," a reclamation of the state's pre-existing religious authority and, through the constitutional process, a dramatic expansion of its claims. The major players, however, were not *'ulamā'* at Zaytūnah but officials in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the diffuse corps of imams whom the ministry sought to discipline. The Tunisian state, like the Jordanian, *does* possess strong religious institutions that exert tangible control deep into society

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[109] Ibid., 367.

[110] Ibid., 368.

[111] Ibid., 381. This categorization allows the authors to construct a tidy two-by-two matrix of "regime strategies toward official Islam" and to conclude that the "structural constraints of regime type and the relative strength of inherited institutions shapes [*sic*] the way official Islam has been employed." The empirical work is so flawed, however, as to render the inductive exercise invalid. Ibid., 380, 368.

[112] Contrast the thoughtful analysis of "the blessings of a robust institutional endowment," especially the passages concerning the Ministry, in Sarah J. Feuer, *Regulating Islam: Religion and the State in Contemporary Morocco and Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 118–27.

[113] Robbins and Rubin, "Ascendance," 383–84.

[114] Ibid., 381–82.

— only they are the state's agencies, not ancient universities. Again a focus on a narrow set of elite structures blinds Robbins and Rubin to the full spectrum of official Islam. It renders them unable to address the tension between their notion of "importing religious legitimacy" and state elites' repeated rhetoric equating "Tunisian" Islam with moderation and "foreign" influences with extremism. In addition, their limited view leads them to misdiagnose "distinct approaches" across regime type, obscuring the important question of why democratic Tunisia behaved so *similarly* to Arab monarchies with respect to religious regulation in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Birol Başkan moves in the right direction by making local institutions (mosques, schools, *awqāf*) the focal point of his exploration of the factors affecting the incorporation of religion into state structures. He recognizes the degree of state control over mosques, as well as measures to restrict preaching, as indices of centralization. Başkan grounds his work in a stated desire to move beyond literature that "view[s] state building simply as a process of institution building," and calls instead for a Foucauldian approach that adequately represents the state's "ambitious project of re-ordering and disciplining the society."[115] Through this perspective, we begin to fill in the state's interest in enforcement at the level of the mosque and preacher: "These institutions can spread an understanding of religion, praising obedience to state power, denouncing illegal activities, and disciplining their adherents…. State incorporation of religious institutions will prevent opposition forces from taking advantage of these vital networks. It will strengthen the state power over the society."[116] Yet Başkan, too, falls back on structural variables to explain the mechanics. States incorporate religious institutions most readily, he concludes, when the latter are internally fragmented (as opposed to hierarchized) and the former exhibit high institutional capacity. This relationship certainly can explain the timing of religious regulation: as states' power generally grew in the decades after independence, they were more capable of projecting it into new domains. Conversely, the loss of the Tunisian state's administrative capacity following the 2011 revolution created, in large part, the environment in which *la crise des mosquées* could take place. Başkan's

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[115] Birol Başkan, "The State in the Pulpit: State Incorporation of Religious Institutions in the Middle East," *Politics and Religion* 4, no. 1 (2011): 138. Cf.: "The state must be considered as something more than the 'government.' It is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure relations *between* civil society and public authority in a polity but also to structure many crucial relationships *within* civil society as well." Alfred C. Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), xii.

[116] Başkan, 138–39.

model, however, does not speak to the shape of the enforcement actions he cites.[117] Which forms of expression are excised from public religious space, by whom, and to what end?

In this study, I am eager to avoid a viewpoint from which official Islam (and Islam itself) appears flattened into a constellation of formal structures operating at the level of the state. A segment of the literature intimates that the state can succeed in functionalizing Islam merely by incorporating *de jure* those very institutions, such as Zaytūnah, or by creating new organs of state, such as *fatwá* councils. This type of legal assimilation is a means to official Islam, but what Başkan intends by "re-ordering and disciplining the society" is a project that has effect principally in non-elite contexts, and which is not achieved by legislation alone. Its targets are those representatives of Islam embedded in local communities; its tools are the rhetorical controls that ensure a uniform production of Islamic goods in conformity with the state's own claims. A meaningful analysis of this dynamic requires a different approach.[118]

Beyond structure: official Islam as a discourse

Lewis's use of "official Islam" to describe Ottoman institutions, quoted above, exposes a related pitfall in adapting older terminology: the implication that the mechanisms of state control today merely represent updated versions of older practices. In the specific case to which he refers, the suggested equivalence is that the modern Turkish Diyanet[119] functions as a one-to-one replacement for the Ottoman *şeyhülislamlık*. They are, after all, both forms of official Islam, if we understand the phrase to mean state structures involved in Islam. And while formal continuities do link the Ottoman religious bureaucracy to the modern Turkish system,[120] Benjamin Bruce counters that

the difference between Ottoman Westernization practices and the Kemalist Republican

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[117] I have borrowed this point from John Turner.

[118] One might argue that this formal perspective accords with, and perhaps even advances, the state's interests, in that the state *prefers* to treat Islam as a set of institutions that can be bureaucratized, in the same way that it prefers to view the *sharī'ah* as a set of texts that can be codified. See the discussions of objectification in Starrett, 8–9. and Eickelman and Piscatori, 37–45. On the *sharī'ah*, see Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially 547–50.

[119] Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

[120] "The state's involvement in creating and sustaining a religious bureaucracy is thus part of a long-standing tradition of religious governance that goes back many centuries." Benjamin Bruce, *Governing Islam Abroad: Turkish and Moroccan Muslims in Western Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan (Springer), 2018), 17. Cf. Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988).

reforms is stark: whereas the former had pursued an underlying logic of preserving and reinvigorating Islam, the latter "used religion as the legitimation for its political goals and as a means to influence the population." Moreover, the very fact that religious affairs were to be managed by an administrative body and not a ministry shows that "the ruling elite both took religion under their control and at the same time managed to break the potentially sacred significance of the [Diyanet]." Indeed, relegating the issue of religious affairs to the realm of bureaucratic administration has significant consequences for the *type* of authority that the Diyanet can claim to represent. Far from the figure of a charismatic Sufi sheikh, but equally distant from the traditional figures of religious authority represented by the Ottoman ulema, the Diyanet's claim to legitimacy at the most basic level is through the institutional and legal framework that tie it to the Turkish state.[121]

The allusion to Weber's tripartite typology of authority (charismatic, traditional, legal-rational) illuminates the fact that the paradigm shift accompanying the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish republic was expressed not in the structures of religious regulation, but in the conceptual underpinnings. That is to say:

> The end of the traditional religious establishment and its replacement "by a more strictly bureaucratized and regulated civil administration" may well have its roots in Ottoman history, but it was founded on a radical new discourse on religious authority in which legitimacy is derived from the state and loyalty to the nation.[122]

Here we have a succinct statement of *why* we must supplement a formal explanation of contemporary official Islam. Structures do not tell the full story without a consideration of the discourse that animates them. Hence Bruce's own straightforward definition of official Islam as

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[121] Bruce, 19–20, quoting İsmail Kara, "Ein Behörde im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Staat: Das Präsidium für religiöse Angelegenheiten," in *Turkish Islam and Europe: Europe and Christianity as Reflected in Turkish Muslim Discourse & Turkish Muslim Life in the Diaspora*, ed. Günter Seufert and Jean Jacques Waardenburg (Stuttgart: Franz-Steiner-Verlag, 1999), and İştar Gözaydın, "A Religious Administration to Secure Secularism: The Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2006). Cf.: "In addition to nationalism, secularism became the second principle of legitimation of the state. It meant the disestablishment of Islam as the state religion and making politics independent of religious considerations. Establishing a positive Western-like self, however, was difficult unless the negative and 'significant other' — Islam — was present…. The problem then, was one of constructing a modern identity that would match the stronger tradition and older institutions of Islam. To achieve this, the Republican elite revived the Ottoman state tradition of including the highest functionaries of Islam, the ulema, within the structures of the state and created a similar agency called the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı). 'Establishment Islam,' thus, became an instrument for articulating a national community in line with a comprehensive system of radical reforms." Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "Rethinking the Connections Between Turkey's "Western" Identity Versus Islam," *Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East* 7, no. 12 (1998): 7–8.

[122] Bruce, 21–22, quoting Amit Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

"the kind of Islam that is promoted and sanctioned by the state."[123] Official Islam is not institutions, but something that institutions *represent*. Yet if we are to accept this definition, we must append the important caveat that by a "kind of Islam" we do not mean a grouping of doctrines or methodologies, a "sect" or a *madhhab*, but rather a certain discourse about Islam, a certain regard of it, built upon distinct theoretical foundations with respect to religion and the state, and religion and politics. Bruce examines three components of this discourse as they operate in the Turkish case.

First, the institutional arrangements themselves aim to orient the relationship between state and Islam to the maximum advantage of the former. In Turkey, the entire religious field is meant to fall within the compass of the state's authority: "The law that founded the Diyanet stipulated that it was to name and employ all individuals involved in the administration of religion," to which end the statute provided a list of overlapping functions (lest any space go unregulated) including imams, Friday orators (*khuṭabāʾ*), and "preachers" generally.[124] At the same time, "while the Diyanet was given the legal state monopoly over certain aspects of the Turkish Muslim field, its field of action was significantly limited" in that a separate organ would manage Turkey's *awqāf* properties — an arrangement by which "the state ensured that the Diyanet would not have the resources to develop into a pole of political authority, as the Şeyhülislam had been at times during the Ottoman past."[125] The delimitation of religious and political, therefore, must achieve universality without creating a competing authority within the state itself.[126]

Second, this bounded religious field is identified with the (uniquely) "correct" articulation of Islam and, crucially, a *nationally specific* articulation of Islam. Conversely, "improper" religious interference in politics is defined as deviant as well as foreign. Enforcement of these categories comes in the form of the prohibition of certain forms of Islamic practice — most notably, in the Turkish case, the criminalization of Ṣūfī orders in 1925.

> The latent hostility of the Kemalist state leaders towards such religious actors had only increased as it became apparent that they possessed a real capacity to mobilize discontented groups in a bid to challenge the state. The leaders of the early Turkish republic had

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[123] Bruce, 8.

[124] Ibid., 19.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Cf. the contrast drawn between the Egyptian and Syrian configurations drawn at Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 72.

developed a deep-set suspicion of all independent religious actors and voiced this suspicion by accusing these actors of following an "impure" Islam, "tainted by its entanglement in political affairs." This dichotomous discourse, which distinguishes between a "pure" (and state-approved) Islam, and an "impure," politicized Islam, was essential in tying Turkish identity to a national Islam while simultaneously delegitimizing any religiously tinged opposition aimed at the state…. The subsequent attempts to "Turkicize" Islam … serve as examples of how the Kemalist government promoted the idea that the only legitimate Islam in Turkey was one that corresponded to state-approved Turkish nationalism.[127]

The effort to foreclose space for independent (non-state) actors to exercise an authoritative role within Islamic tradition ramifies locally and individually, as particular imams are drawn within or outside the boundaries of acceptability. Thus

the principal figure of legitimate religious authority in the Turkish Muslim field has increasingly come to coincide with the figure of the Diyanet religious official — that is to say a … state-employed imam or preacher who has graduated from a state-run imam hatip school or Turkish theology faculty. These individuals are presented as religious "professionals" capable of "enlightening society on religious issues with correct and up-to-date (*doğru ve güncel*) information based on the fundamental sources of the Islamic faith." Turkish authorities thus emphasize a particular kind of religious capital as the defining distinction between state-employed religious authorities and the archetypal "self-declared" imam or leaders of non-state religious associations with no formal training in Islamic theology…. Given that the employees of the Diyanet are "professionals" of Islam, they are portrayed as religious actors who understand the limits of Turkish Sunni Hanafi Islam with regard to politics; conversely, non-state actors without proper theological education are seen as more than capable of unpredictable, if not outright dangerous behaviour. A relatively coherent and self-enclosed model thus emerges: for the Turkish state, legitimate religious authority is attained through theological education as dispensed in Turkish educational institutions and following the recognition as conferred by the state religious institutions.[128]

Although preaching (and other authoritative Islamic roles) had undergone processes of professionalization previously, the qualitative shift in the 20th century was the linking of the professional qualification *as a preacher* to an individual's adherence to the (secularist) ordering

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[127] Bruce, 20–21, quoting Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

[128] Bruce, 290–91, quoting *Faaliyet Raporu — 2013*, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Ankara, 2014).

of state and religion.[129] As seen above, this "professional" imam is now charged with carrying forth the state's "correct" articulation of Islam and, not insignificantly, providing "enlightenment" and "civilization" to society. The unregulated amateur, by contrast, may fall into error and should be avoided or, if possible, (re-)educated. This latter figure, the "archetypal self-declared imam" — for example, the *autoproclamé* Houcine Laabidi — represents the uncontrolled, alternative authority (charismatic and/or traditional) that rationalized state structures (the Diyanet, a ministry of religious affairs, etc.) endeavor to minimize.[130]

Third, and again with reference to Weberian vocabulary, the new conception of religious authority and its attendant institutions are routinized within the state. Bruce notes that the question of removing the Diyanet from the supervision of the Turkish state was raised, and dismissed, during the democratization period after World War II. Rather, a 1965 law expanded and fortified the Diyanet as a state body, "the victory of a certain vision for religious governance in Turkey, which reinforced state supervision of religion, as well as emphasized religious-national unity over pluralism."[131] When a lawsuit challenged the existence of the Diyanet as violating the secularist constitution, Turkey's constitutional court responded that

> The Diyanet … is not a religious organization, but an administrative organ…. State oversight of religion is founded on reasons such as preventing religious fanaticism through the training of competent religious personnel and ensuring that religion is a source of moral and spiritual discipline for society, and in this fashion achieving the ultimate aim of sublimating the Turkish nation and elevating it to the level of modern civilization…. State support within this domain and the fact that employees of the Diyanet are considered public

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[129] "Bureaucratization may appear to be harmless, but it is better understood as a significant program of social engineering. 'Although governments that are engaged in bureaucratizing religion tend to depict it as a process that is largely "technical," it is often ridden with conflict and exclusion, as alternative sources of meaning and beliefs are systematically suppressed by agencies imposing statist notions of religion.'" Wainscott, 17, quoting Yüksel Sezgin and Mirjam Künkler, "Regulation of 'Religion' and the 'Religious': The Politics of Judicialization and Bureaucratization in India and Indonesia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 2 (2014): 451. Studying the Moroccan case, Wainscott observes: "the bureaucratization of religion is paired with a particular theology labeled 'Moroccan Islam.'" Wainscott, 17. O'Neill remarks that "bureaucracy might be treated as a *strategy* … for the reproduction of socio-economic relations between individuals in the state" but does not itself represent the totality of the disciplinary project. John O'Neill, "The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault," *British Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (1986): 46. In light of the rhetoric of "neutralizing" the mosques, I take note of his description of bureaucrats' "interest in depoliticizing the perception of their power and ideology by subordinating them to the neutral image of disciplined technology and expertise … seek[ing] to manufacture public docility and in this way have citizens support the state which in turn supports them with a modicum of legal force exercised against their occasional disobedience." Ibid., 57–58.

[130] "The representatives of official Islam are presented as the most legitimate religious authorities in the country and are contrasted with the religious actors of 'unofficial' or 'parallel' Islam." Bruce, 9.

[131] Ibid., 29.

servants are not to be understood as state control of religious affairs, but as an appropriate solution to certain obligatory needs due to the circumstances of the country.[132]

In this way, the apparatus of religious regulation, and the particular ordering of religion and politics upon which that apparatus rests, appear as a public service, falling within the state's competence as "naturally" as taxation or education.[133] The state also secures a strategic ambiguity about what counts as "religious" and what counts as "administrative," allowing the state to manipulate the categorical boundaries and thereby confirm its own dominance, the hallmark of secularity.

This discursive construction is qualitatively different than the Ottoman "official Islam"[134] that preceded it. Not only has the authority anchoring it changed significantly, but so have its nature (not only a bureaucracy but also a discourse) and its reach (no longer elite, it extends into every mosque and the speech produced therein). These shifts are, of course, interlinked in the state, the superstructure that authorizes official Islam and in service of which it operates. We can therefore observe that the ideational boundaries of "correct" Islam (or *Turkish* Islam, or *moderate* Islam, or *modern* Islam) produced and enforced by the state's institutions — the oft-invoked red lines — fluctuate in line with the state's needs. As Bruce remarks, "it would be mistaken … to assume that the content of official Islam is static: on the contrary, what is deemed official corresponds to the prevailing interests of the state at a specific moment, which in turn means that it is contingent on the changing interests of political actors over time."[135] The categories of "correct," "deviant," etc., respond "more often to political necessities than a clear theological or legal doctrine" and are "better characterized by compromises and tacit understandings."[136]

Vish Sakthivel agrees, remarking that the notion of "moderate Islam" has, in the age of the Global War on Terror,

> become even more resistant to precise definition, and is instead subject to complex political contestations…. It is a lynchpin of political legitimacy, even while rival political camps define it in diametric opposition and make exclusivist claims to it. "Moderate" has become a contested social label from which religious actors are loath to be excluded. Such a lens

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[132] "Anayasa Mahkemesi Kararı 1971/76," *Resmi Gazete* 14216 (1972), quoted at Bruce, 30.

[133] Even these competencies are built into the state deliberately. Kristin Elisabeth Fabbe, "Disciples of the State: Secularization and State Building in the Former Ottoman World" (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012).

[134] On the notion of a reified "Ottoman Islam," see Burak, 2.

[135] Bruce, 8–9.

[136] Ibid., 21–22.

qualifies explanations of Islamist moderation as chiefly a result of doctrine, and challenges those that analyze it as a single detectable position or objectively traceable process.[137]

She goes on to demonstrate that the Algerian state retroactively redefined the country's civil war, which predates the Global War on Terror, in terms of moderation:

> the state also … mobiliz[ed] collective trauma to cast "the Islamists" … as the sole aggressors…. The conflict was recast to Algerian citizens as having resulted from Islamists' lack of *moderation*. The ambiguity of this concept, and the imprecision with which it was invoked, allowed the state to conflate any sort of anti-state contention with religious or ideological radicalism. In what is now a region-wide phenomenon, moderation became a rhetorical tool to wield against opposition and consolidate state power. Religious and revolutionary history was marshalled by the state to craft an "Algerian Islam," of which the state reasserted itself as the sole legitimate arbiter. This brand of Islam was billed to domestic audiences as "the Islam bequeathed by [Algeria's] ancestors," to which the country needed to "return." Official discourses contended that the immoderation of the Islamist insurgents was a result of their "importation" of a "foreign" Islam…. Moderation, and its precondition of religious localism, by now had also become larger priorities in Western circles…. As the term's use evolved over time, a Muslim-majority state's designation as "moderate" became more about its reliability in helping allies meet foreign policy goals than a measure of its ideological centrism, political liberalism, or any of the other oft-cited yet inadequate metrics for understanding Islam and politics. The stamp of approval in effect endorsed and emboldened authoritarian policing of domestic religious spheres and efforts to monopolize religion."[138]

Perhaps the exemplar of state-dictated "moderation" appears in the aforementioned Amman Message, a 2004 statement (originally a sermon for Ramaḍān[139]) in which the king of Jordan outlines a series of principles defining "the true luminous image of Islam … founded upon equanimity, balance, moderation, and facilitation" ("al-ṣūrah al-ḥaqīqīyah al-mushriqah lil-islām … qāma 'alá al-tawāzun wa-al-i'tidāl wa-al-tawassuṭ wa-al-taysīr") and "the true character of the

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[137] Vish Sakthivel, "Moderate Islam in the Maghreb: How US Foreign Policy Shapes Islamist Contention," The Brookings Institution, April 4, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/04/04/moderate-islam-in-the-maghreb-how-u-s-foreign-policy-shapes-islamist-contention/. "The moderate Islam–extremist Islam dichotomy is a creation in the minds of politicians and journalists, and does not have an empirical referent." Syed Farid Alatas, "Is Objective Reporting on Islam Possible? Contextualizing the Demon," in *Covering Islam: Challenges & Opportunities for Media in the Global Village*, ed. Syed Farid Alatas (Singapore: Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs, 2005), 45.

[138] Sakthivel.

[139] Michaelle Browers, "Official Islam and the Limits of Communicative Action: The Paradox of the Amman Message," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 5 (2011): 945.

tolerant, accepting Muslim" ("ṭibāʿ al-muslim al-ḥaqīqī al-mutasāmiḥ al-munsharaḥ al-ṣadr").[140] Appended to this statement is a collection of legal rulings (fatāwá) that the king solicited from various 'ulamā' ("in order to give more religious authority to the Amman Message"[141]) regarding the so-called Three Points: the definition of a Muslim, the permissibility of takfīr, and the credentials required to issue a fatwá. The Jordanian government describes the Message with its Three Points as "of the greatest importance because it amounts to a historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (ijmāʿ) of the Ummah (nation) of Islam in our day, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam."[142] However, Michaelle Browers finds that "that the document achieved its 'consensus' not through communication, but by means of tactical silences over and evasions of contentious issues."[143] Furthermore,

> as was consistently pointed out to [Browers] in interviews and as is apparent on each official diplomatic occasion in which the Amman Message is cited, the Message was primarily directed towards the West and not the Islamic world. The Message's claims of "truth" or "authenticity" and the values it espouses (moderation, tolerance) and rejects (extremism, intolerance) are artefacts of strategic political processes constructed in the context of US hegemony and discourses emanating from the Bush administration.[144]

Browers notes that "the document is constructed as a debate within Islam, among Muslims, yet it is clear that it contains an awareness of a non-Muslim audience." That the latter was its primary audience is further attested in the Jordanian government's presentation of the Message, which states that "its goal was to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam."[145] In this regard, "moderation" takes on a performative aspect, whereby the Amman Message serves "as evidence that Jordan (and other such moderate states) are on the side of, the partners of, the proper interlocutors for, the West."[146] As in the Algerian example, the designation "moderate" signifies a particular posture in relation to the West ("the modern world"!) more than any identifiable ideological or political object, and elides markedly non-ecumenical (especially

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[140] "The Official Website of the Amman Message," https://www.ammanmessage.com/.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid. Romanization adjusted.

[143] Browers, 944, 945–47.

[144] Ibid., 954.

[145] "The Official Website of the Amman Message."

[146] Browers, 947.

anti-Shī'ah) behavior by state elites.

> Jordan and the other regimes that sponsor and champion the Amman Message are able to claim their "moderation," "tolerance" and status as "true" Muslims by virtue of their good relations with the US and its projects in the region, even if they remain extremist and intolerant in other regards.… "Moderation" in this sense can coexist with greater exertion of state control over society and … can provide the framework for justifying exclusion and suppression.[147]

Browers concludes that "the true or authentic Islam promoted in the Message is a regime-sponsored brand of 'official Islam' — or, as one professor at the University of Jordan put it, 'the Amman Message was a central part of official Arab states' attempt to define Islam.'"[148] It is entirely concordant with regulatory projects in Algeria, Turkey, and indeed every Muslim-majority country, distinguished only by its singular forthrightness and transnational scope.

"Official Islam," in contemporary usage, must convey the totality of this project and its novelty. We may be asking too much of an old term, and find that a new formulation such as "state Islam" is better equipped to fulfill that charge. Moreover, the development of nationally distinct articulations of Islam suggests that we should speak in terms of official or state *Islams* in the plural, for each state's implementation will conform to local political exigencies and, inevitably, diverge from other states'.[149] Irrespective of the label, the consistency of vocabulary across national contexts is remarkable and points to transnational discursive structures at work.

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[147] Ibid., 948.

[148] Ibid., 947.

[149] Robbins and Rubin, in fact, title an article "The Ascendance of Official Islams," although they do not use the plural in the text and do not comment on this multiplicity.

III. Heresy and Authority in Early Islam

The historical context

The Miḥnah ("testing, trial, tribulation") was a period of inquisition[150] that occurred between 833 and 849 CE — that is, just over two centuries after the death of the Prophet (632 CE). My intent in referring to so distant a historical episode is not to suggest congruity with recent events; rather, I observe John Turner's careful attention to the use of language and labels during the Miḥnah as a model for undertaking my examination of *la crise des mosquées*. In the theoretical section above, we found functional parallels between the medieval label "heretic" and the contemporary label "radical." Turner focuses on the constitution of authority through the rhetorical strategy of labeling dissent as heresy. In so doing, he offers a sophisticated framework for the study of authoritative contestation, in any era, especially when that contestation implicates the definition of religion and politics as a component of state-building.

To understand the claims and counterclaims at issue in the Miḥnah, we must first familiarize ourselves with the contemporary religious and political milieu. The Qur'ān explicitly referred to Muḥammad's mortality on multiple occasions; it also affirmed his position as "the seal of the prophets," commonly (though not universally) understood to signal that revelation would cease with him. Yet the scripture included no provision for the disposition of his authority, neither as the interpreter of revelation nor in his capacity as the political leader of the Muslim community.[151] Following his death, the early caliphs (from Arabic *khalīfah*, meaning "successor" or "deputy"[152]) acceded to leadership through selection by a consultative *shūrá* council and/or designation by the incumbent. Crucially, the first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī) had been among the close Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet and thus their qualifications rested in part on their intimate ability both to interpret his divine message and to further his political

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[150] Turner remarks: "Walter Patton in 1897 was the first to translate 'Miḥna' as 'inquisition.' Although I use that translation, it was not analogous in scope to the medieval European inquisitions…. The death toll for the Miḥna was extremely low, which is the reason for caution in comparisons to the Spanish Inquisition. Ibn Abī Du'ād was no Torquemada, and there was no *auto da fé*." Turner, 151n1, n5.

[151] Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 6; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:197.

[152] Wadād al-Qāḍī, "The Term 'Khalīfa' in Early Exegetical Literature," *Die Welt des Islams* 28 (1988).

project.[153] In this sense, these four, known retrospectively as *al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*, "the rightly guided caliphs," continued to exercise religious and temporal authority in the mold of Muḥammad.

The caliphs' authority was far from absolute, however, as they were not the only surviving Companions: the caliphs' knowledge (*'ilm*) of the law was not inaccessible to other members of the community and therefore not above dispute.[154] Initiatives of the *rāshidūn* to set devotional practices,[155] standardize the text of the Qur'ān,[156] and so on met with resistance from other Companions,[157] who "were still widely recognized as the guardians of the principles of Islam, the informal leaders of the Muslim community collectively responsible for its right guidance."[158] Western historiography of the early Islamic period has closely tracked when these two poles of authority crystallized and how they interacted. As Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds relate, the general view holds that in Muḥammad's absence

> political power passed to the new head of state, the caliph; but religious authority remained with the Prophet himself or, differently put, it passed to those men who remembered what he had said. These men, the Companions, transmitted their recollection of his words and deeds to the next generation, who passed it on to the next, and so forth, and whoever learnt what the Prophet had said and done acquired religious authority thereby. In short, while political power continued to be concentrated in one man, religious authority was now dispersed among those people who, owing their authority entirely to their learning, came to be known as simply the *'ulamā'*, the scholars.[159]

The bifurcation of Muḥammad's authority is popularly associated with the first caliph after the *rāshidūn*, Muʿāwiyah, who foreclosed the counterbalancing role of the Companions as *shūrá*-electors (and rejected the established qualifications for office: excellence, piety, etc.) by

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[153] On kinship, see Madelung, 80. The claim of 'Alī, although now imagined to have rested primarily on kinship, was more complex: see Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Propinquity may have hampered Abū Bakr, owing to a desire among some Companions to avoid a hereditary office: see Madelung, 40.

[154] A proto-Sunnī understanding; cf. the proto-Shīʿah view of the imamate, infallibility, and succession via "divine fiat" in Afsaruddin, 4.

[155] Madelung, 93.

[156] Hodgson, 1:213.

[157] Madelung, 108–9.

[158] Ibid., 92.

[159] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1–2.

designating his son as his successor, initiating the Umayyad dynasty.[160] This fundamental transformation in the nature of the office gave rise to the accusation that the Umayyads were not caliphs at all, but merely kings like any other, and so had forfeited their authority in matters of religion.[161] Crone and Hinds, for their part, propose a new thesis according to which the separation of religious-legal authority and political leadership occurred less tidily and much later.[162]

Crone and Hinds make their case through an examination of the early caliphs' use of the title *khalīfat Allāh* ("God's deputy [on Earth]") rather than *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* ("the successor of God's messenger"), with clear implications as to the ambit of their authority.[163] The caliphs' persistence in calling themselves *khalīfat Allāh*, so the argument goes, indicates an expansive conception of their own role in elaborating Islamic law — namely, that caliphs were capable of issuing *religiously authoritative* judgments and edicts[164] constituting a body of caliphal *sunnah* (precedential practice). The *'ulamā'*, however, increasingly contended that only the *sunnah* of Muḥammad was precedential and binding upon the community (*ummah*). This latter position clearly empowered the *'ulamā'*, for they controlled the collective memory of the Prophet through their mastery of *ḥadīth* (the genre of orally transmitted, later canonized, reports about Muḥammad's sayings and deeds). By the same token, restricting *sunnah* to the Prophet, and the very process of canonizing the *ḥadīth*, "deprive[d] the caliph of any say … in the definition of Islamic norms."[165] The assertion of the title *khalīfat Allāh*, then, represented a rhetorical strategy by which caliphs sought to substantiate and defend their authoritative role in defining normativity.[166]

This approach leverages a philological analysis to reinterpret behaviors observable in the

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[160] "It was to be Muʿāwiyah … who put a definite end to the reign of the early Companions… and who established the dynastic rule of the old Mekkan aristocracy in its place." Madelung, 62.

[161] G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 11–15. Cf. Crone and Hinds, 22–23.

[162] Crone and Hinds's basic outline is not in itself controversial: "the common view among Islamicists is not that the caliph was a political leader but rather, as they emphasize, that he began as a combined religious and political figure and then lost his religious authority. Scholars have long been aware that the caliphate was denounced as a secular kingship by religious scholars advancing their own claims to authority and that these counterclaims set in motion the separation of religious from political authority." Ira M. Lapidus, review of *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, *American Historical Review* 93, no. 2 (1988): 470.

[163] Crone and Hinds, 4–23.

[164] Turner, 16.

[165] Crone and Hinds, 58, and cf. 90–93. Cf. Hallaq, 47–49.

[166] Cf. Crone and Hinds, 94–95.

historical record (e.g., the judicial and legislative actions of early caliphs) in a new light. A close reading of what was meant by *khalīfat Allāh* leads Crone and Hinds to hypothesize that the early caliphs operated upon a radically different conception of their authoritative relationship vis-à-vis the prophets (perhaps to the point of parity) than is traditionally conveyed[167] — and that, on that basis, the caliphs claimed a central position for themselves in the spiritual, legal, and political life of the *ummah*.[168] Reliance on a particular phrase, however, limits Crone and Hinds in other ways. First, their (extensive) attestations may be challenged on grounds of authorship, chronology, linguistics, etc., potentially calling their central premise into question.[169] Second, other titles also made claims to religious authority. For example, the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833 CE) "repeatedly and almost obsessively deploy[ed] the title" *amīr al-mu'minīn*, "commander of the faithful."[170] While not *khalīfat Allāh* — of which al-Ma'mūn also made use[171] — this title achieved a similar aim: "Calling oneself the Commander of the Faithful explicitly asserts that one's followers are the believers and those who oppose him, whether infidel or self-professing Muslims, are by definition not 'the faithful,' not members of the community of belief."[172]

From their vantage point, Crone and Hinds see the demise of "the office of *khalīfat Allāh*"[173] in the Miḥnah, which they treat as aberrational, a singular and decisive event through which a caliph finally "chose to force the issue" of his religious-legal authority (and failed).[174] Turner, by contrast, pulls away from the phrase itself to study a wider range of polemics employed by caliphs (as well as *'ulamā'*) in defining orthodoxy and heresy through the two early dynasties of Islam, the Umayyad and the 'Abbāsid. He finds that the Miḥnah was in fact richly precedented in the persecutions carried out by previous caliphs, and that scholars deployed similar strategies in

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[167] Ibid., 27–28.

[168] "It is through the caliphs that God's ordinances are maintained." Ibid., 95, and cf. 33–42.

[169] E.g., Turner points to the work of Wadād Al-Qāḍī as showing "that the earliest rulers did not use the title God's Caliph" after all: see al-Qāḍī. However, al-Qāḍī does not say this at all, but rather that the exegetical literature gave a certain political meaning to *khalīfah* only later; indeed al-Qāḍī notes that *khalīfat Allāh* "was adopted as a caliphal title possibly even before the Umayyads." Ibid., 411. More importantly, Turner posits that whether the caliphs used *khalīfat Allāh* or "the more usual title … *amīr al-mu'minīn*, Commander of the Faithful," is not really material; "in practical terms … the Caliphs behaved as though they were God's deputies leading the community on the right path." Turner, 17.

[170] Turner, 17.

[171] Crone and Hinds, 13–16.

[172] Turner, 17. While these titles did not migrate from the caliphs to the *'ulamā'*, Crone and Hinds intriguingly note that another title did: *imām*. Crone and Hinds, 98.

[173] Crone and Hinds, 105.

[174] Ibid., 93.

competing among themselves. He then identifies continuities across these historical episodes to arrive at an understanding of the *mechanics* of these contentions. (He also refutes that the Miḥnah was a decisive endpoint to the caliphs' religious authority.[175]) Turner's method examines how labels were deployed more broadly as an avenue by which to define the boundaries of normativity, and substantiate religious authority, in early Islam.

The Miḥnah and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

The cast and (a version of) the plot of the Miḥnah are well known to this day among scholars and lay believers alike. Under dispute was a question about the nature of the Qur'ān: is its text "the uncreated … divine word of God, with the implication that it was and is eternal"?[176] Or had the Qur'ān been created by God, "contingent upon the will of God, and thus … existing within a limited sphere of time"?[177] This question held profound theological implications,[178] but it took on immense political significance when the caliph al-Ma'mūn in 833 CE required that key *'ulamā'* publicly affirm the createdness of the Qur'ān under threat of discipline or even execution. Most *'ulamā'* acquiesced, a notable exception being Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780–855 CE), "a popular preacher of traditions" — that is, *ḥadīth* — "in Baghdad."[179] The usual narrative recounts that Aḥmad, out of great piety, accepted lengthy imprisonment and flogging "until he was unconscious" rather than accede to the "incorrect" doctrine; only "when commotion among the population of Baghdād threatened to get out of hand" did the caliph release him.[180] In this telescoped retelling, the defiance of Aḥmad frustrated the Miḥnah, such that today, "if one asks about the Miḥna, then one will be told that a heretic Caliph was kept at bay by the defenders of Muḥammad's tradition, thus preserving (or changing, depending on perspective) the character of the religion and ensuring it was (as it always had been) the scholars, not the Caliphs, who inherited

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[175] Turner, 120–22, 134–40.

[176] Richard C. Martin, "Createdness of the Qur'ān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2016).

[177] Richard C. Martin, "Createdness of the Qur'ān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2005).

[178] It implicates the paramount doctrine of *tawḥīd*, the oneness of God.

[179] Turner, 7.

[180] Martin Hinds, "Miḥna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012). By this time al-Ma'mūn had died; the caliph here is al-Muʻtaṣim.

the mantle of the Prophet."[181] Thus the Miḥnah nowadays[182] "is thought of as a significant and major turning point in the legal, intellectual, and theological development of Islam … the final point of rupture between 'church' and 'state.'"[183]

This retroactive designation of *the caliph* as the heretic for his advocacy of the createdness of the Qur'ān represents a complete inversion of the rhetorical dynamic of the Miḥnah. Such a designation is only possible today because the normative consensus of Sunnī Islam subsequently coalesced in deeming "correct" the opposite doctrine, that of the eternality of the Qur'ān.[184] It also reflects the *ex post facto* understanding that the *'ulamā'* were (as ever) the repository of Islamic knowledge and, therefore, not only that an action of the caliph could be incorrect (i.e., that he was fallible) but also that the *'ulamā'* held the authority to adjudicate it as such.[185] In early Islam, however, the two poles coexisted in a complex relationship, at once collaborators and competitors.[186] One means by which the caliph defended his position in this system was the labeling and enforcement of orthodoxy and heresy and, thereby, the boundaries of membership in the *ummah* (in this period, as much a political as a spiritual community).

Precedents for inquisition

Indeed, looking back at the Umayyad dynasty (661–750 CE), Turner characterizes the persecutions of two "heretics"[187] — al-Ḥārith ibn Saʿīd (known as al-Kadhdhāb, "the Liar") and

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[181] Turner, 8. For "heretic Caliph," see, e.g., Tayeb el-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[182] "The *mihna* is foundational for Islam because it constitutes the watershed in which the relationship between the state and the ulama … regarding authority in religious matters was defined in Islam." John Nawas, "Mihna," (Oxford Bibliographies, 2014).

[183] Turner, 8. "To be sure, the idea of a complete rupture between 'church' and 'state' is a poor analogy because the two concepts of 'governing' and 'Sharīʿa/Islam' were never truly divorced from each other in the pre-nationalist era. However … the scholarly shouldering of [the mantle of the Prophet] explains why the rulers did not promulgate or determine the law that governed their societies: they were merely the executors of the law." Ibid.

[184] Ibid., 116.

[185] Cf. Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.

[186] Crone and Hinds are focused on competition (Crone and Hinds, 58) but their text also explores routine interactions on legal matters: see ibid., 43–57. This topic is well explored in works on early jurisprudence, such as those of Wael Hallaq, and note Nimrod Hurvitz, "State and Religion in the Formative Stage of Islam (7th–11th Centuries C.E.)," *History Compass* 13, no. 7 (2015). Contemporaries debated it, too: consider the eighth-century treatises discussed in Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 82–101.

[187] Not an Arabic term, obviously, nor one with a direct Arabic translation. See Bernard Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953). However: "Even though orthodoxy is not an autochthonous Islamic term it is not impossible to adopt it. To apply such a category does not depend on

Ghaylān al-Dimashqī — as "acts of boundary drawing that shaped what it meant to be a Muslim."[188] The former was executed for claiming to have prophetic visions, a clear refutation of Muḥammad as "the seal of the prophets"; the latter, evidently for advocating free will (*qadar*) as against predestinarianism. Thus their persecution asserted both that these doctrinal positions were orthodox *and* that the caliphs possessed the competence to make such authoritative statements about right belief:[189] "their trials … exemplify direct Caliphal involvement in defining the boundaries of normativity."[190] Yet it would miss the point to conclude that the caliphs were acting on religious *and not* political motives, or that their targets were punished as doctrinal dissenters *and not* as rebels.[191] In an environment in which "disobedience to the Caliph was equivalent to disobedience to God,"[192] questions of political leadership and religious identity were inextricably linked.[193] As Lester Kurtz has it: "Every heresy implies a political stance and every heretic is the leader of an insurrection, implicitly or explicitly."[194]

The caliphs' efforts to define normativity were a routine exercise of their role "as Commander of the Faithful, an identity assumed by all involved to be valid."[195] Most normally, caliphal involvement occurred in the legal domain, wherein he adjudicated disputes among judges (*quḍāh*) and issued edicts clarifying specific points of law. Occasionally, dissension in (or among) the mosques might evoke the specter of broader social discord rooted in doctrinal deviation, the

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the condition that a word in a given language is at hand. The question is whether it can be used as an analytical tool in describing relations and processes in a social system." Langer and Simon, 280–81. I take note of the notion that "only the word *kāfir* is adequate to express the full force of the Christian concept of 'heresy.' It carries all the Qur'ānic opposition of *kufr* over against *īmān* and *islām*." John Taylor, "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām," *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (1967): 198.

[188] Turner, 61.

[189] I have borrowed the phrasing from El Shamsy, 112.

[190] Turner, 65.

[191] "Heresy is encoded as a form of rebellion even if no swords are raised." Ibid., 61–62.

[192] Ibid., 159n7.

[193] Berkey, 83–86. Cf. Turner, 122.

[194] Kurtz, 1087. "The motive for the state's intervention in the arena of theological scholarship was often the need to defuse perceived political threats. This need was underpinned by the frequent intertwining of state legitimacy with religious authority: the state bolstered its domestic sovereignty by portraying itself as the guardian of orthodoxy. As a result, political opposition to the ruling regime easily acquired an air of heresy. Unsurprisingly, therefore, political rebellions often appeared in alliance with heterodox movements." El Shamsy, 114.

[195] Turner, 62, 115. "The Inquisition … illustrates that the rulers took the role of guarding the tenets of faith very seriously, to the point that they would use violence against their opponents…. Clearly, then, their view about their own authority did not wane, and they were convinced that they had the privilege and authority to decide whom to support and in so doing, shape the beliefs of the community." Hurvitz, 317–18.

much dreaded *fitnah*;[196] at such times, the caliph might intervene directly in the activity of the mosques, although some measures — closing the mosques outside the prayer times, for instance — elicited popular protest.[197] Persecution of heretics, a singularly dramatic intervention, was a response to particularly severe threats, in which cases it served (as one tool among many) to tighten social control. The caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705 CE), after more than a decade of struggle to consolidate Umayyad dominion after the death of Muʿāwiyah, centralized the administration of the empire and built the Dome of the Rock with its "polemical inscriptions" of Islamic doctrine;[198] he also persecuted al-Ḥārith. The caliph Hishām (r. 724–743 CE) ascended to the throne after a relatively quick succession of relatives and sought to stabilize his, and the dynasty's, legitimacy; to this end he pursued territorial expansion abroad and at home persecuted Ghaylān.

Importantly, Turner clarifies that "Hishām … was not responding to a rash of heretical eruptions; rather, he sought to enforce conformity and eliminate nonconformative individuals and doctrine and found himself increasingly able to do so. Disobedience triggered persecution."[199] In the cases of both al-Ḥārith and Ghaylān, the "trials are of particular interest because they occur at the end of periods of acute crisis that had provoked a reshaping and redefining of Islam as a community of believers."[200] Eager to participate preeminently in that redefinition, the caliph "claim[ed] the social role of the Commander of the Faithful as his" by "visibly and forcibly" performing it.[201]

The rhetoric of exclusion

A comparable dynamic obtained a century later when al-Maʾmūn, of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty, became caliph in 813 CE: "As a result of coming to the throne via rebellion, al-Maʾmūn spent the

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[196] "On account of the struggles that marked Muʿāwiya's advent, the term *fitna* was later applied to any period of disturbances inspired by schools or sects that broke away from the majority of believers." L. Gardet, "Fitna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012). "*Fitna* can change the religious status of a believer quickly…. The meanings of *fitna* centre on the idea that violent events or trials can distinguish true from hypocritical believers by forcing each person to take a stand or to have their character shaped." David B. Cook, "Fitna in Early Islamic History," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012).

[197] J. Pedersen, "Masdjid," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012).

[198] Turner, 63–64.

[199] Ibid., 30. Cf. Moore, 1–5.

[200] Turner, 22. "The more firmly societal order was defined, the more dissenters were defined as heretics…. Inquisitions in certain areas such as central Italy and especially Spain became agents of national consolidation and identity." Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (New York: Twayne, 1992), 61, 99.

[201] Turner, 64.

majority of his reign establishing dominance over the Caliphate and asserting his legitimacy as Commander of the Faithful."[202] Again, he pursued many avenues to this end: military conquest and a *jihād* against the Byzantines, structural reforms aimed at centralization, even the appropriation of 'Abd al-Malik's Dome of the Rock.[203] Then, once the state under al-Ma'mūn possessed sufficient administrative capacity, he proclaimed the createdness of the Qur'ān and initiated the Miḥnah to enforce the policy among the scholarly and bureaucratic elite, the *'ulamā'*.[204] Administrative capacity — the infrastructure that allows the state to shift from an obligatory accommodation of dissent to actively classifying and punishing it[205] — is a key factor determining the *timing* of persecutions[206] but, in Turner's view, "does not explain the shape they take. For that, we must focus on the idiom, the rhetoric of heresy … to see clearly the maintenance of a social role defined as orthodox through the labeling of heresy."[207]

To that end, Turner analyzes the rhetorical devices at work in al-Ma'mūn's correspondence conveying orders relative to the Miḥnah. In these letters,

> al-Ma'mūn establishes that he, as the Commander of the Faithful, is the most qualified to discern and correct deviants. Then he shows that deviants pose a widespread threat to the community's religious welfare and require immediate action. Having proven the legitimacy of the Caliphal action against the heretics, he charges they are reprehensible men and guilty of unrighteous innovation. He then places the heretics in clusters and links the clusters to denigrate them further and to reinforce the immensity of the threat.[208]

"Continually and repeatedly" touting the title "commander of the faithful" forms part of al-Ma'mūn's strategy to substantiate himself as the center of normativity.[209] His Islam is true by

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[202] Ibid., 51.

[203] Ibid., 127–29.

[204] "There are many reasons for persecution. One cannot discount belief in righteousness as one of them but the place of social roles in a web of interaction can help discern why an individual would feel the need to do something about it." Ibid., 34.

[205] Talal Asad, "Medieval Heresy: An Anthropological View," *Social History* 11, no. 3 (1986): 358–60.

[206] Steven Judd, "Muslim Persecution of Heretics during the Marwānid Period (64-132/684-750)," *Al-Masaq* 23, no. 1 (2011): 12–14. Turner further notes that "the expansion of centralized control to regions previously only under nominal control drove many of the rebellions…. As the center (the Caliph and his tax collectors) projected its involvement more intrusively, local contact with the government increased, as did manifest disobedience and its prosecution. What appeared to be an increase in 'rebellion' was actually internal consolidation." Turner, 132.

[207] Turner, 29.

[208] Ibid., 51–52.

[209] Ibid., 52.

virtue of his title, the signifier that God designated the caliphs as His deputies on Earth, whereas the positions and titles of the *'ulamā'* (e.g., *qāḍī, faqīh, muḥaddith*) — and thereby their *authority* — are manmade.[210] The caliph's opponents, *God's* opponents, "the unfaithful, those who do not follow him," are depicted as "destined for Hell."[211] Al-Ma'mūn has made heterodoxy into heresy. Accordingly he defines the advocates of the eternal Qur'ān as deviant, corrupt, and filthy; labels them with epithets like *kadhdhāb*; identifies them as companions of Satan, "the enemy of Islam"; and "liberally defames" them with unrelated charges (usury, theft, polytheism).[212] The caliph renders his opponents yet guiltier by what Turner calls "clustering," associating their heresy with infamous deviants from previous generations. By classifying his targets in this way, al-Ma'mūn not only inflates the current threat into a broad and persistent conspiracy; he also makes it cognizable, familiar to his audience, and thus the necessity of action is undeniable.[213] Because the deviants' transgressions are so clear — because heretics by definition "have diverged from the preexisting, eternal truth … as held by the community and as represented by the Caliph"[214] — al-Ma'mūn is able to present himself as "only draw[ing] attention to the obvious" rather than making a subjective assertion on his own initiative.[215]

The same rhetorical complex appears in scholarly works of doxography, a genre "tasked with explaining and accounting for dissent, deviation, rebels, and rebellion."[216] Doxographers in the Ash'arī theological school of the 10th through the 12th centuries CE, seeking to establish their school as orthodox, deploy many of the same tactics as al-Ma'mūn in redefining their competitors as not merely incorrect dissenters but impermissible deviants. The doxographers foreground their own Islamic credentials, in this case resting not on a divine mandate but on the integrity of their scholastic lineage down from the authoritative ancestors (*salaf*) of early Islam. This maneuver has the effect of centering the doxographer (and, sympathetically, the reader[217]) as normative, his views as "true," and enabling him to characterize his judgement of others' beliefs as a dispassionate

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[210] "Those who have raised themselves up for giving juridical decisions": see ibid., 53.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid., 54–55.

[213] Ibid., 56–58. Cf. Moore, 115.

[214] Turner, 57.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid., 35. Many scholars instead use the term "heresiography" as in the Christian tradition: cf. Aaron Hughes, "Heresiography," in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (New York: Macmillan, 2004).

[217] Turner, 25, 35–36, 45–46.

act of cataloguing.[218] Of course, there is nothing objective about the doxographer's categorization; rather, he "frames … opponents as unremitting extremists" and sketches their doctrines as "extreme and opposing positions with his own firmly and moderately between the two."[219] The doxographers compound their competitors' extremism by labeling them as unbelievers (*kuffār*) and ascribing to them all manner of sins (drunkenness, idolatry, etc.).

The doxographers have also perfected the art of imputing guilt by association. Whereas al-Ma'mūn merely juxtaposes his opponents to famous heretics, the Ash'arī doxographers construct elaborate hierarchies of heresies in which to categorize and compartmentalize their various adversaries. By grouping a current opponent under the same header as a known arch-heretic, the doxographers subtly transfer *all* the attributes of the latter to the former. Turner refers to this as the "transitive property," and determines that the resulting "ambiguity blurs the lines between the two, momentarily merging them semantically before releasing them as separate entities that are nonetheless linked in the reader's mind as being the same."[220] The treatment meted out to the antecedent heretic (for example, the doxographers invoke the executed Ghaylān) thereby seems fitting and proper for the current defendants (depicted as latter-day "Ghaylānites"), irrespective of any substantive difference in their actual beliefs.

In the parallels between the Miḥnah and doxography, Turner observes "common points of rhetorical strategy and motives for their deployment," whether by caliphs buttressing their legitimacy or by a theological school jockeying for superiority.[221] In both cases, authorities were working to sanction certain statements as Islamic knowledge and disqualify alternative interpretations as falling outside authorized Islamic discourse. The classificatory schemes of the doxographers are a particularly explicit exercise in marking the discursive boundaries between permissible and forbidden, inclusion and exclusion. Examined with an archaeological and genealogical eye, the shifts in these boundaries — a doctrine is declared correct, a line is drawn between Muslim and *kāfir* — telegraph a great deal about the power structures in society during the formative period of Islam. Caliphs persecuted opponents as heretics when they found themselves able to do so and, cyclically, the success of the persecution further substantiated the

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[218] Ibid., 43–46.
[219] Ibid., 46.
[220] Ibid., 46–47.
[221] Ibid., 118.

caliph's authority in the religious field.

By the time of the Ash'arī doxographers, however, the caliph had been eliminated from the field except as a figurehead. The notion that the righteous intransigence of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal single-handedly toppled the Miḥnah and the religious authority of the caliphate is ahistorical: the inquisition only came to an end under a subsequent caliph, al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861 CE), more than a decade after Aḥmad's trial.[222] Rather, the bloody period that followed the assassination of al-Mutawakkil (in which four of his successors were also murdered in turn) dissipated the potency of the caliphate, both political and religious.[223] In this environment, the various theological and juridical schools among the *'ulamā'* were left to compete for dominance in defining orthodoxy.[224] In the absence of "a strong centralizing arbiter of orthodoxy,"[225] multiple legal schools (*madhāhib*) established sufficient legitimacy but none emerged as dominant, leading to the *modus vivendi* of mutual recognition within a range of normativity, which persists to this day.

We will see comparable dynamics and strategies at play in the formative period of modern nation-states, in which state elites asserted their ability to enunciate Islamic normativity (coded as modern, moderate, and enlightened) and exclude those who "distort" that "truth" in the form of political opposition. In the modern period as in the premodern, the administrative capacity of the state is a prerequisite for the sustained project of managing religious expression, but that alone does not explain why states also make substantive assertions about truth and deviance. Interestingly, despite the advent of secularism, modern states continue to draw upon a classical rhetorical repertoire that evinces concern with the threat of *fitnah*, disobedience from "extremist" *'ulamā'* (and other religious figures), and the precise definition of Muslims and *kuffār*. As with the caliphs, modern rulers assert discursive categorizations to clarify their own authority and to starkly distinguish those who resist it.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the redefinition of orthodoxy

Given that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal did not himself bring the Miḥnah crashing down, why is he

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[222] Al-Mutawakkil continued to exercise religious authority in the social role of the commander of the faithful: see ibid., 134–36.

[223] Ibid., 137–40.

[224] "The transition from trends of legal thought, or Schacht's 'ancient schools,' to the 'personal' schools of legal thought tied to an eminent founding figure possessing authority via a tie to early and correct practice resulted from the center's inability to enforce its authority (power was a different matter)." Ibid., 121–22.

[225] Ibid., 121.

so centrally associated with the inquisition in Sunnī thought and in popular imagination? By comparing various accounts of the Miḥnah, historians have traced the elevation of Aḥmad's stature, showing how the narrative of his ordeal was shaped to the advantage of his followers and their nascent legal school (*madhhab*). As a character, Aḥmad serves very neatly to illustrate the migration of authority from the caliphs to the *'ulamā'*.

There are a number of obstacles to address in Aḥmad's story. For one, some historical accounts (including the seminal history of al-Ṭabarī[226]) are not especially attentive to his trial, suggesting that it was not always perceived as pivotal. Other chroniclers even state that Aḥmad escaped execution not because of civil unrest on his behalf but because he in fact recanted. His survival is further complicated by the fact that another alleged heretic from the same scholarly circles was later executed under the Miḥnah, presenting an alternate candidate for martyrdom. The role of the caliph is problematic, too: he personally directed the inquisition, but "none of the sources question this part of his social role," a recognition of the "normality of heresy trials" and the caliph's prerogative to conduct them.[227] Finally, Aḥmad was famous for his quietism, warning against any involvement in (to say nothing of active opposition to) the doings of the ruler — meaning that public defiance at trial would have been distinctly out of character.[228]

These discrepancies might have permanently muddied Aḥmad's reputation were it not for the deterioration of the caliphate. The newfound primacy of the *'ulamā'* in defining normativity presented opportunities, both to the *'ulamā'* as a whole and to certain factions seeking standing. It is important to understand that, even aside from the fame the Miḥnah brought him, Aḥmad was an influential *ḥadīth* scholar whose approach to the law earned him many devoted disciples. From the subsequent generations of his followers, known as the Ḥanbalīs, emerged sympathetic reinterpretations that center his ordeal as the decisive climax of the Miḥnah. These later accounts assert that Aḥmad defied his inquisitors until the end; they introduce the element of popular opinion supporting him; and they subordinate the executed martyr as an early disciple of Aḥmad in order to attribute *original* virtue to Aḥmad himself.[229] To square Aḥmad's renowned quietism with his act of resistance — all the more if it engendered political unrest — these accounts had to

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[226] Ibid., 147–48.

[227] Ibid., 115–16.

[228] Ibid., 141. Cf. Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 101–5. "Except in disobedience to God": ibid., 113.

[229] Turner, 115–17, 140–41; Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 12.

posit something new: if even Aḥmad was resisting authority, "then the authority must have been illegitimate. To solve this, al-Ma'mūn was cast as a heretic."[230]

Here we see the mechanics of the rhetorical inversion by which al-Ma'mūn became the extremist and the Miḥnah an aberration. The caliphate as an institution could not be heretical,[231] given its provenance, but the *'ulamā'* could redefine orthodoxy in terms of fidelity to certain doctrines and methodologies rather than obedience to the caliphal office.[232] The *'ulamā'* always were authorities within the field of Islamic knowledge; in the absence of the caliphal arbiter, however, social relations were such that the *'ulamā'* could classify discursive objects as true or deviant in a different way. Al-Ma'mūn and his court, having attempted to impose the (now) deviant doctrine of createdness, took their place in the intricate pantheon of heretics. In parallel, given Aḥmad's status as the exemplar of pious resistance, many *'ulamā'* sought to inherit his credibility by claiming him as their *shaykh* and *imām* — mirroring the doxographers' categorizations of arch-heretics and demonstrating that Turner's "transitive property" worked as a conduit for virtues just as well as for vices.[233] These early Ḥanbalīs championed a particular version of Aḥmad's biography to highlight his, and by extension their own, place at the center of refashioned relationships of power — the new orthodoxy.[234]

Above all, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was a jurisprudent and a "mildly ascetic" scholar for whom "the life of piety … was what mattered most";[235] he was certainly a conformist with regard to political power and not the rabble-rousing vigilante that many of his followers would turn out to be. He came to be drawn outside the bounds of acceptability by political power for his failure to obey (at least initially) on a point of law forced by the political power itself, *precisely as* a means of eliciting obedience. This was a technique of discipline enabled by the centralization of religious authority and coercive power in the caliphate. As Turner points out, the caliphs "participated in the process of defining the boundaries of orthodoxy and prosecuting those who were left out …

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[230] Turner, 141.

[231] Cf. ibid., 116.

[232] "The Inquisition was not the last time Muslims would persecute other Muslims for wrong beliefs, but henceforward it would not be the caliph persecuting in his own name, on his personal and sole responsibility for maintaining correct belief, but rather the caliph or other prince would act as the agent of the ulema, the learned men of the community." Melchert, 17.

[233] Turner, 140–45.

[234] Ibid., 142.

[235] Melchert, 59, 113, 120.

not … reactively (i.e., reining in heretics who had deviated from orthodoxy) but, rather, proactively (i.e., attempting to define the boundaries of orthodoxy and prosecuting those who refused to comply)."[236] At stake was not the point of law *per se* so much as the preservation of the social relationships that sustained the caliph's position and the elimination of "unlicensed, uncontrolled" alternatives to his authority.[237] A similar motive underlies the (literal) licensing and control of preaching in modern times, the topic to which we now turn our attention.

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[236] Turner, 27.

[237] "The successful preacher represented unlicensed, uncontrolled power. Therefore he must either recognize the authority of the Church, and so by implication the legitimacy of secular power and the social order, or be extirpated." Moore, 98.

IV. Radical and Moderate in the Modern State

Modernity and secularity

In seeking to draw such a comparison, however, we must take into account the substantial contextual differences between the Miḥnah in ninth-century (CE) Mesopotamia and *la crise des mosquées* in Tunisia beginning in 2011. Perhaps the most pertinent is the rise of secularism, a pervasive presence within the modern nation-state. As a starting point, consider the admonition by three prominent scholars of secularism that "the uncritical deployment of the categories of the religious and the secular severely limits the analysis of international politics and social change throughout the world."[238] Just as in treating the Miḥnah we took care not to impose an anachronistic separation of religion and politics,[239] in discussing the contemporary regulation of religion by states we cannot make assumptions about the nature of those categories and the division between them.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the founder of this Institute, opens his masterpiece, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, with a historical analysis of the concept of religion.[240] Through an extended etymology, he traces the Latin *religio* from its broad Roman usage encompassing social obligation and devotion, toward the modern idea of *a* religion as a "system of beliefs and practices, considered as a system."[241] Smith demonstrates how this subtle shift in meaning (sometimes called "conceptual slippage") is a development particular to Christian Europe as it passed through the Enlightenment. The reification of religion — its transformation from "personal orientation" to "depersonalized intellectual systematization" — therefore represents a unique construct, a product of specific circumstances in European history, and not a universal structure.[242] Religion, therefore, "is not simply found, but invented."[243]

For William Cavanaugh, a consequence of this shift is that religion can now be treated "as

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[238] Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

[239] Cf. Asad's judgement that it is anachronistic to speak of "religion" in premodernity. Asad, *Formations*, 194.

[240] Smith. "Masterpiece" is Asad's characterization.

[241] Ibid., 39.

[242] Ibid., 40.

[243] William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 58.

a discrete category of human activity separable from culture, politics, and other areas of life."[244] In revising and extending Smith's conceptual history, Cavanaugh is also responding to Talal Asad's critique that the modern concept "religion" cannot be fully understood without recognition of the way in which "it has been linked to its Siamese twin 'secularism.'"[245] That is to say, religion (as a system) and secularism not only mirror one another, but were in fact born together, of the same historical moment, and exist in perpetual relationship.[246] They are not coequal, however, as the latter makes claims over the former: "secularist ideology … tries to fix permanently the social and political place of 'religion,'" out of a belief that "an enlightened morality … requires particular institutional separations and arrangements … because only by compelling religion, as concept and practice, to remain within prescribed limits can the transcendent power of the secular state secure liberty of belief and expression."[247] With respect to "fixing" the place of religion, Asad asks: "How, when, and by whom are the categories of religion and the secular defined?"[248]

This is, of course, a question of power. Cavanaugh observes that "what counts as religion and what does not in any given context is contestable and depends on who has the power and authority to define religion at any given time and place"; in other words, religion is "a term that constructs and is constructed by different kinds of political configurations."[249] Agreeing with Asad, Cavanaugh remarks that the aim of secularism is precisely "to establish as timeless, universal, and natural a very contingent set of categories — religious and secular — that are in fact constructions of the modern West. Those who do not accept these categories as timeless, universal, and natural are subject to coercion."[250] In Europe, the Enlightenment came to characterize religion "as an irrational and dangerous impulse that must give way in public to rational, secular forms of power." Consequently, within the paradigm of modernity, "revulsion toward killing and dying in the name of one's religion is one of the principal means by which we become convinced that killing

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[244] Ibid., 61.

[245] Talal Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion'," *History of Religions* 40, no. 3 (2001): 221.

[246] "It should be obvious that 'the religious' and 'the secular' are always and everywhere mutually constituted." José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54.

[247] Asad, "Reading," 221.

[248] Asad, *Formations*, 201. Cf. Asad, "Reading," 210.

[249] Cavanaugh, 58–59.

[250] Ibid., 6. Cf. Asad, *Formations*, 191–92.

and dying in the name of the nation-state is laudable and proper."[251] This transformation facilitated the centralization of political power, as well as allegiance and obedience, in the early modern state. Coercion was (and still is) visited upon those who violate this norm by engaging in religious violence: they feature in secularist politics as "a stock character, the religious fanatic, to serve as enemy" of the established social order.[252]

Owing to processes of colonization, modernization, and secularization, the same discursive tools are available to nation-states external to, though profoundly affected by, the specific experience of European history. These tools enable state elites to delineate categories of religious, secular, political, cultural, etc., in ways advantageous to their own interests and social roles. This mechanism works in a manner comparable to the labeling performed by premodern caliphs, who might make substantive claims about religion, but furnishes the additional power to subordinate religion *categorically* to the will of the state. Any inquiry into state control of religion must be attentive to these changes, for "major shifts in terms and practices are accompanied by shifts in the way that authority and power are distributed."[253] We should endeavor, in Asad's words, "to trace the significant differences between the practical elements identified and translated as 'religion' in various epochs … asking questions about what the definition includes and what it excludes — how, by whom, for what purpose."[254]

State Islam(s) in comparative development

We can observe empirically the definition and circumscription of "religion" in the Arab world as an integral component of state-building, first under colonial regimes and then independent nation-states. As Nathan Brown observes, "state formation and the organization of religion have gone hand in hand, so that 'modern religion in Muslim countries is positioned on the platform of

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[251] Cavanaugh, 4–5.

[252] Ibid., 5.

[253] Ibid., 82.

[254] Asad, "Reading," 217–20. "Future research on religion and politics should shift from the questions of how religion may be 'epiphenomenal,' how it can serve as an ideology of power legitimation, and how elites abuse or manipulate religion, to what the power configurations authorizing 'religion' to be defined in a certain way are, and in whose interests the specific boundaries made between 'the sacred' and 'the secular' lie." Scott M. Thomas, review of *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*, *International Affairs* 86, no. 3 (2010): 775.

the state.'"[255] Ali E. Hillal Dessouki agrees: in "most Arab and indeed most Islamic states," he writes, "religious institutions have been 'nationalized' and 'officialized' by the state — that is, penetrated by the state and subordinated to its will."[256] Dessouki enumerates four methods by which states have taken control of religious institutions: the nationalization of religious properties and endowments (*waqf*, plural *awqāf*, called in the Maghreb *ḥabūs*), the assimilation of the ancient Islamic universities (such as Zaytūnah in Tunis and al-Azhar in Cairo), the integration of religious schools into national educational systems, and the replacement of *sharī'ah* courts with secular judiciaries.[257]

Control of mosques and preachers is conspicuously absent from Dessouki's list, though it is intimately interrelated with the methods that he does name, and demonstrates in different and compelling ways how religion came to be defined, delimited, and regulated. Patrick Gaffney, the scholar of Islamic preaching, laments that "research interests [tend] to cluster around the two extremes of the exotic and the powerful," whereas it is no less important to "discover the structure and the character of local practice, the familiar, the current, and the representative behavior within a given society."[258] In this study I am interested in redirecting attention to diffuse and local institutions (the mosque, the preacher) as well as, crucially, the discourses that animate and constrain them. While the freedom and power of mosque and preacher fluctuate over time, these very oscillations serve as a productive index of state-society relations. That is to say: not only is the regulation of mosques and preachers a longstanding and widespread practice deserving of study, but the unique embeddedness of these institutions allows them to telegraph change (and response to change) in ways that other indicators may not.

In this section, I pair a structural analysis of these developments in four countries with an examination of the accompanying shifts in discourse that justify those structures and enable them to operate in society in new, more pervasive ways. As states centralized and grew in power, how

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[255] Nathan J. Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 11, 2017, 4, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP306_Brown_Religious_Institutions_Final_Web1.pdf, quoting Jocelyn Cesari, *The Awakening of Muslim Democracy: Religion, Modernity, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[256] Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Official Islam and Political Legitimation in the Arab Countries," in *The Islamic Impulse*, ed. Barbara Freyer Stowasser (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 135.

[257] Ibid., 135–36.

[258] Patrick D. Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3.

did they draw discursive boundaries around communities of belonging, whom did they exclude, and why? What continuities and distinctions are observable across time, geography, and regime type? I follow this history through the Arab Spring to show that patterns of control only accelerated in response to rising Islamist political power.[259]

Egypt

The officialization of preaching in Egypt finds its roots in the centralizing and modernizing reforms of the 19th century.[260] Under this program, the *'ulamā'* saw "their influence and their economic independence diminish as they became increasingly marginal to those spheres of public life where they had once dominated,"[261] namely, the judicial and educational systems that were then being either appropriated by the state or supplanted by new, parallel institutions directly under its control.[262] The "age of reform" arrived at al-Azhar in a series of decrees (1872–1911) that progressively incorporated the mosque-university as an arm of the state. Accordingly, the activities of its personnel were curbed: under the 1911 law, "students and ulama were not to engage in political activities and were now answerable for their conduct in and out of al-Azhar to [its] Supreme Council," over which the government held statutory leverage.[263] At the same time, the growing Ministry of Awqāf increasingly asserted its authority to administer the careers of religious professionals after graduation, transforming mosque personnel into *petits fonctionnaires*[264] whose

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[259] "Never before has there been such a concentration of state resources on the regulation of a religion globally." Wainscott, 3.

[260] "Islamic modernist regimes have … sought to bring the independent power of traditional institutions, including those of the ulama, to an end as they have sought to extend their firm control over previously autonomous religious institutions such as the schools and religious courts." Daniel Crecelius, "Nonideological Responses of the Egyptian Ulama to Modernization," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 196.

[261] Patrick D. Gaffney, "The Changing Voices of Islam: The Emergence of Professional Preachers in Contemporary Egypt," *Muslim World* 81, no. 1 (1991): 29. An important rejoinder to the marginalization narrative regarding the *'ulamā'* of this period, with particular reference to Egypt, is Meir Hatina, *'Ulama', Politics, and the Public Sphere* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010).

[262] "It was not the intention of the Pasha to destroy the institutions of the older order but rather to create a new order alongside the old." Crecelius, 186.

[263] Ibid., 194. Note Gaffney's mention of "the growing containment within the mosque of those who would continue to identify themselves by their training, their public uniform and their professional affiliations with a classical image of Islam," and "how the social functions of the latter are being increasingly circumscribed." Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 38.

[264] "Pour le pouvoir, le processus d'intégration des prêcheurs à l'État permet d'exercer un contrôle étroit sur ceux qui répandent la bonne parole." Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam: Les oulémas d'Al Azhar dans l'Égypte contemporaine* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1996), 168. The early *Dīwān al-Awqāf* in Egypt operated under an 1851 decree that stipulated that "all mosques should be opened from morning till evening, so that all five prayers

clearly defined professional roles fell within a rigid hierarchy — in a word, bureaucratization.[265]

Al-Azhar officialized preaching as its own department in 1918 which, tellingly, was taken over by the Ministry of the Interior in the 1920s. For Malika Zeghal, the move signals that religious rhetoric had been "instrumentalized by political power for the purposes of internal security."[266] Bruce Borthwick notes that, as the government's objective during this period was the "preservation of the status quo," it "confined the topics [of sermons] to loyalty to the existing order, satisfaction with one's lot, the sacredness of property, and the defense of capitalism."[267] This state of affairs obtained irrespective of regime type: after overthrowing the monarchy in 1952–1953, Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir likewise exerted control over Islamic rhetoric. His Ministry of Awqāf provided a topic and a model sermon each week, "but now the preachers advocate[d] social and economic reform," in line with the priorities of the government of the day.[268] Borthwick concludes: "Egypt has followed the policy that political, social and economic questions may be dealt with in sermons as long as they support the state."[269]

The revolutionary regime did not simply continue the previous policy of intervention in the mosques, but greatly augmented its scope.[270] Gaffney highlights a surge in the budget of the Ministry of Awqāf, "clearly point[ing] to an exponential increase in the Ministry's involvement in the administration of the nation's mosques."[271] Among the objectives pursued with the ministry's new bounty was its "commitment to expand vastly its jurisdiction, both by building new mosques

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can be performed." Contrast the more recent role of ministries of religious affairs in shuttering mosques to avoid the expression of dissent. Miroslav Melčák, "The Development of Dīwān al-Awqāf in Egypt in the 19th Century: Regulations of 1837 and 1851," *Archiv orientální* 78, no. 1 (2010): 10.

[265] Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 35–37.

[266] Zeghal, *Gardiens*, 168.

[267] Bruce M. Borthwick, "The Islamic Sermon as a Channel of Political Communication," *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967): 304–5.

[268] Ibid., 305. Cf.: "Avant comme après la révolution de 1952, le prêche est contrôlé, doit laisser dans le silence toute contestation politique et montrer fidélité à l'ordre établi. Le régime de 1952 relève, sur ce point, de la continuité : les prêcheurs, comme l'ensemble des oulémas, se doivent de légitimer la réforme sociale et économique. Ils reçoivent leur directives du ministère des *waqf*-s qui leur impose par écrit le sujet du sermon du vendredi. Les élites politiques instrumentalisent ainsi le prêche au profit du message nationaliste." Zeghal, *Gardiens*, 169–70.

[269] Borthwick, 304. This resonates with earlier eras, too: "Muhammad Ali left [the *ʿulamāʾ*] virtually alone, to teach, think, write, or practice whatever they wanted so long as they did not undermine his programs within the sphere of government." Crecelius, 186.

[270] It is not irrelevant that "some of the new revolutionary leaders … ascended the pulpits of Cairo mosques on Friday and preached," whereas "prior to 1952 modern government officials had not been in the habit of doing this." Borthwick, 305.

[271] Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 37.

and incorporating existing private mosques into the state bureaucracy."[272] Gaffney describes the emergence of this latter breed of private (*ahlī*) mosque as characteristic of the Egyptian religious scene in the 20th century, and observes that the "mushrooming of popular religious facilities" and the accompanying "appearance of a new breed of lay preacher" were not, at first, "constrained by any systematic government oversight."[273] In the gap, "a new and potent basis for religious authority began to arise,"[274] expressed through "a new type of preaching that … took on a free form, most often with a political angle," and which "competed with the preaching that was routinized between al-Azhar and the *awqāf* ministry."[275] Gaffney finds that many of these preachers "were ideologically opposed to being identified as professionals, that is, within a government mosque," owing to the "stigma of a 'government shaykh' as a 'parrot' who simply mouthed the hallow, stilted, and conformist formulas denigrated by its critics as 'radio Islam.'"[276] As a consequence of the bureaucratization of some preachers as "official," these non-government figures were now drawn into a new category, the "unofficial" preacher, to which the state now turned its attention.

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Ministry of Awqāf regularly published statistics about the number of mosques in the country and the share of government (*ḥukūmī*) mosques among them. A 1960 law formally empowered the ministry to bring all mosques under its control within ten years, and in this spirit the ministry's tabulation for 1963–1964 "declares unequivocally that the policy of the state is ultimately to bring all private mosques under the supervision and hence the control of the Ministry," explaining that "the reason this extensive survey was undertaken was to assist in the planning and gradual implementation of this policy."[277] Yet this and subsequent ministry publications show that for decades the growth of private mosques consistently outpaced the government's ability to annex them or build its own.[278] Even among the government's relatively small share of Egypt's mosques, the ministry lacked the budgetary and administrative

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[272] Ibid., 38.

[273] Ibid., 32–33.

[274] Ibid., 32.

[275] Zeghal, *Gardiens*, 166. "Increasingly, many private mosques were assuming a posture of opposition, giving voice to a vision of Islam that represented an alternative or perhaps was openly critical of the loyalist message usually preached in government mosques." Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 42.

[276] Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 40–41.

[277] Ibid., 38–39.

[278] The numbers in these reports fluctuate noticeably, even "wildly," "clearly reflect[ing] the rising temperature of an ongoing conflict over religious expression in Egypt." Ibid., 44–45.

capacity to furnish every mosque with an imam and the requisite supporting staff (a *mu'adhdhin*, a Qur'ān reciter, etc.). The state's chronic insufficiency in providing the public good of worship space, especially stark in communities that were under-resourced in general, continually created openings for other suppliers to enter the market. Many of the private mosques were managed by voluntary associations (*jam'īyāt*) that undertook social functions outside of worship, too, such as education and medical care; and while most of these were not hostile toward the state, their existence did contribute to "political undercurrents" of opposition to a government evidently unable to provide for its citizens' needs, spiritual or material.[279] Islamist groups, however, drew on such undercurrents to elaborate broader claims about the culpability of secularist governance and to urge "a totalistic societal transformation with the mosque serving as its center and meeting place."[280]

With the added pressure of Islamist political violence in the 1970s, the state redoubled its effort to corral independent Islamic actors, but only by redefining the terms of its own campaign. A proposal from the *awqāf* minister in 1979 sought "to fill at least the empty pulpits in mosques under the Ministry's jurisdiction," without so much as a mention of any functionaries other than those engaged in delivering sermons.[281] Finally, a forceful seizure of the mosques first threatened by Anwar al-Sādāt in 1981 materialized under Ḥusnī Mubārak in 1986: the government "announced quite simply that 60,000 mosques 'were taken over … to prevent the independent imāms and Islamic workers from exerting their influence.'"[282] The regime had effectively abandoned the "strategy of incremental integration … which had been failing for decades":

> No longer would the control of mosques be understood as their incorporation into the Ministry's bureaucracy. That would have meant full governmental [responsibility] for maintaining the physical facilities and staff. From now on, the support and interest of the state would indeed reach every mosque but not the whole of it. Instead, the government's supervision in most cases would extend only as far as the minbar, that is, the pulpit for the Friday sermon.[283]

The intensifying emphasis upon the imam and the *khuṭbah* reveals the area of regulation

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[279] Gaffney, *Prophet's Pulpit*, 47–49.

[280] Ibid., 51.

[281] Gaffney, "Changing Voices," 43.

[282] Ibid., 45.

[283] Ibid.

most important to the state, in the absence of its ability to pursue a fuller array of objectives in this domain. In accordance with its new and streamlined purpose, the government adopted new tools, both kinetic and rhetorical:

> By directive, every preacher was henceforth required to have formal approval for his performance from the authorities in whose jurisdiction the mosque was located. Increasingly, therefore, the Bureau of Mosques (*maktab al-masājid*) within the Ministry of Awqāf which was charged with the oversight of these institutions was becoming, in fact, a "Bureau of Preachers," for their actual concerns were narrowing from the whole to this single aspect of religious administration. Needless to say, this decision was not welcomed in all quarters, nor did the transition always occur peaceably. During the process a number of confrontations occurred as the government virtually imposed government imāms upon any recalcitrant private mosque which attempted to maintain its independence. In some instances, riots were reported, with arrests following, as "religious extremists" defied the Ministry of Awqāf's newly appointed mosque officials. Also, in a few cases, such as the celebrated al-Nūr Mosque in Cairo, police forcefully dispersed resisters who attempted to conduct unauthorized prayers outside the building.[284]

The explicit linkage of nonconforming imams to the vocabulary of "extremism" reflects two transformations. One is that the stroke-of-pen officialization of "all" preachers erased the official/unofficial dichotomy, replacing it with "a less definite contrast that distinguishes between the activist versus the conformist preacher."[285] Embedded in this new distinction is the understanding that extremism might be defined by behavior (i.e., disobedience) rather than beliefs. The other transformation is the Egyptian state's willingness to define Islamic normativity.[286] The exercise of this religious authority became a recurring feature of the Mubārak years: yet another initiative to seize control of unregulated mosques in 1997 proceeded under the explicit objective of "prevent[ing] the dissemination of 'unorthodox' Islamic views that are critical of the regime."[287]

     As with the 1952 revolution, the tumult of the Arab Spring period led to an expansion of the regulatory regime governing mosques and the speech produced therein. Following the ousters of Mubārak and Muḥammad Mursī, the interim administration and later that of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-

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[284] Ibid.

[285] Ibid., 46–47.

[286] This inclination found expression not only in administrative actions and regulation, but also at the most fundamental level: "All three of its twentieth-century constitutions have declared Islam Egypt's official religion, granting the state both the right and the duty to co-opt Islamic discourse for itself." Starrett, 8.

[287] Wiktorowicz, 53.

Sīsī dismissed some 12,000 unlicensed imams and credentialed 17,000 others.[288] In language consonant with that of earlier regimes, the *awqāf* minister defended the move as "only meant to legalize the preaching process."[289] The government also forbade Friday prayers at small and independent mosques and dictated topics for the *khuṭbah*.[290] In 2016 the Ministry of Awqāf went further, announcing that its officials, in consultation with al-Azhar and members of Parliament, would draft a unified national *khuṭbah* each week for all imams to deliver verbatim.[291] The *awqāf* minister stated that the new policy was "not at all political," but rather sought to "push moderate Islamic ideology"[292] and to ensure that preachers did not politicize their sermons.[293] His justification was of a piece with a code of ethics for preachers promulgated by the ministry during this period, which specified that "mosques cannot be exploited to achieve political, partisan, or electoral benefits."[294] That the promotion of a particular ideology could qualify as "not political" revealed that the definition of the political lay in the hands of politicians — the same strategic ambiguity that the Turkish state exploited to declare that its Diyanet "is not a religious organization" and that allowed a cabinet minister to preach from the *minbar* in Tunis. The irony

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[288] "Manipulating the Minarets," *The Economist*, August 2, 2014; "One Year Later: Legislation Issued since Morsi's Ouster," Atlantic Council, July 3, 2014, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/one-year-later-legislation-issued-since-morsi-s-ouster/.

[289] Yasmine Saleh, "Egypt Bans Mosque Preachers in Crackdown on Islamists," Reuters, September 10, 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-protests/egypt-bans-mosque-preachers-in-crackdown-on-islamists-idUSBRE9890NF20130910.

[290] "Manipulating the Minarets."

[291] Mohamed Abdellah, "Egypt Orders Muslim Preachers to Deliver Identical Weekly Sermons," Reuters, July 12, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-islam-idUSKCN0ZS2FI.

[292] Al-Sīsī "talked about correcting the religious discourse by purifying it [of] misconceptions." Ishak Ibrahim, "Obstacles to Renewing Religious Discourse in Egypt: Reasons and Results," Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, October 31, 2019, https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/obstacles-to-renewing-religious-discourse-in-egypt-reasons-and-results/.

[293] Ayat Al Tawy, "Egypt's Muslim Preachers to Recite Government-Issued Friday Sermons," Ahram Online, July 13, 2016, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/233113/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-Muslim-preachers-to-recite-governmentissued.aspx. "The ministry is shutting down all small, unregistered mosques. The reason? Officials say it's to distance religion from politics." Leila Fadel, "Egypt's Crackdown on Islamists Spreads to Mosques, Charities," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, October 18, 2013, https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2013/10/18/236256570/egypts-crackdown-on-islamists-spreads-to-mosques-charities. "The regime wants a religious discourse devoid of the political, economic, and social issues that Egypt suffers from." Ibrahim.

[294] Georges Fahmi, "The Egyptian State and the Religious Sphere," Carnegie Middle East Center, September 18, 2014, https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/09/17/egyptian-state-and-religious-sphere-pub-56619. In a move reminiscent of 1986, the minister proclaimed that the government was "in full control of all mosques," with the intention "to firmly stand against any attempts for using them for any political or partisan purposes." "Awqaf Ministry in Full Control of All Mosques: Minister," Egypt Today, June 20, 2017, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/8272/Awqaf-Ministry-in-full-control-of-all-mosques-minister.

was not lost on preachers. "As one imam observed wryly after Egypt held a constitutional referendum in 2014 that was backed by the post-coup regime: 'If I endorse the constitution, that is not political. But if I oppose it, that is political.'"[295]

Algeria

Government control of mosques during Algeria's long colonial period,[296] in addition to the dynamics of its broad-spectrum liberation movement, meant that upon independence in 1962 the state initially "held a monopoly over political activism as well as Islamic discourse."[297] The state routinized its authority by "creat[ing] a Ministry of Religious Affairs to supervise, regulate and administer religious activities. In order to ensure ideological compliance, it transformed Islamic scholars and preachers into civil servants and deterred any Islamic activity outside this 'official framework.'"[298] The ministry did not transform *all* scholars and preachers, however: "the Salafi imams who belonged to the Association of the Reformist Ulama were recruited as civil servants," while on the other hand "the state launched an offensive aimed at weakening the independent religious actors ([Ṣūfī] brotherhoods, minor marabouts, Ibadite minority)."[299] Outspoken scholars critical of the regime were removed from the *minbar*, and the prominent association al-Qiyam, which sought "the respect of Islamic values and ethics in the construction of the new Algeria," was banned in 1970 for "incursions into the realm of politics."[300] Mohammed Tozy characterizes: "The objective was to assure that the state had the monopoly over the organization of the religious sources of reference and their interpretation," an "operation … [of] the Algerian authorities to adopt a single version of Islam adapted to a Jacobin conception of the state."[301]

Ahmed Rouadjia links the closure of al-Qiyam, and the regime's "need to prevent the return of the Islamists" more generally, to an ordinance introduced the following year according to which

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[295] Brown, 16.

[296] "Between 1830 and 1962 the French government remained a patron of the mosques as well as the employer of the religious personnel attached to them." Jean-Claude Vatin, "Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism: Islam in Algeria," in *Islam in the Political Process*, ed. James P. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 109.

[297] M'hand Berkouk, "The Algerian Islamic Movement from Protest to Confrontation: A Study in Systemic Conflagrations," *Intellectual Discourse* 6, no. 1 (1998): 46.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Tozy, 104.

[300] Berkouk, 47.

[301] Tozy, 108, 104.

private associations could not form without the approval of the Ministry of the Interior.[302] Those with a religious purpose, such as to build a mosque, required the further consent of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as well as local officials. (A decree governing the ministry did "not explicitly state that all mosques should be registered, but it certainly emphasize[d] that the ministry should watch over their 'religious orientation.'"[303]) Even after the adoption of the constitution of 1976, which declared that "la liberté d'association est reconnue," officials continued to "prefer" the older ordinance.[304] Requests for approval could linger for years, and contemporary reports bemoan the lack of other means of review: "il n'existe … aucun recours judiciaire utile dans un tel cas."[305] Those approvals that did come through were understood to have been authorized "under duress … against the will of the bureaucracy."[306]

Little wonder, then, that "religious associations, in particular, systematically avoided contact with the civil service."[307] Much as in Egypt's *ahlī* sector, a range of institutions emerged to meet the demand for devotional and communal space: some, known as "popular" mosques, were simply built without the hassle of formal authorization in disadvantaged areas, too quickly for the government to raze them;[308] others, called "free" mosques, engaged in more deliberate resistance to the perceived encroachment of the state upon the *sharī'ah* and freedom of conscience.[309] (The regime labeled them all "anarchic."[310]) A hallmark of these non-state mosques was the congregation's ability to select an imam "having their confidence" and demonstrating a "spirit of independence toward the religious discourse imposed upon the official imams," for the attendees "found repulsive those imams who recite sermons from *al-warqa* (the paper) during the Friday

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[302] Ahmed Rouadjia, *Les frères et la mosquée : Enquête sur le mouvement islamiste en Algérie* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1990), 87.

[303] Vatin, 112.

[304] Rouadjia, 86–87.

[305] Ibid., 87.

[306] Ibid., 84.

[307] Ibid., 89.

[308] Ibid., 82–84. The interview with *shaykh* Mohamed Salah Abed about the "game" of building mosques covertly and quickly is instructive ("On construit des mosquées en ferraille…").

[309] Ibid., 90, 92; Myriam Aït-Aoudia, "La naissance du Front islamique du salut : une politisation conflictuelle (1988–1989)," *Critique internationale* 30 (2006).

[310] Rouadjia, 89.

prayer."[311] Thus the preference for unregulated Islamic expression (especially among the youth[312]) highlighted "l'opposition d'une bonne partie des fidèles au monopole religieux de l'État."[313]

Algeria's democratic opening of 1989 saw the formation of new political parties, most notably the Front Islamique du Salut, "the first contemporary organization to more substantially erode the state's control of Islamic discourse and institutions."[314] Capitalizing on "a large network of mosques and charitable and religious associations," alongside a sophisticated *da'wah* operation, the party "attacked the state bureaucracy, its corruption and nepotism, the spread of un-Islamic practices, and focused on social welfare through acts of national solidarity, and large political demonstrations to force the regime to consider Islamist perceptions of matters of national concern."[315] The party's landslide electoral victory in 1990 prompted a series of executive decrees through which the state sought to regain its authority in the Islamic domain — in other words, "consacrer juridiquement son monopole du contrôle de tout exercice du culte musulman."[316]

Partially an implicit response to the Islamist tide, these decrees also followed a series of "querelles de mosquées" taking place across the country, feuds among congregations "in some cases ending in the expulsion of the official imam by local Islamists."[317] In crafting a legislative response, the regime defined the mosque as *religious* space (echoing the language, then current

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[311] Ibid., 90. "In Algeria … under the Boumedienne presidency, the imams of mosques received every Thursday the text of the sermon they had to deliver the following day before Friday prayers, without changing a word." Mohamed Charfi, *Islam and Liberty: The Historical Misunderstanding*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Zed Books, 2005), 128.

[312] Rouadjia, 82.

[313] "Ces classements de mosquées par type ne résultent pas d'une terminologie juridique officielle … mais de la volonté populaire de se démarquer par rapport au discours religieux officiel." Ibid., 96. See also Vatin.

[314] Vish Sakthivel, "Political Islam in Post-Conflict Algeria," Hudson Institute, November 2, 2017, https://www.hudson.org/research/13934-political-islam-in-post-conflict-algeria. "The Islamic Salvation Front and later domestic jihadi groups considered the state and its apparatuses impious (*tawaghit*) and unlawful in the context of sharia." Dalia Ghanem, "State-Owned Islam in Algeria Faces Stiff Competition," Carnegie Middle East Center, March 13, 2018, https://carnegie-mec.org/2018/03/13/state-owned-islam-in-algeria-faces-stiff-competition-pub-75770.

[315] Berkouk, 50–51. "Le contrôle étatique de l'islam a été remis en cause dans les années 1990 par les mouvements islamistes qui, considérant l'État algérien comme impie, lui ont dénié le droit de gérer la norme musulmane, ce qui ne signifiait pas qu'ils contestaient le principe de ce contrôle, l'État islamique devant au contraire selon eux appliquer et faire appliquer la *chari'a*." Stéphane Papi, "Le contrôle étatique de l'islam en Algérie : un héritage de l'époque coloniale," *L'Année du Maghreb* 6 (2010).

[316] Mustafa al-Ahnaf, Bernard Botiveau, and Franck Fregosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1991), 103.

[317] Ibid.

among secularist parties, of "la non-utilisation des mosquées à des fins *politiques*"[318]) and the state itself as the guarantor. One decree reads, in part:

> Article 1er. — La mosquée est la maison d'Allah.
>
> Elle est le lieu de réunion des musulmans qui y font leurs prières, lisent le Coran et écoutent les prêches qui leurs sont utiles pour tout ce qui touche à leur religion et à leur vie présente.
>
> La mosquée ne dépend ni d'un individu, ni d'un groupe, ni d'une association.
>
> La mosquée relève de l'État qui est responsable de son respect et de son indépendance dans l'accomplissement de ses missions spirituelles, sociales, d'enseignement et d'éducation….
>
> Art. 12. — Le ministre des affaires religieuses nomme les imams et ce, après avoir recueilli l'assentiment des fidèles pour garantir leur stabilité….
>
> Art. 25. — Toute action contraire à la mission de la mosquée ou susceptible de porter atteinte à son respect est interdite.
>
> Art. 26. — L'utilisation des mosquées pour la concrétisation d'objectifs illicites, personnels ou de groupe ou pour la réalisation d'affaires de la vie courante, tels que le commerce, la publicité, ou la recherche de l'intérêt personnel est interdite.[319]

The avoidance of the word "politique" is notable; the law instead creates the catchall category of "action contraire à la mission de la mosquée." Another advantageous ambiguity exists between the inclusion of "leur vie présente" as an acceptable topic of sermons and the exclusion of "affaires de la vie courante" as unacceptable (these are rendered as *dunyá*, *dunyawīyah* in the Arabic version). Unambiguous, however, are the place of the mosque under the jurisdiction of the state ("relève de l'État") and the circumscription of the "independence" of the mosque within the state's oversight. The exclusive role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in selecting the imam is also made clear. In subsequent decrees, the government created apparatuses for enforcement, mandating for each province a "mosque foundation"[320] and a *niẓārah* (inspector) for religious affairs.[321]

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[318] Ibid., 102. Emphasis mine. This vocabulary also avoided speaking in terms of *laïcité*, a concept "in [some politicians'] eyes marred by a Western specificity and essentially French." Ibid., 102n8.

[319] Décret exécutif relatif à la construction de la mosquée, à son organisation et son fonctionnement et fixant sa mission, *Journal officiel de la République algérienne démocratique et populaire*, 443–45 (March 23, 1991).

[320] Charged with "la sauvegarde de l'unité religieuse de la nation," *inter alia*: Décret exécutif portant création de la fondation de la mosquée, *Journal officiel de la République algérienne démocratique et populaire*, 446–48 (March 23, 1991).

[321] "Afin que soit assurée la bonne marche de l'activité religieuse dans les mosquées," *inter alia*: Décret exécutif portant création de la Nidhara des affaires religieuses et déterminant son organisation et son fonctionnement, *Journal officiel de la République algérienne démocratique et populaire*, 448–49 (March 23, 1991).

These and other maneuvers brought the state and Islamist organizations into open conflict during Algeria's devastating civil war (1991–2002). The government's tactical victory paved the way for gains in conceptual terms,[322] to great effect: Vish Sakthivel observed fifteen years later that "nowadays, it is rare (though not impossible) to hear someone say they oppose state control and provision of mosques."[323] Among the postwar measures adopted were a more explicit criminalization of unauthorized preaching,[324] as well as an addition to the penal code prescribing lengthy imprisonment and a hefty fine for "quiconque par prêche ou par toute autre action, entreprend une activité contraire à la noble mission de la mosquée ou de nature à attenter à la cohésion de la société ou à faire l'apologie et la propagande des actes visés à la présente section."[325] Through such language, the "mission" of the mosque — spiritual, social, and educational, but not "political" — was reinforced and put in the service of the cohesion of society.

Speech in the mosques now became a priority for regulation, required to be "au service de l'Algérie" and "lutter contre les discours subversifs … qui prônent la radicalisation violente, le sectarisme et les idées étrangères aux valeurs nationales et à l'identité algérienne."[326] To this end, the Ministry of Religious Affairs introduced a preferred "methodology" for sermons (if not complete scripts) in the name of "standardizing imams' doctrinal references."[327] As in the Egyptian experience, these relatively loose guidelines were solidified after the Arab Spring, again with an appeal to social cohesion: in 2017 the ministry published a preaching guide to ensure that "imams do not fall into inappropriate discourses that divide society more than they unite it."[328] The guide offered 52 weekly themes for sermons with accompanying verses from the Qur'ān, with a distinct emphasis on social and political themes of contemporary relevance.

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[322] Ghanem.

[323] Sakthivel, "Political Islam in Post-Conflict Algeria."

[324] Amine Kadi, "Alger reprend le contrôle des prêches dans les mosquées," *La Croix*, January 22, 2002, https://www.la-croix.com/Archives/2002-01-22/Alger-reprend-le-controle-des-preches-dans-les-mosquees-_NP_-2002-01-22-149730.

[325] Code pénal, *Journal officiel de la République algérienne démocratique et populaire* (2015).

[326] Yakine Allam, "Mohamed Aïssa plaide pour la promotion d'un discours religieux modéré," Algérie360, November 26, 2016, https://www.algerie360.com/mohamed-aissa-plaide-pour-la-promotion-dun-discours-religieux-modere/.

[327] Kadi.

[328] Hani Abdi, "Un guide des prêches de vendredi pour prémunir les mosquées des discours extrémistes," Algérie Patriotique, December 7, 2017, https://www.algeriepatriotique.com/2017/12/07/guide-preches-de-vendredi-premunir-mosquees-discours-extremistes/. "Pour Cheikh Khaleb Bounab, islamiste, il s'agit en fait « de consolider un islam algérien face à un islam salafiste qui serait étranger »." Kadi.

> Parmi les thèmes qu'on trouve dans ce guide officiel du prêche de vendredi, il y a, entre autres, la protection de l'enfance, la tolérance et l'entraide, les accidents de la route, la triche, le mensonge et l'hypocrisie et leurs effets sur la société, les dangers des courants religieux extrémistes sur la société, la place de la jeunesse dans la société, la valeur du temps, le pardon, l'unité nationale, le 1er Novembre 1954, l'Indépendance de l'Algérie, la sécurité, les référents religieux nationaux, l'amour de la patrie, la maladie du sida et ses dangers….[329]

The minister of religious affairs insisted that the government had "no intention whatsoever to dictate sermons to the imams, but to channel their discourse so as not to depart from the true values of Islam … which will allow Algerians, especially the youth, to guard against religious extremism and return to the Islam of Cordoba … which advocates peace, tolerance, brotherhood, and solidarity among human beings."[330] That is to say, the imam was "free to choose the subject" of his sermon, but the government would still act to "ensure that the imam is a partner in the national strategy aimed at dealing with attempts at division or attacks on national unity."[331] The minister of religious affairs stated: "our objective is to make sure that religious discourse fits in complementarily with the national discourse."[332]

The ministry employed similar language in a new effort to classify mosques and religious schools according to their "orientation." Beginning in 2011, the government recognized mosques as Mālikī,[333] scientific Salafī,[334] Muslim Brotherhood, or of no orientation at all.[335] Even though numbers provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs showed these categories constituting 100 percent of the country's mosques, the ministry itself spoke of additional categories termed simply

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[329] Abdi.

[330] Ibid.

[331] "L'imam est libre en Algérie et son prêche ne lui est pas dicté," *Algérie Presse Service*, December 1, 2017, http://www.aps.dz/algerie/66481-l-imam-est-libre-en-algerie-et-son-preche-ne-lui-est-pas-dicte.

[332] Ibid.

[333] One of the four principal schools of Sunnī jurisprudence, here subdivided into two tendencies, *traditionnel* and *nouveau*.

[334] That is to say, Salafī but non-*jihādī*. This bipartite scheme is common in non-specialist parlance in the Maghreb: see, e.g., Monica Marks, "Who Are Tunisia's Salafis?," *Foreign Policy*, September 28, 2012, https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/28/who-are-tunisias-salafis/. Wiktorowicz would call them "purist": see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006). See further discussion in Joas Wagemakers, "Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining the Branches of Salafism," in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[335] Curiously, the last category is associated with government imams, apparently understood to pertain to no affiliation, not even the state-endorsed Mālikī *madhhab*.

"Salafī" (evidently intending the non-scientific sort) as well as "Quṭbī" (referring to *jihādī* thought influenced by Sayyid Quṭb).[336] Dozens of mosques so labeled were monitored by the Algerian security services in 2015, and several hundred unregistered prayer spaces were shuttered.[337] Likewise, in 2016 the government deemed 139 religious schools "out of control" as they lacked the authorization of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to operate, as required by decree.[338] In the course of authorizing a Qur'ānic school, the ministry would examine its curriculum and staff with a view to "protecting children from radical discourse," and would require that each school "adopt a discourse consistent with the 'national religious referent.'"[339] Statements from the minister of religious affairs made clear that the "national referent" stood in opposition to "des salafistes, des chiites et des adeptes d'autres religions" — that is, "les groupes 'sectaires' qui menacent la sécurité du pays."[340]

Jordan

A smaller population and territory facilitated Jordanian state control of religious activity relatively early after independence.[341] The government required advance approval of all sermons by the 1950s,[342] and began to proactively suggest topics for sermons by the mid-1960s; at this stage, however, such dictates could still be embraced or ignored locally, at least in rural areas, as explored in Richard Antoun's ethnography of preaching at the village level.[343] The Ministry of Awqāf drafted complete, "exemplary" sermons from the 1970s, but did not require imams to read them verbatim.[344] Since the passage in 1986 of a law regulating preaching, the ministry "reviews the names of prospective preachers before the Friday sermon and can deny permission to any

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[336] Nassima Oulebsir, "La blacklist des mosquées salafistes," *El Watan*, June 26, 2015, https://www.djazairess.com/fr/elwatan/498224. Speaking about the latter group, a former ministry official sounded somewhat frustrated: "On sait que ce sont des radicaux, mais ils ne le proclament pas officiellement." Of course, it is in the nature of labels like "radical" and "heretic" that they are applied exogenously.

[337] Ghanem.

[338] Essaïd Wakli, "Ces 139 écoles coraniques qui échappent au contrôle de l'État," Algérie Focus, October 9, 2016, https://www.algerie-focus.com/2016/10/affaires-religieuses-ecoles-coraniques-echappent-controle-de-letat/.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid. Elsewhere, the minister evoked the "invasion sectaire et confessionnelle de notre société": see Allam.

[341] "In Jordan, all mosques are controlled by the government…. There is no 'independent' or 'free' space in Jordanian mosques." Wiktorowicz, *Management of Islamic Activism*, 53.

[342] Borthwick, 305.

[343] Richard T. Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 93–94.

[344] Ibid.

candidate without specifying a reason."[345] The statute set punishments for any preacher who "insists on speaking publicly" after being denied.[346] Furthermore, the ministry makes use of "outside preachers" — that is, orators (*khuṭabā'*, singular *khaṭīb*) who specialize in delivering the important Friday and/or holiday sermons — partly out of necessity (there are not enough imams to staff all the country's mosques, and some of the everyday "prayer imams" are not particularly gifted orators) and partly because of collateral advantages. As Quintan Wiktorowicz explains,

> the government brings in "balanced thinkers," everyday speak in Jordan for those who are not critical of the government or its policies. The ministry consciously avoids controversial or oppositional figures that may espouse "radical" ideologies. [Additionally], the ministry rotates outside preachers from mosque to mosque. While the director in charge of these appointments claims that the rotation is done so that the congregation does not tire of listening to the same preacher every week, it has the more controlling effect of reducing the opportunity for nongovernment preachers to cultivate a loyal following through the mosques.[347]

Both categories of preachers, the permanent salaried imams and the rotating *khuṭabā'*, are bound by what Wiktorowicz describes as the "most important mechanism of control for preachers … a set of informal rules known as 'red lines.'"[348]

> They are not explicit, only hesitantly discussed, and extremely effective. While the government requests that preachers discuss issues of concern to the community, this rhetorical openness bows to the weight of informal red lines, which in reality guide content. The most significant red line is that "preachers cannot go against state policy" or else they will be prevented from speaking. Officials at the Ministry of Awqaf argue that this is the "spirit" of the Law of Preaching, Guidance, and Teaching in Mosques, which states: "The preacher shall be committed to wisdom and proper teaching and shall not attack, accuse, or instigate and go beyond the guidelines of the Islamic *da'wa*." Since one of the roles of the [ministry] is the "supervision of clearing the atmosphere in mosques from disagreements and conflicts," officials interpret the limits of preaching as a prohibition of criticism directed against the state. Several ministry officials referred to mosques as "government agencies," reiterating the state's control and denying their status as

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[345] Wiktorowicz, *Management of Islamic Activism*, 60.

[346] Ibid. The Ministry of the Interior also plays a role as prospective preachers are submitted for screening by the intelligence service. William Booth and Taylor Luck, "To Counter Rise of Islamic State, Jordan Imposes Rules on Muslim Clerics," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/to-counter-rise-of-the-islamic-state-jordan-imposes-rules-on-muslim-clerics/2014/11/09/4d5fce22-5937-11e4-bd61-346aee66ba29_story.html.

[347] Wiktorowicz, *Management of Islamic Activism*, 59.

[348] Ibid.

community and social institutions. As a consequence, the informal policy is to prevent any actions that might be harmful to the government and its Islamic legitimacy, a source of legitimacy that would be affected by any attacks from the *minbar*.[349]

Red lines are, of course, an exemplary form of strategic ambiguity, whereby the state avoids the labor of promulgating formal regulations (which may be scrutinized for conformity to constitutional guarantees or human rights) and retains the ability to shift the boundaries of acceptability over time, in accordance with its own interests in a given situation.

Violations can prompt the ministry to ban a preacher from the pulpit "for two or three months," although "more outspoken or influential figures are banned for longer periods of time. Though this latter ban is not in strict accordance with the law, ministry officials admit that there are cases where preachers are blacklisted from delivering the *khutba* for long periods of time."[350] Wiktorowicz traces an uptick in preaching bans to 1994, when the Jordanian government switched its posture toward Israel. Whereas previously the government had "often actively encouraged" preachers to openly decry Israel, now the two states were preparing to sign a peace treaty. Accordingly, the Jordanian government sought to prevent dissent in the mosques by denying preaching authorization to imams critical of the new policy, and dismissing those previously authorized who had given sermons in opposition.[351] Failure to support the treaty thus became a red line, one criterion among many against which the regime evaluated preachers in its increasingly organized effort to hire exclusively "moderate, apolitical imams" and to "remove any imams whose views do not support the state."[352]

Jordan's minister of religious affairs embraced this terminology openly in 2014 when he defined rhetorical transgression in starkly political terms: imams must not speak against the king, the royal family, the "leaders of neighboring Arab states," the United States, or Europe, and they certainly must not express support for "sectarianism" or "extremist thought."[353] The minister advised that the government would not tolerate "preachers using the pulpit for political means, to launch attacks on private individuals and the state." He warned imams at a series of compulsory

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[349] Ibid., 60.
[350] Ibid., 61.
[351] Ibid., 61–62.
[352] Ibid., 55, 166n31.
[353] Booth and Luck.

regional convocations: "Once you cross the red line, you will not be let back in."[354] The minister's reinforcement of standards for preaching came after substantial erosion in the state's control of places of worship: by 2014, official figures showed that more than half of the country's imams were self-appointed, with 400 to 500 further unauthorized mosques being built each year.[355] It also cannot be comprehensively understood without reference to the challenge — military and ideological — posed by the Islamic State organization then menacing Jordan's borders.

Syria

Implicit limits on speech served to cement an entente between the government and preachers in Syria as well. The Islamist uprising of 1979–1982 (ending with the massacre at Ḥamāh) provided an opening for the state to "regain control of the religious field," including the conspicuous measures of closing mosques between prayer times and banning the headscarf in schools.[356] Less visible were the "unprecedented budgetary outlays on the part of the Ministry of Awqaf, whose real expenditures tripled between 1980 and 1984 … to increase the meagre salaries of clerics and subsidise the construction of mosques."[357] Thomas Pierret points out, however, that the ministry's administrative staff in fact shrank, "presumably due to the regime's lack of confidence in its religious functionaries" and a desire to avert "the development of a powerful religious lobby inside the state apparatus."[358] Rather, the state encouraged a private yet conformist religious sphere through clientelism, "on the principle of selection among existing clerical networks: whereas loyal groups were favoured, rebellious ones were marginalised, or destroyed."[359] Annabelle Böttcher explains the role that the favored preachers were expected to play:

> After Hama the Syrian regime regained full control of the Sunni arena but … as elsewhere in the Islamic world there has been a growing demand by Syrian Sunnis to integrate Islamic values in their social, political, and economic life. In order not to have radical Islamic

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[354] Ibid.

[355] Maria Abi-Habib, "Jordan Plans Crackdown on Unauthorized Mosques to Combat Radical Islam," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 19, 2014, https://www.wsj.com/articles/jordan-plans-crackdown-on-unauthorized-mosques-to-combat-radical-islam-1411157776.

[356] Pierret, 70–71.

[357] Ibid., 71.

[358] Ibid., 72.

[359] Ibid., 98. Heck describes these client-preachers as "non-state actors … incorporated into state-defined networks." Paul L. Heck, "Religion and the Authoritarian State: The Case of Syria," *Democracy & Society* 3, no. 1 (2005): 4.

currents provide these interpretations of Sunni Islam, the Syrian authorities decided to respond by developing their own version of Islam, the "official Islam" (*al-Islâm al-rasmî*). While on one hand any interpretation of Islam threatening the power holders is forbidden, on the other hand space has been created for those versions of "official Islam" which provide legitimacy to the regime. The strict rules of planning such as those applied to the economy are even more rigorously applied to the field of Islam. Just as in trade and commerce, an oligarchy of "official license-holders," the Baʿthi shaykhs, are the profiteers of this monopolistic setting.[360]

This approach relied on strong interpersonal and communal connections (Ṣūfī orders, prominent clerical families), which also functioned as mechanisms of discipline that reassured the regime that its unwritten rules would be observed.[361] In turn, the regime enjoyed more granular flexibility to tighten or relax its control. In areas of greater state penetration, such as Damascus and Aleppo, by the late 20th century "Friday preachers [were] generally free to write their own sermons provided they abide[d] by certain 'red lines.'"[362] Outside the principal cities, the government imposed "either ready-made sermons or general guidelines" into the 2000s, whereafter these "rules started to relax somewhat."[363] Widespread acquiescence to the red lines even gave the regime sufficient confidence to "[tolerate] the emergence of younger preachers who dare to address social and/or political issues."[364] This move also paid dividends for the regime, of course, having been "designed to develop relatively safe partners to meet the expectations of the educated youth, which badly resented the deterioration in the quality of religious discourse that resulted from the 1980 crackdown on the most politicised clerics."[365] (Islamist politicians were subject to similar conditions: they were permitted to pursue "their project … to renew 'religious speech' (*al-khiṭāb al-dīnī*)" provided that it rested upon "a conception of Islam as a civic-minded

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[360] Annabelle Böttcher, "Official Sunni and Shiʿi Islam in Syria," Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 2002, 5, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/41100344.pdf.

[361] There was enforcement, with attendant consequences for the preachers' popular legitimacy: "The state infiltrated and spied on any *ulama* who were not formally part of the state structure, which left them with limited or no credibility in the eyes of their audience." Azzam al-Kassir, "Formalizing Regime Control over Syrian Religious Affairs," *Sada*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 14, 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77712.

[362] Pierret, 14n39.

[363] Ibid. Cf.: "À Homs, par exemple, le contenu des sermons était dicté par le ministère des Waqf jusqu'au début des années 2000." Thomas Pierret, *Baas et Islam en Syrie: La dynastie Assad face aux oulémas* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2011), 28n1.

[364] Pierret, *Religion and State*, 95.

[365] Ibid.

religion where toleration, not coercion, is [the] paramount principle" — such that it neatly "coincide[d] with state interests in defining 'true' Islam as a moderate religion."[366])

In this decentralized environment, Syria's Ministry of Awqāf played a more constrained role, refereeing relationships at multiple levels. The ministry administered many mosques directly, but not those operated by trusted clients; it appointed local imams, but only in conjunction with the prime minister's office and the security services.[367] In many places, the selection of an imam involved some negotiation with prominent families and the relevant congregations. The Syrian case thus offers a counterpoint to the Egyptian or the Algerian, representing a context in which the state maintained control through the promotion of private mosques — owing to unique social and political factors — rather than taking on the expense and effort of managing all mosques directly. Interestingly, although the uprising and subsequent civil war beginning in 2011 accelerated this decentralization,[368] the strength of local ties preserved the networks of trust that had undergirded the entire patronage system. Kheder Khaddour finds that

> [rebel] factions were rarely able to disrupt local families' control over mosques, the appointment of imams, and ideology. That is because these groups were often drawn from the local community and therefore accepted the mosque-family-imam relationship that had preceded the conflict…. It was sometimes a struggle for armed groups to spread more radical versions of Islam. The reason for this is that such ideologies could only take root where families and imams with local legitimacy were conduits for spreading them…. Mosques were insulated to a great extent from the influence of actors not native to an area, such as foreign fighters, when they were tied to a network of local families and served as social institutions around which communities organized.[369]

Therefore, as the tide of the conflict turned in the government's favor from 2015, its strategy for the reintegration of Islamic leadership in rebel-held areas hinged on "reappoint[ing] trusted religious figures to their positions and return[ing] to a limited acceptance of localism," continuing the longstanding preference for "decentraliz[ing] authority into the hands of reliable local religious

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[366] Heck, 13.

[367] Kheder Khaddour, "Localism, War, and the Fragmentation of Sunni Islam in Syria," Carnegie Middle East Center, March 28, 2019, https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/28/localism-war-and-fragmentation-of-sunni-islam-in-syria-pub-78714.

[368] "It broke the linkages between smaller and larger urban areas, between local religious leaders and formal religious institutions, and between major and minor mosques." Ibid.

[369] Ibid.

actors while also maintaining leverage over them."[370]

In the capital, however, the regime's responses to instability have more closely tracked its neighbors', in terms of both rhetorical strategies and formal institutions. In 2014, Bashshār al-Asad linked the selection of the state's religious clients to the language of extremism and moderation, commenting that "the crisis has offered us an opportunity to draw clear boundaries between black and white. For us — the state and the Ministry of Awqaf — this means that it is now easier to differentiate between the patriotic *alim* and the unpatriotic *alim*, between the extremist *alim* and the moderate *alim*."[371] A sweeping 2018 law formalized this discursive structure by creating a body (al-Majlis al-'Ilmī al-Fiqhī) "with the power to define what religious discourse is 'appropriate,'" and to "monitor every *fatwa* issued throughout the country to prevent the spread of any 'Ikhwani' (meaning Brotherhood inspired or affiliated) or 'Wahhabi' thoughts."[372] The legislation recognized the authority of the *awqāf* minister to "penalize religious figures who propagate 'extremist' or 'deviant' thoughts by withdrawing their license or filing civil lawsuits against them."[373] The new law further forbade preachers from "'stoking sectarian strife' or 'taking advantage of religious platforms for political purposes,'" and went so far as to ban imams from "travel[ing] outside of Syria or attend[ing] any conference even inside the country without the *waqf* minister's permission."[374]

Patterns of state Islam

A similar résumé on religious regulation and its discursive accompaniments could be written about every Muslim-majority country. (In fact, the lack of a comprehensive survey is a noticeable lacuna in the field.) While the points of divergence among national histories are also

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[370] Ibid. See also Harout Akdedian, "The Religious Domain Continues to Expand in Syria," Carnegie Middle East Center, March 19, 2019, https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/19/religious-domain-continues-to-expand-in-syria-pub-78624.

[371] Al-Kassir.

[372] Ibid. A press release following the new council's first meeting was very clear that it "aim[ed] to enshrine concepts of national unity … and to confront the thought of the enemies of the *ummah*: the Zionists, the *takfīrī* extremists, the followers of political Islam, and the devils' *Ikhwān*, who lost no time in spreading dissension (*al-fitan*) to tear apart the *ummah* and to scatter its strength away from its goals…." "Al-Majlis al-'Ilmī al-Fiqhī fī Wizārat al-Awqāf yaṭluqu al-'amal bi-fiqh al-wāqi'," Syrian Ministry of Awqāf, November 21, 2019, https://bit.ly/wizarat-awqaf.

[373] Al-Kassir.

[374] "New Syria Law Expands State Regulation of Religious Affairs," Agence France Presse, October 13, 2018, https://www.france24.com/en/20181013-new-syria-law-expands-state-regulation-religious-affairs.

instructive, comparison reveals, on the whole, striking parallels with respect to both the *mechanisms* and the *vocabularies* of state control over authoritative Islamic expression. In terms of mechanisms, states of all regime types engage in the counting and categorizing of mosques as a component of state-building and as a measure of their jurisdiction: consider the statement from Afghanistan's Ministry of Ḥajj and Religious Affairs that it has 7,000 mosques on its registry, but believes that "there are likely tens of thousands of mosques in the country."[375] (Even less is known about Pakistan's mosques.[376]) States also license preachers, as they do other professions, and impose conditions in exchange: Saudi Arabia required preachers to sign pledges to "avoid political issues" and hew to "the religious purpose of the Friday sermons,"[377] revoking the licenses of those who discussed the Arab Spring uprisings or failed to "publicly condemn Islamic extremist groups."[378] States manipulate mosques' hours of operation, restrict or abolish independent prayer spaces, and limit or even precisely dictate the content of sermons: the Indonesian state "made rules on the allowable terms, methods and contents" that could appear in sermons.[379]

Even more interesting are the vocabularies of state control: state elites across regime types deploy very similar rhetorical categorizations to define the licit and the illicit. In the absence of overt legislation stipulating lawful modes of religious expression, these categorizations — often

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[375] "Friday sermons in the registered mosques are largely controlled and prepared by the ministry, but not all of Afghanistan is under government control." Stefanie Glinski, "In Afghanistan, Religious Schools Are a Breeding Ground for Islamic State Influence," *Foreign Policy*, January 24, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/24/afghanistan-schools-breeding-ground-islamic-state-influence/.

[376] "No one knows even the number of mosques in Pakistan, where they are located, and, most importantly, what their khutbas (sermons) contain." Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Mosque versus State," *Dawn*, January 10, 2015, https://www.dawn.com/news/1156025. The author advocates that "this must change if Pakistan is to make any progress towards containing religious violence. The first baby step towards bringing an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 mosques under state control requires tasking local authorities at the district and tehsil level with documentation: mosque locations, sizes, religious affiliation, and known sources of funding. The second is to monitor Friday sermons, a possibility offered by modern technology…. Let the state act decisively — albeit in small steps — to restore its right to regulate religious activities within its boundaries. Else the people of Pakistan shall continue to suffer terribly."

[377] Habib Toumi, "Saudi Arabia Suspends 18 Friday Preachers," *Gulf News*, September 11, 2013, https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/saudi-arabia-suspends-18-friday-preachers-1.1229834.

[378] Abdullah al-Shihri and Aya Batrawy, "Top Saudi Cleric: Islamic State Is Islam's Enemy," Associated Press, August 19, 2014, https://apnews.com/b07916c1c3d143ab839dda827d70e766. Similarly in Bahrain: "Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa said the government would ensure that places of worship are run by those who promote 'the values of tolerance and moderation.'" "Bahrain to Reassert State Control over Mosques," Al Arabiya, September 6, 2010, https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/09/06/118618.

[379] Ismatu Ropi, *Religion and Regulation in Indonesia* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 146. This represented a "loosening [of] the strict controls" prior to the 1980s, which had required "all *dakwah* [i.e., both *da'wah* and *khuṭbah*] activities to gain prior written permission from state authorities and the military officer in charge." Ibid., 145. Incidentally, on the role of two prominent Indonesian *mcgillois* in the construction of the state religious bureaucracy, see ibid., 104, 144.

indicated only by the punishments or rewards meted out to individual religious figures — serve as the state's instructions to society as to what is permissible in the religious realm (and as to what exactly constitutes that realm in the first place). Gradually, these determinations come to form, and propagate, a "common" notion of the acceptable. They instill in the public consciousness an image of the "extremist" or "radical" imam who holds views that are "unorthodox" or "deviant," who behaves transgressively by "improperly" injecting religion into politics or appropriating religion for political ends. The extremist is thus contrasted with the model imam whose thought is "balanced" and "moderate" and whose expression of religion is "apolitical" or at least nonpartisan. This imam's Islam is "true" by virtue of its "tolerance" and its support for "patriotic" national unity; it is never divisive or "sectarian." These particular vocabularies demonstrate that the red lines delineating normativity are more than preferences, but rather make truth claims about the very nature of Islam. Yet their informality preserves an advantageous ambiguity that allows the state to elaborate new claims to reinforce its position in any new context that may arise. In this way, the act of definition itself represents an assertion and an exercise of religious authority, protean and therefore virtually irrefutable, on the part of states. Although formal state structures are often the vehicles of these processes, it is the discursive formations, exercised principally at the local and individual levels, that give shape to enforcement and point to the motivations behind it. This recognition must be incorporated in any attempt to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of state-directed Islam.

The construction of Tunisian Islam

In Tunisia, much like the countries studied above, the demarcation of religious space by the state began under the influence of European colonization. Of course, prior to this period a *functional* distinction had existed between *'ulamā'* and rulers, just as premodern Europeans had differentiated church and state in terms of their respective roles in society. Modernity, however, introduced the notion of a "fixed and immovable" boundary demarcating the *proper* place of *separate* religious and secular realms, a boundary set and patrolled by the state.[380] This is the "shift in terms and practices" that signals a correlative shift in the distribution of power and authority.

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[380] "Fixed and immovable" from John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Patrick Romanell (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955).

Likewise, as discussed earlier, formal aspects of Islamic authority before and after secularization may resemble one another superficially, but closer examination reveals that the conceptual bases meaningfully changed. Before secularization, rulers appointed and dismissed imams as a matter of course, even if the precise extent of that power fluctuated over time. Afterward, the modern nation-state has continued this practice, but the secularized discourse of "religion" (and *a fortiori* "official religion") indicates that a different dynamic of authority is at work.

Here is Leon Carl Brown's description of the situation in the 19th century under the Ḥusaynids, the final dynasty of beys to rule in Tunis (r. 1705–1957):

> The bey had the formal authority to appoint and dismiss muftis, qadis, madrasa shaykhs, imams, and even, for that matter, shaykhs of zawiyas. He actively used this authority. Since government did not usually care to concern itself with such details, the 'ulama exercised a relatively broad *de facto* autonomy, but it could be disrupted at even the most insignificant level if the bey or one of his subordinates chose to act…. When a dispute did flare up between an 'alim and the government, the matter was almost invariably resolved by the man's withdrawal or dismissal. Occasionally, the government arbitrarily intervened to dismiss or even imprison a religious functionary.[381]

Brown characterizes this behavior as the exercise of "direct beylical authority in religious matters."[382] To the modern reader, this statement gives the impression of the *'ulamā'* as a separate "religious" preserve into which the bey "arbitrarily intervened" — a conceptualization that relies on an anachronistically secularized sensibility. Rather, we must bear in mind that at this time the *'ulamā'* staffed a wide variety of bureaucratic posts within the government,[383] forming a symbiosis with rulers that Arnold Green calls the "*amīr-'ulamā'* condominium."[384] Importantly, this relationship operated on an understanding that the bey's authority was not absolute: for example, Brown quotes a *shaykh* who declined the bey's request to stop teaching at a mosque because the bey "[did] not have the right to prevent me from disseminating religious science in a mosque

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[381] Leon Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837–1855* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 169. Also: "the Sharia magistrates acted as deputies of the sovereign who could maintain or dismiss them at will. Similarly, *mudarrisūn* and imams, while not functioning expressly as agents of the ruler, were nevertheless appointed and remunerated by him." Green, 54.

[382] Brown, 171.

[383] While the *'ulamā'* "had a strong sense of separate identity vis-à-vis government," such that "the 'ulama class was a living reality," they also "were closely tied to government." Ibid., 168–69.

[384] Arnold H. Green, "A Comparative Historical Analysis of the Ulama and the State in Egypt and Tunisia," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 29 (1980): 36.

devoted to the worship of God."[385]

The modernization program under the French colonial administration (1881–1956) had the effect of consolidating and systematizing this formerly discretionary authority.[386] Announcements of newly appointed imams were now gazetted in the *Journal officiel tunisien* in the form of decrees,[387] e.g.:

> Par décret en date du 13 janvier 1912 (24 moharrem 1330), le cheikh Si Mostfa, fils de feu Mohammed Ennacache a été nommé imam-prédicateur à la mosquée de La Goulette.[388]

In contrast to legislative decrees, which open with a royal flourish ("NOUS, MOHAMMED EN NACER PACHA-BEY, POSSESSEUR DU ROYAUME DE TUNIS…"), these decrees of appointment are more modest and unsigned; nonetheless they also issue from the beylical authority as they are clearly distinguished from ministerial orders (*arrêtés*) in the *Journal officiel*. In terms of scope, a review of these decrees of appointment reveals that they are not limited to larger mosques and urban centers. One decree states that "le cheikh Si Mohamed ben Abderrazak ben El Hadj Ali Dachraoui est nommé imam prédicateur à la mosquée de Nabeur, caïdat du Kef,"[389] a very small town. Nor are the appointments limited to the leading role of *khaṭīb*: the bey also regularly made direct appointments of daily imams (the imams of the five prayers) as well as auxiliary ("second" and "third") imams to mosques of all sizes. These announcements are embedded among those of sundry other officials, both those involved in worship (the *shaykh* of a *zāwiyah*) and those of a more legal or administrative character (*muftī*, *qāḍī*, *amīn*, *wakīl*, *notaire*, etc.). The distinct impression across decades of decrees is that the appointment authority had become both universal over Tunisian territory and thoroughly quotidian — a change from occasional beylical intervention

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[385] Brown, 172., quoting ibn Ḍiyāf. On the entire subject: "Confrontations between *umarā* and ulama usually resulted in the latter being dismissed or severely chastized…. But at the same time, although the Beys would not hesitate to discharge or to discipline an alim if necessary, they seem to have wanted to avoid doing so if possible." Green, *The Tunisian Ulama 1873-1915: Social Structure and Response to Ideological Currents*, 57.

[386] The colonial administration was not solely responsible for these processes, which had forerunners in earlier "indigenous reforms," most famously under the prime minister Khayr al-Dīn. Of course, those reforms were themselves in response to Westernization. The *'ulamā'* were more often (but far from uniformly) cooperative toward the "indigenous reforms," a dynamic that broke down in the later colonial period. Green, *Tunisian Ulama*, 103–28.

[387] "Exploiting their ability to rule by decree (a feature of the medieval system to which the ulama had always objected), the centralizing amirs began radically to change the character of the order itself." Green, "A Comparative Historical Analysis of the Ulama and the State in Egypt and Tunisia," 43.

[388] Décret, *Journal officiel tunisien*, 53 (January 13, 1912).

[389] Décret.

to comprehensive state oversight.

Accordingly, the appointment authority was routinized into formal state institutions. In the 1930s, appointments of imams were made on the authority of the Direction de l'administration générale et communale, a body oriented toward local governance, rather than that of the bey.[390] This arrangement was short-lived, however, as the Direction was subsumed into larger structures, an example of the ongoing centralization of interior and security functions under increasingly senior (and increasingly French) control.[391] By the time that "le Cheikh Abderrahman ben Ali Khelif est nommé deuxième imam prédicateur à la Grande Mosquée de Kairouan"[392] on the eve of independence in 1955, the decrees appear under the heading of the Présidence du conseil (i.e., the prime minister's office). Notably, high government officials retained jurisdiction over these appointments even after the creation of a Ministère des institutions musulmanes, which *inter alia* managed the affairs of Zaytūnah.[393]

Bourguiba, the president-imam

In 1956, these powers transferred to the newly independent Tunisian state. In Keith Callard's words, state control of religion was "merely a function inherited from the Bey";[394] yet "merely inherited" implies a passivity that does not accurately capture the high-modernist project of Habib Bourguiba's new government, one that "was not willing to recognize any important centre of authority outside its own control."[395] As Callard himself explains, "it would be wrong to assume that the Tunisian government wishes to create a secular state…. The policy that has been followed in Tunisia can best be described as 'étatisme.' Virtually no area of Tunisian life which has, or might assume, a degree of social or political importance, has been allowed to remain outside

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[390] E.g., Décret.

[391] Ahmed Kassab and Ahmed Ounaies, *Histoire générale de la Tunisie: Tome IV: L'époque contemporaine* (Tunis: Sud Éditions, 2010), 310–12.

[392] Décret.

[393] On this ministry, cf. Décret relatif aux conditions d'avancement et temps de services des personnels enseignant et administratif de la Grande Mosquée et ses annexes, *Journal officiel tunisien*, 532–33 (March 31, 1955); Herman L. M. Obdeijen, *L'enseignement de l'histoire dans la Tunisie moderne (1881–1970)* (Tilburg: Moller-Institut, 1975), 39.

[394] Keith Callard, "The Republic of Bourguiba," *International Journal* 16, no. 1 (1960/1961): 31.

[395] Ibid., 33. "La nomination des imams par voie de décrets dès les premières années de l'indépendance [atteste] de cette volonté [étatique] de contrôle." Jean-Philippe Bras, "L'islam administré : illustrations tunisiennes," in *Public et privé en Islam*, ed. Mohamed Kerrou (Tunis: Institut de recherche sur le Maghreb contemporain, 2002).

the control of the state."[396] Abdellatif Hermassi distinguishes this approach from the European model of secularization in that *étatisme* seeks not only to limit the influence of religion but also to submit it to state control, specifically by weakening pre-existing religious institutions.[397] Bourguiba moved against those institutions briskly.

> A series of daring measures were announced as of 1956: abolition of the *habous* (decrees of May 13, 1956, and July 18, 1957), reform of personal-status laws (decree of August 13, 1956), suspension of the *shari'a* courts (decrees of March 29, 1956, and October 1, 1958).... The decrees of March 29, 1958, and October 1, 1958, put a definitive end to the Zeitouna by reducing it to a simple affiliate of the University of Tunis, consecrating the unification of the education system.[398]

As with the caliphs early in their reigns, Bourguiba aimed to stabilize the new regime and to assert its legitimacy. It should not come as a surprise, then, that efforts to "eliminate nonconformative individuals and doctrine"[399] also now took place, at the end of the nationalist struggle, a period of "acute crisis that had provoked a reshaping and redefining of [Tunisian] Islam as a community of believers."[400]

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[396] Callard, 32–33. He notes that the same forces precipitated the nationalization of Jewish institutions in Tunisia as well. Cf. the discussion of the "myth of secular Tunisia" in Anne Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia: The History of Ennahda* (London: Hurst & Co., 2017), chap. 1. Also see Francesco Cavatorta and Rikke Hostrup Haugbølle, "The End of Authoritarian Rule and the Mythology of Tunisia under Ben Ali," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 189–91.

[397] Abdellatif Hermassi, "Société, Islam et islamisme en Tunisie," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 49, no. 1 (1994): 74. Grasso evokes the Weberian concept of caesaropapism: Grasso, 203.

[398] Tozy, 104–5.

[399] Recalling Turner, above. As for doctrine, consider: "Having replaced the amirs as the executors of sovereignty and having replaced the ulama as the spokesmen for the umma-nation, the nationalists and other new elites began even to replace the ulama as spokesmen for Islam. By the mid-twentieth century it was not uncommon for politicians and Western-trained academics to make seemingly official pronouncements on behalf of Islamic institutions, values, beliefs, and practices." Green, "A Comparative Historical Analysis of the Ulama and the State in Egypt and Tunisia," 45.

[400] Again recalling Turner. In a sense, the foremost "nonconformative individual" was Bourguiba's great political rival, Salah Ben Youssef. "Bourguiba took advantage of the national enthusiasm for independence, his own generally positive image and high public profile, and the considerable power he was already amassing to impose state control over certain aspects of religion.... The choice of these reforms and the speed with which they proceeded revealed Bourguiba's eagerness to assert the domination of his interpretations, not those of his rival, over the Tunisian body politic." Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 140. "Bourguiba's government … took measures to undermine the religious establishment, which had supported the losing Ben Youssef faction. It deprived it of most of its privileges by eliminating religious landholdings and reducing the institutions of religious education to a skeleton. By 1956, Bourguiba and his faction had successfully decimated the fighting force of the Ben Youssef faction, silenced its leader, and seriously weakened its social base. They faced no challenger in that period." Mounira (M. M.) Charrad, "Policy Shifts: State, Islam, and Gender in Tunisia, 1930s–1990s," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 4, no.

Accordingly, the regime grew more confident in "re-ordering and disciplining the society"[401] through the enforcement of obedience among the spokesmen of Islam, both elite and local. Dissent on the part of *'ulamā'* against the new Personal Status Code and the assimilation of Zaytūnah led to arrests and the government's suggestion "that the Friday sermons should contain an exposition of Bourguiba's regular speeches."[402] Places of worship were now patrolled: "the security apparatus exerted … very close surveillance … through the dispatch of its operational wings into the mosques to monitor meetings and observances."[403] A duty to police religious space was even enshrined into Tunisia's constitution of 1959, its Article 5 promising that "la République tunisienne protège le libre exercice des cultes, sous réserve qu'il ne trouble pas l'ordre public." For his part, Bourguiba launched rhetorical attacks on the "false *'ulamā'*" who defied him,[404] denying that the "turban wearers" held a monopoly on Islamic interpretation[405] and staking his own claim to *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning): "In my capacity as head of a Muslim state, I too can speak in the name of Islam."[406] He even theorized that "le Président n'est autre que l'imam dont l'investiture résulte du suffrage de la communauté nationale."[407] In Ira Lapidus's words, Bourguiba "pursued a complex policy of controlling the expression of Islam, and even deriving legitimacy from it, while committing … at the same time to a drastic secularization of the society."[408]

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2 (1997): 294. See also Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 234–35.

[401] Recalling Başkan, above.

[402] Callard, 32. It is unclear how often the regime drafted verbatim sermons, but this did occur: "since independence in 1956 … the state prepares sermons to be preached in the mosque." Susan Waltz, "Islamist Appeal in Tunisia," *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 4 (1986): 660. "La direction des Affaires du Culte … contrôlait … la teneur des prônes du vendredi." Hermassi, 74. "A similar, though less systematic, policy [to the Algerian model of scripted sermons] was attempted in Tunisia under Bourguiba, but it was not successful." Charfi, 128.

[403] Omar Safi, *The Intelligence State in Tunisia: Security and Mukhabarat, 1881–1965* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 157. Not lost is the irony that mosques had served "frequently" as the "sites of local meetings and rallies" for Bourguiba's own nationalist movement prior to independence. Anderson, 175.

[404] Rory McCarthy, "Re-thinking Secularism in Post-independence Tunisia," *Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 5 (2014): 736; René Otayek, *Le radicalisme islamique au sud du Sahara : Da'wa, arabisation et critique de l'Occident* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 80.

[405] Yadh Ben Achour, "Islam perdu, islam retrouvé," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 18 (1980): 67–68.

[406] Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi, "An Analysis of the History and Discourse of the Tunisian Islamic Movement al-Naḥda: A Case Study of the Politicisation of Islam" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1996), 30.

[407] Mathilde Zederman, "Construction nationale et mémoire collective : islamisme et bourguibisme en Tunisie (1956–2014)," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 117–18 (2015).

[408] Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 605.

The first indication of the limits of this policy arose in 1961 in the holy city of Kairouan. Amid a very public dispute between Bourguiba and the *'ulamā'* over the observance of Ramaḍān,[409] Abderrahman Khelif, a "popular and outspoken imam"[410] at Kairouan's Great Mosque (whose appointment in 1955 we saw above), had "delivered sermons castigating the religious policy of the regime."[411] As a result, the provincial governor ordered the imam reassigned to another province. Clement Henry Moore describes the fallout:

> Mobs shouting "Allah is great, he [the imam] will not depart" converged on the governor's official house in what seemed to be an attempt to lynch him. Cars were burned and some of the mob penetrated the residence. The police, the National Guard, and army detachments quelled the rioting only after twenty-four hours of fighting.[412]

Eight among the crowd were killed, as was a member of the National Guard,[413] in what *Le Monde* characterized as "le premier signe grave de l'opposition des milieux religieux à la politique de laïcité que poursuit M. Bourguiba."[414] The nature of that opposition and its history are usefully surveyed through the lens of Khelif's career, which we will investigate below.

While it may be true that after the Kairouan episode "the regime avoided direct attacks on religion in deference to public opinion,"[415] several years later it again moved to contain religious activity within the compass of its authority. In 1966, Bourguiba issued a decree creating a bureaucracy of civil servants with the title of *prédicateur* (in Arabic *wā'iẓ*[416]) responsible for overseeing local imams and, where necessary, "undertaking the role of imam" (*yaqūmu bi-al-*

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[409] These disputes had already led to the dismissal of the chief imam at Zaytūnah, a member of the Ennaifer family. Clement Henry Moore, *Tunisia since Independence: The Dynamics of One-Party Government* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 59.

[410] Perkins, 145–46.

[411] Moore, 59.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Kerrou states that "le bilan des morts … demeure encore aujourd'hui inconnu." Mohamed Kerrou, "La Grande Mosquée de Kairouan : L'imam, la ville et le pouvoir," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 125 (2009).

[414] "Les incidents de Kairouan ont fait au moins quatre morts," *Le Monde*, January 19, 1961, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1961/01/19/les-incidents-de-kairouan-ont-fait-au-moins-quatre-morts_2260925_1819218.html. For Kenneth Perkins, it was "the most serious and bloodiest challenge to the political establishment since the crushing of the Yusufist *fellagha*." Perkins, 145–46.

[415] Tozy, 105.

[416] On the significance of this title, see Patrick D. Gaffney, "The Office of 'al-wā'iẓ' and the Revival of Preaching in Egypt," *Mélanges* (Institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire) 17 (1986).

imāmah) themselves.[417] The new framework envisioned all religious space as entirely under state control: even auxiliary members of staff at mosques and small prayer halls who did not qualify as preachers had to be nominated by the appropriate state apparatus.[418] This bureaucratic assimilation was successful in controlling personnel but again engendered resistance through other avenues. Rather than contest the *minbar* directly, incipient social movements now advocated an Islamic politics via independent study circles (*ḥalaqāt*) that met in mosques, informally, *after* Friday prayers.[419] Through the 1970s, the *ḥalaqāt* worked toward "the reappropriation of the mosque and the reactivation of the sermon" — delivered by a non-official speaker — "as an effective means of social action."[420]

Fuelling these groups was, in part, a growing "ideological discontinuity … between the incumbent nationalist élite and one significant segment of the mobilisational counter-élite," namely university students.[421] The latter exhibited "mass disaffection … with the élite political culture itself and its ethical and ideological underpinnings,"[422] notably with respect to what "the ruling élite … call[ed] Tunisia's Mediterranean heritage," associated "deeply and intimately with French language, culture, and civilisation."[423] Central to the Bourguibist conception of "the Mediterranean" was a close identification of *tunisianité*, the national character of the Tunisians, with a secularity derived from the Enlightenment and firmly implanted through *étatisme*.[424] The president frequently contrasted this image with the figure of "le mal tunisien," a sort of folk devil with a "forte propension à l'anarchie et à la division … et recours, sans scrupules, des minoritaires

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[417] Décret fixant le statut particulier des prédicateurs de Gouvernorat et des prédicateurs de Délégation, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 602–3 (French)/699–700 (Arabic) (April 8, 1966). This *décret* notably only has one *visa*, citing a 1959 law on the civil service. It does not cite any prior legislation relating to imams, mosques, or the organs of state that had formerly overseen them. This suggests (perhaps purposefully) that the new structure was created *ex nihilo* when in fact it drew upon older practices. Separately, Bras cleverly points out that the corps of preachers is stitched to the administrative structure of the state (preachers are assigned to the *gouvernorats* and *délégations*) in a system reminiscent of French parishes. Bras.

[418] Bras.

[419] Waltz, 656.

[420] Tozy, 115.

[421] John P. Entelis, "Ideological Change and an Emerging Counter-Culture in Tunisian Politics," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 12, no. 4 (1974): 567.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Ibid., 556.

[424] "Le choix de « tunisifier » la société comme source de légitimation du projet de Bourguiba n'est pas passé sans conséquence…. « Au nom de la modernisation de la société tunisienne, Bourguiba place l'identité collective tunisienne avant l'identité individuelle arabe et islamique »." Mustapha Bakir, "Laïcité et religion en Tunisie" (PhD diss., Université de Strasbourg, 2016), 86, quoting Nawel Gafsia.

à la violence et à l'étranger"[425] (but not the *étranger* of France!). Yet a 1974 survey of students showed the extent to which "Bourguiba's emphasis on Mediterranean Islam and the Franco-Tunisian synthesis … seem[ed] to have been rejected by the great majority": respondents across ideological orientations overwhelmingly identified with a culture described as "Tunisian, with stress on its Arabic component" as opposed to "Tunisian, with stress on its Mediterranean, non-Arabic component."[426] That "young Tunisians … sought a renewal of Arab-Muslim values, not the radical break with [the] past that the regime had championed,"[427] was strongly suggested by the similar majority of respondents who agreed that religion should play some role in Tunisian politics.[428]

Amid these currents emerged Tunisia's flagship Islamist organization, the Mouvement de la tendance islamique (MTI), to enunciate a political program through the medium of religious lectures.[429] Rory McCarthy describes its politics "not as a notional return to Islam in direct opposition to a secular regime, but as a reaction against a state that had sought to monopolise the definition of Islam."[430] In the 1981 parliamentary campaign, the MTI's founders, Rached Ghannouchi and Abdelfattah Mourou — who had studied under the same *shaykh* at Zaytūnah — "tested the limits of the regime's tolerance, often using mosques as the venues for [their] condemnation of twenty-five years of [Bourguiba's] policies that had removed virtually any trace of an Islamic dimension from Tunisian public life."[431] Those limits were soon ascertained, in a pattern to become familiar:

> In late July a group of worshippers attempted to replace the state-appointed imam at a mosque in the town of M'Saken. It was following this event (and a similar, smaller-scale incident the preceding day) that 61 members marked as leaders of the MTI were arrested. This final incident alone was linked to the MTI, whose leaders were charged with only

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[425] Yadh Ben Achour, "La réforme des mentalités : Bourguiba et le redressement moral," in *Tunisie au présent : Une modernité au-dessus de tout soupçon?*, ed. Michel Camau (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions du CNRS, 1987).

[426] 72% and 9%, respectively. Entelis, 555–57.

[427] McCarthy, 734.

[428] 73%, as opposed to no role at all (21%) or, at the opposite end, that religion should be "intimately related to politics" (7%). Entelis, 557.

[429] Emad Eldin Shahin, *Political Ascent: Contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 67, 70; Marion Boulby, "The Islamic Challenge: Tunisia since Independence," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 599. Boulby offers that "by 1981 members of the MTI had penetrated about three hundred mosques." Ibid., 602.

[430] McCarthy, 735.

[431] Perkins, 171.

non-violent political crimes. In September, the MTI leaders began serving sentences ranging from 2 to 10 years, while governmental edicts had suspended publications, banned Friday afternoon "lessons" at the mosques, and forbidden *lycée* students to wear Islamist garb.[432]

Expressions of dissent in the mosque, and especially active disputation of state control over the imam, were red lines the violation of which political elites could not tolerate. Alaya Allani locates the origin of the long conflict between the state and the MTI in precisely this principle:

> there were mainly two causes leading the authorities to confrontation and a hurried judgment of the Islamists in 1981. The first cause was the government's firm belief that the Movement aimed at taking power and planned to achieve this goal by force. The second cause was the government's rejection of the Islamic Movement's request to be involved in directing mosques; the government considered that this would be a dangerous precedent that would usurp the government's prerogative in the area of control of religious establishments.[433]

Rhetorical enforcement came swiftly. The prime minister, "while emphasising his government's 'tolerance,' criticised the Islamist movement for seeking to use religion for political ends"; MTI members were labeled fundamentalist, obscurantist, and intolerant "intellectual terrorists" intent on rebellion.[434] Similarly, the moratorium on the *ḥijāb* described the garment as "sectarian dress" (*al-libās al-ṭā'ifī*) — in other words, divisive, and thereby un-Tunisian.[435] "In the official discourse, the state represented tolerance while the Islamist movement, with its religiously inspired demands for political pluralism, represented dangerous dogmatism."[436]

Although Ghannouchi was released from prison under an amnesty in 1984, "the authorities [were] resolute in preventing [him] from resuming his sermons at the mosque."[437] In March 1987 he was again "arrested for delivering a speech in one of the mosques without a license and for

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[432] Waltz, 653–54; Larbi Chouikha and Éric Gobe, *Histoire de la Tunisie depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015).

[433] Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between Confrontation and Participation: 1980–2008," *Journal of North African Studies* 14, no. 2 (2009): 261. "The religious policy of the government insisted that the State alone should control the religious institutions of the country, so that they would not be used for political ends." Ibid., 269n21.

[434] McCarthy, 740.

[435] Ibid. These descriptors re-emerged when the *ḥijāb* became popular again in the 2000s: the minister of religious affairs called it "un-Islamic," "unpatriotic," "political," and "imported." Ibid., 746.

[436] Ibid., 741.

[437] Waltz, 658.

causing a disturbance."[438] The following month, Bourguiba issued a decree affirming that "les chargés des mosquées et des salles de prière sont nommés par décision du ministre de l'intérieur," giving the security services a veto over who could preach, who could teach the *ḥadīth*, and even who could (in public) recite the Qur'ān.[439] As one of Bourguiba's final acts in office, this decree forms the endpoint of his thirty-year project to subdue Islamic institutions to the will of the state; it furthermore reveals the depth and the granularity of regulation required, the sheer constancy of effort the state had to expend, in order to reshape Islam in its image. What was so much exertion *for*? "Perhaps Bourguiba truly wanted an evolution of Islam, as some have argued," McCarthy concludes, "but also he sought political legitimacy. Controlling an official version of Islam was fundamental to this: it defined the Tunisian nation and mobilised support."[440]

Ben Ali, defender of the faith

Defining the nation through official Islam was on the mind of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the prime minister and minister of the interior, when in late 1987 he ousted Bourguiba and succeeded him as president. In his public address on the day of his "coup," Ben Ali promised a new regime that would "give Islamic, Arab, African and Mediterranean solidarity its due importance," appearing to re-emphasize the non-European components of *tunisianité*.[441] Likewise, his government was comfortable speaking of Tunisia's "specific Arab-Islamic identity," of the "noble Islamic values" it upheld,[442] and of the state's role in "la formation du citoyen tunisien musulman."[443] In practice, though, there was little distinction, for Ben Ali's conception of secularity, just like Bourguiba's, required that "Islam had to be subordinated to and controlled by state authorities."[444] Thus the new president could simultaneously claim that his government sought to "establish the Arab-Muslim identity of Tunisia" *and* that other parties must "exclude all

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[438] Shahin, 97.

[439] Décret relatif aux chargés des mosquées et des salles de prière, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 575–76 (April 22, 1987). The *chargés*, who were also strictly hierarchized, included the *imām khaṭīb*, the *imām khams*, the *mu'adhdhin*, the *riwā'ī ḥadīth*, the *qāri'*, the *nāẓir*, and others.

[440] McCarthy, 738., citing Lotfi Hajji, "Pour une relecture critique de la relation de Bourguiba à l'islam," in *Habib Bourguiba : La trace et l'héritage*, ed. Michel Camau and Vincent Geisser (Paris: Karthala, 2004).

[441] Feuer, *Regulating Islam*, 109.

[442] McCarthy, 742.

[443] Décret portant création du conseil islamique supérieur de la République tunisienne, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 574–75 (April 22, 1987).

[444] Teije Hidde Donker and Kasper Ly Netterstrøm, "The Tunisian Revolution & Governance of Religion," *Middle East Critique* 26, no. 2 (2017): 142.

exploitation of religion for political ends."[445]

Within six months of taking office, Ben Ali had passed through Parliament a comprehensive new statute stipulating that all mosques were part of the "domaine public de l'État qui est incessible et imprescriptible" and requiring the approval of the prime minister for the construction of any new mosque (so forestalling the development of an *ahlī* sector as in Egypt or the "popular" and "free" mosques seen in Algeria). The act prescribed fines and/or imprisonment for "quiconque trouble volontairement la tranquillité des mosquées" and "quiconque appelle dans les mosquées à la rébellion contre l'autorité publique." Most dramatically, while the legislation promised freedom of worship, it strictly forbade any activity in the mosques, "sous forme de discours, de réunions ou d'écrits," conducted by anyone other than state personnel, unless authorized by the prime minister.[446] In practice this meant that the mosques were closed, their doors locked, except at the five daily prayers. Ben Ali had cemented the linkage between places of worship and public order as envisioned in Bourguiba's constitution, completing the securitization of Tunisia's mosques and drawing their management into the very highest levels of government.

The trend continued apace as control of the mosques was soon transferred into an expansive new Ministry of Religious Affairs.[447] Its organizing statute further codified the dichotomy between an enlightened *tunisianité* and a backward other: it charges the ministry with a "mission générale … de s'opposer aux dangers du renfermement et de l'extrémisme et de conserver les fondements civilisationnels de la personnalité tunisienne."[448] In order to fulfill its mission, the ministry was enjoined to "superviser les monuments religieux : mosquées et 'zéouia' et contrôler leurs activités … élaborer, exécuter et suivre les programmes de prédication … [et] assurer la corrélation entre le discours religieux basé sur les fondements de l'islam et la réalité de la collectivité nationale."[449]

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[445] McCarthy, 742. This requirement was written into the constitution in 1997: "Un parti politique ne peut s'appuyer fondamentalement dans ses principes, objectifs, activité ou programmes, sur une religion…."

[446] Loi relative aux mosquées, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 705–6 (May 3, 1988). The following year, a decree established that the prime minister himself would nominate the staff at both mosques and "prayer halls" (i.e., the *muṣallayāt*). *Décret relatif aux chargés des mosquées et des salles de prière*.

[447] As in the Egyptian and Syrian cases discussed earlier, budgetary and staffing figures convey the growing political importance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs: see Bras.

[448] Décret fixant les attributions du ministère des affaires religieuses, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 541–42 (March 22, 1994).

[449] Décret portant organisation du ministère des affaires religieuses, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 542–44 (March 22, 1994).

This language unmistakably echoes the statement of the Algerian minister of religious affairs quoted previously — "our objective is to make sure that religious discourse fits in complementarily with the national discourse."[450] It also resonates in a separate decree reorganizing the university at Zaytūnah, which placed the institution squarely "dans le cadre de l'identité nationale tunisienne" and made clear its adherence to a "religion fondée sur une tolérance perpétuelle."[451]

As is clear, these maneuvers represented more than mere administrative reorganization. Jean-Philippe Bras reads these legal developments as indicative of "une forte production *de normes et de structures* dédiées à la gestion de l'islam."[452] That is to say, the legal history outlines not only the burgeoning *structures* of the Tunisian state but also the *norms* they sought to inculcate. Susan Waltz tells us that ever since the rise of the MTI the "government had sought to contain the Islamist thrust by promoting itself as the protector of Islam in Tunisia and by rhetorically connecting the overall Islamist movement to intolerance in general."[453] Now Ben Ali proclaimed it loudly: "There is no other defender of the religion of the Tunisians than the State, the State of all Tunisians, which seeks to preserve and protect the faith, to manage religious affairs, in faithfulness to its sublime teachings."[454] One of his ministers of religious affairs echoed:

> We see religion, in terms of belief, ideas and civilisation, as the affair of the state alone, maintained by the laws, the highest of which of course is the country's constitution. Our religious discourse is dedicated to the fundamentals of Islam and proves its value is immune to political trends…. We take every care to highlight the true, honourable image of Islam…. And it is no secret this does not come from sectarianism and division and loathsome disputes.[455]

In the view of the regime, only "the religion of the Tunisians," managed by the regime itself, was "true" and thereby "unifying, a symbol of tolerance… a force of progress," and an agent of "cohesion."[456] This point was reinforced at every public opportunity, and explicitly attributed not

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[450] "L'imam est libre."

[451] Décret relatif aux missions de l'université Ez-zitouna, *Journal officiel de la République tunisienne*, 1136–37 (May 8, 1995).

[452] Bras. Emphasis mine.

[453] Waltz, 653–54.

[454] McCarthy, 743.

[455] Ibid., 746. "In his view, it was the state that was charged with imposing the official interpretation of Islam, an interpretation that could not be challenged and an interpretation that fitted what the state decided was the Tunisian tradition."

[456] Ibid., 743.

only to the president but also to his coup (known as "le Changement"). Consider this press report about a meeting between the minister of religious affairs and members of Parliament:

> les conseillers se sont félicités du haut intérêt accordé par le président Zine El Abidine Ben Ali à la religion islamique et à ceux qui en ont la charge, ainsi que son souci constant de consacrer les fondements de l'identité arabo-islamique et de diffuser les valeurs de modération, de tolérance et d'ouverture sur les autres religions, civilisations et cultures, en vue d'immuniser la société contre toute forme d'extrémisme et de sclérose…. M. Boubaker El Akhzouri, ministre des affaires religieuses, a souligné que l'approche religieuse en Tunisie se fonde sur l'effort d'interprétation (ijtihad) et l'interaction avec les exigences de la modernité, sans pour autant renoncer aux attributs de l'identité nationale et aux spécificités civilisationnelles du pays. Il a, à cette occasion, relevé l'importance de s'attacher au rite malékite, rite qui prône le juste-milieu et la modération…. M. El Akhzouri a indiqué que la Tunisie s'appuie sur la pensée éclairée, saluant le souci du Président Zine El Abidine Ben Ali d'enraciner les nobles valeurs de l'Islam… dont en particulier, le juste-milieu, la modération, le dialogue et l'ouverture sur l'autre…. Le ministre a relevé que la promotion d'un discours religieux modéré est considéré comme étant l'une des priorités du programme réformateur et civilisationnel du Changement, précisant que le prêche du vendredi est axé, désormais, sur instructions du ministère….[457]

The Ministry of Religious Affairs instructed its imams in the same fashion, orienting them toward the "authentic religious faith" disseminated through "an enlightened discourse drawing on the rich heritage of tolerance and moderation that characterizes the Islamic religion on the one hand, and on the need for that discourse to listen to the concerns of the national community on the other hand."[458]

"This was the regime … instrumentalising a religious discourse," writes McCarthy, "and was indicative of a police state determined to enforce control over society."[459] But the regime was also instrumentalizing religion itself by manipulating the definition of the religious and the political, and the boundary between them. If religion was "the affair of the state alone," then its agents were authorized to supervise religion, to ensure that religious expression fit within *la collectivité nationale*. Thus could a member of Parliament prescribe that "le discours religieux doit être conçu de sorte à 'faire connaître le programme d'avenir du président Ben Ali,'"[460] or speak of

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[457] "Adoption du projet de budget du ministère des affaires religieuses," Tunis Afrique Presse, December 9, 2010, https://www.turess.com/fr/tapfr/28557.

[458] McCarthy, 744.

[459] Ibid., 746.

[460] Bras.

"la nécessité d'adapter le discours religieux aux autres discours politiques."[461] In the same way, a minister of religious affairs might not only belong to the ruling party but serve as a member of its *comité central*, acting as a spokesman and surrogate for the president in political contexts well outside the religious-affairs portfolio.[462] These actions did not represent a violation because of the state's duty to defend and maintain the faith. Yet an intervention on religious grounds by a non-state actor was an incursion of religion into politics that must be policed.

In the regime's conception, of course, there ought not *be* any non-state religious actors: the subordination of the *'ulamā'* and the nationalization of the mosques had seen to that. Those who challenged this strict control engaged in what George Joffé, above, called "dissent over the normative and hegemonic assumptions behind the definition of the state," which, "unwilling to accept" the challenge, rejected it as innately illegitimate, criminal, and extremist.[463] In applying these labels to religious figures, state elites drew upon, and reinforced, suspicions of the "dangerous impulse" of religion and its messenger, "the religious fanatic."[464] Identifying the unauthorized religious leader, the self-proclaimed imam, with this stock character became a regular device in the state's repertoire to define normativity and maintain social control. Its success relied upon the particular secular rationality underlying *étatisme*, as well as the erasure of the traditional authority structures of Islam.[465] It was now as improper, indeed as dangerous, for an unlicensed Muslim to preach Islam as for an unlicensed doctor to practice medicine.[466]

Abderrahman Khelif between martyrdom and the establishment

Like Zaytūnah, the Great Mosque of Kairouan[467] has been a center of devotion and

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[461] "Adoption du projet de budget du ministère des affaires religieuses."

[462] E.g., Ben Ali's penultimate minister of religious affairs, Boubaker El Akhzouri (in office 2004–2010). "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses analyse, à l'Ariana, la portée du discours du Président Ben Ali," Tunis Afrique Presse, November 9, 2010, https://www.turess.com/fr/tapfr/26714.

[463] Joffé, "Introduction: Antiphonal Responses, Social Movements and Networks," 2–4.

[464] Recalling Cavanaugh. As Bruce writes of Turkey: "the Diyanet … exists in order to fulfill two main goals: preventing 'religious fanaticism' (represented by religious actors operating outside the boundaries of official Islam), and guiding and 'civilizing' the Turkish nation." Bruce, 30.

[465] "Islam went through multiple rereadings to become a basic element of the political practice, a source of legitimacy for those in authority and of delegitimization against the opposition. This effort of reinterpretation, though, was possible only after a neutralization of the historical guardians of the exegetic function, the ulama, by elimination, marginalization, or integration." Tozy, 106.

[466] Cf. "archetypal" vs. "professional" at Bruce, 290–91.

[467] Jāmiʿ ʿUqbah ibn Nāfiʿ.

education since its founding in the seventh century CE. Also like its counterpart in Tunis, the Great Mosque came under the semi-hereditary management of great *'ulamā'* families, in particular the Saddem family,[468] through the end of the French colonial period. The prime minister's selection in 1955 of Abderrahman Khelif for the post of second imam, after the death of a Saddem incumbent and in preference to the latter's brother, therefore already disrupted traditional patterns of authority. In this sense, Khelif's appointment was "le produit de la délégitimation de l'aristocratie et de la mémoire religieuses," a herald of the reordering of state and religion that Bourguiba was about to implement.[469] Concurrently, however, Khelif embodied something underway at the level of society, what Mohamed Kerrou describes as an *inversion/réaction* against the project of the Westernized elite.

Both trends were evident in the unusual petition that accompanied Khelif's application for appointment to the Great Mosque. The petition vehemently asserted Khelif's submissiveness to political authority, a recognition of the secularized order achieved under the French administration.[470] On the other hand, the document stressed his experience as a preacher and his moral rectitude — seemingly standard qualifications for an imam, but in this case representing something more subversive. Khelif had begun his career preaching at the Jāmi' al-Sabkhah, a mosque associated with Abdelaziz Baouandi, a professor and preacher widely known in the 1930s for organizing a civil-society association to promote Qur'ānic education (*imlā'*). Baouandi's association had grown rapidly throughout the country, credited with stimulating attendance at Friday prayers and curtailing Tunisians' drinking and socializing with Europeans; Baouandi himself had been acclaimed the "guide de la nation dans la voie droite." The French authorities rather quickly repressed the association, first in 1935 and again in 1937.[471] Khelif continued in that mold, preaching adherence to early Islamic practices (those of the *salaf*) and rejection of *ijtihād*

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[468] "Les Saddam … formaient une noblesse religieuse fort prestigieuse par son ascendance arabe yéménite ainsi que par l'exercice quasi héréditaire des fonctions d'imam de la Grande Mosquée et de bach-mufti ou grand jurisconsulte." Mohamed Kerrou, "Quartiers et faubourgs de la médina de Kairouan : des mots aux modes de spatialisation (XIXᵉ–XXᵉ siècles)," in *Les divisions de la ville*, ed. Christian Topalov (Paris: UNESCO, 2002).

[469] "Dans la ville de Kairouan réputée pour son conservatisme et l'appui de Ben Youssef … le gouverneur Amor Chéchia n'a pas hésité à s'attaquer aux puissantes familles aristocratiques." Kerrou, "Grande Mosquée." I draw heavily upon Kerrou in what follows.

[470] Ibid.

[471] G. Zawadowski, "Situation de l'Islam dans la Tunisie d'entre deux guerres (1918–1939)," *En terre d'Islam* 18 (1943): 82–85. On opposition to Westernizing influences in this period, see ibid., 97–100.

and innovation (*bid'ah*).[472] Thus his credentials as a preacher and his assertions of rectitude (i.e., fidelity to Islam) implicitly criticized both the Westernizing influence of state elites (whether French or Tunisian) and the *'ulamā'* aristocracy perceived to have capitulated to them.[473] Moreover, Khelif's critique was very popular: some thousand residents of Kairouan co-signed Khelif's petition to the prime minister.

In ordering Khelif transferred to another province in 1961, the governor of Kairouan cited a *khuṭbah* in which the imam had called for parents to prevent their unmarried daughters from entering public space unaccompanied. Certainly the sermon contravened the spirit of Bourguiba's new personal-status laws, which had significantly expanded women's rights. Although not explicitly invoked by the governor, Khelif had also spoken against Bourguiba's recent appeal for Tunisians to abandon the Ramaḍān fast in the name of increasing economic productivity.[474] Inconveniently, Khelif had authored a tract attacking those who did not observe the fast, suggesting that their blood could licitly be spilled and the funerary prayers withheld, in the manner of apostates.[475] His forthrightness in condemning the policy of the state, grounded in a claim of autonomy from the same, constituted a potential pole of opposition. In the aftermath of the violence in Kairouan, state elites targeted Khelif as an instigator and called for an example to be made of him — "un châtiment exemplaire."[476] Bourguiba himself accused Khelif of using religion as a "pretext" for political objectives, antagonistic to the president's truer interpretation of "l'Islam bien conçu."[477] Kerrou finds in this formulation a consummate illustration of Bourguiba's conception of religion as a "domaine réservé" of the state, deriving from his "souci d'empêcher les opposants de manipuler le champ religieux contre l'instance étatique."[478] The state, by contrast, had free rein to marshal the religious field in support of *its* political objectives.

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[472] These trends were already strong in Kairouan, where a Jam'īyat Muqāwamat al-Bid'ah wa-al-Isrāf had been operating since 1922 "pour lutter contre les fléaux de la consommation du chanvre, du vin, du thé, des jeux du hasard et des spectacles." Kerrou, "Grande Mosquée."

[473] "Ses prêches … traitent des affaires de la cité et des problèmes qui interpellent les Musulmans dans le monde d'ici-bas. Ce n'est pas le cas de tous les imams, encore moins des Saddem…. Leur appartenance aristocratique ancrait l'alliance entre le religieux et le politique, tout en les séparant. Par contre, l'appartenance populaire de Khelif tend à la confusion entre les deux instances. D'où le risque de confrontation avec le pouvoir." Ibid.

[474] Moore, 59.

[475] Kerrou, "Grande Mosquée."

[476] Ibid.

[477] Ibid.

[478] Ibid.

The state initially imprisoned Khelif, but this treatment only enhanced his image as a "hero of the faith," the "martyr of Kairouan" who had defied an impious and unjust government.[479] (Not insignificantly, Kerrou refers to the entire episode as Khelif's *miḥnah*.) After releasing him, officials still ensured that he could not regain prominence as an imam by marginalizing him as a teacher of literature transferred among various cities. Decades later, however, Khelif would re-emerge, once Ben Ali had taken power and shifted the state's posture from containment of Islam to acting as the "defender of the religion." The new government not only restored Khelif to the *minbar* at the Great Mosque in Kairouan but also appointed him to the state's Conseil Islamique Supérieur. Furthermore, Ben Ali allowed (or persuaded[480]) Khelif to stand for Parliament at the head of the ruling party's list in Kairouan, all but guaranteeing his election, as a means of defusing the Islamic legitimacy of independent candidates aligned with the MTI (now renamed al-Nahḍah, or "Renaissance"). The imam's later career is a vivid illustration of the fluidity of the substance of official Islam, its responsiveness to, in Benjamin Bruce's words, "the prevailing interests of the state" and political actors. Khelif's trajectory also attests to the fact that, dependent upon context, both the repression of "deviance" and the rehabilitation of the "deviant" can serve to reinforce the authority of the state.[481]

Tunisia's *crise des mosquées*

Abderrahman Khelif died in 2006 and was not succeeded, in the old style, by one of his sons. Such an "inheritance" was hardly to be expected with the state so firmly in control of appointments to pulpits and the notion of clerical aristocracies increasingly consigned to a bygone age. Nearly immediately after the fall of Ben Ali in January 2011, however, Mohamed Khelif appeared at the Great Mosque of Kairouan and interrupted the sermon of the incumbent imam, Taïeb Ghozzi. In Ghozzi's retelling:

> [Khelif] thought he should've been the rightful successor when his father died in 2006, so after the revolution he saw his chance to take what he thought was rightfully his: being the imam of the Great Mosque of Kairouan. He climbed up to the pulpit and started preaching. He criticized the ousted dictator Ben Ali…. After the revolution, imams like him … wanted to make an immediate end to the regime that severely oppressed the Islamic faith, and an

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[479] Ibid.

[480] Wolf, 71.

[481] Kerrou, "Grande Mosquée."

end to everyone who cooperated with the regime. They charged me with collaboration. The mess that Ben Ali has left behind needs years to be cleared. The new government was too weak to keep extremists in check.[482]

This incident, and Ghozzi's framing of it, call attention to important dynamics in the aftermath of the revolution. First are the premises of *la crise des mosquées* itself. The urge to unseat imams in order to "complete" the revolution revealed just how successfully the *ancien régime* had linked the legitimacy of an imam, *as* a religious authority, to the legitimacy of the state that had appointed him to the *minbar*. Any imam, therefore, might be labeled a "collaborator" simply for having been appointed at all, regardless of his individual posture.[483] In Ghozzi's case, his view that the Ben Ali regime, a "dictatorship," had "severely repressed" Islam did not serve as a defense of his qualification to preach. Moreover, the immediacy with which *la crise des mosquées* erupted across the country evinced the intimate connection, in the minds of many, between the restrictions on the mosques and the person of the president. The "insurgents" in the mosques operated on the notion that the removal of Ben Ali necessarily entailed the collapse of the legal framework governing Islamic practice, and a reversion to older, even pre-Bourguiba, modes of authority. In this way, we might say that both presidents' efforts to define and control the religious sphere had only partially succeeded in routinizing their personal authority within the structures of state. Absent the presidents themselves, those structures were incapable of governing the religious sphere as fully, compelling them to undertake a prolonged campaign to re-establish their writ.

Second, and crucial to answering the questions posed at the outset of this study, are the rhetorical formations that endured into the post–Ben Ali period. Ghozzi not only refers to Mohamed Khelif as an "extremist"[484] but also decries that

> the extremists want to take over Tunisia and govern the country according to the extremist Salafist ideology. Then our tolerant Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence will be over.

[482] Pieter Stockmans, "Beneath the Stones of Kairouan's Ancient Mosque," August 25, 2015, https://pieterstockmansorg.wordpress.com/2015/08/25/tunisia-blog/.

[483] "Ces Imams ont été changés sous prétexte d'avoir été proches de l'ancien régime." "Plus de 400 mosquées ont connu des tensions liées à l'expulsion de leurs imams," Tunisie Numérique, March 9, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-plus-de-400-mosquees-ont-connu-des-tensions-liees-a-lexpulsion-de-leurs-imams/.

[484] Merone refers to him as a "prominent jihadi sheikh." Fabio Merone, "Tunisian Islamism beyond Democratization" (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2017), 163.

They are opposed to all that is Tunisian because they associate it with the dictatorship. They choose the Saudi school of Islamic jurisprudence and wear Saudi clothes. It hurts me to see how our young people begin to hate their own country and adhere to a foreign ideology.[485]

While harshly critical of the *ancien régime*, Ghozzi endorses components of the construct of *tunisianité*, its identification with a "tolerant" interpretation of Islam (here, as in Algerian state policy, enunciated through the Mālikī *madhhab*) and its opposition to foreign influence. These concepts persisted, and indeed intensified, as the common repertoire through which a range of social actors debated the legacy of *étatisme* and the proper relationship between Islam and the post-revolutionary state.

Notably, what Ghozzi condemns on all sides is an impulse to monopolize religion. Speaking of figures like Mohamed Khelif, Ghozzi diagnoses that "le problème, c'est qu'ils veulent s'accaparer le mot 'salafisme,' alors que tout musulman est en lui-même un salafiste puisqu'il croit au Coran et à la Sunna…. Ceux qui se font appeler salafistes se basent sur l'exclusion de l'autre. Ils sont corrompus par des discours extrémistes."[486] If Ghozzi's definition of extremism is the totalizing tendency exemplified by Salafī exclusionary practices (he cites *takfīr* in particular), he finds the label applicable to some secularists, too. He blames "extremist secularists," who have opposed the resuscitation of Zaytūnah and Kairouan as centers of learning out of a fear of "Islamization," for impeding "the recovery of our indigenous Islamic identity and the development of strong Islamic institutions integrated into Tunisian society. Thereby they strengthen the growth of foreign intolerant ideologies that preach secession."[487] Ghozzi retains the principle of national unity as a political priority, but recasts it as a *tunisianité* compatible with an Islamic identity that is not under state control.

This conception of secularity, distinct from *étatisme*, finds expression in the political program of al-Nahḍah, whose members emphasize that

they abide by the electoral law that stipulates political parties to be solely active within the political arena…. They vehemently oppose anything that sounds like an Islamic state or an

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[485] Stockmans.

[486] Lilia Weslaty, "Rencontre avec les partisans d'Ansar al-Charia à Kairouan : entre "révolution islamique" et injustice sociale," Nawaat, May 20, 2013, https://nawaat.org/2013/05/20/rencontre-avec-les-partisans-dansar-charia-a-kairouan-entre-revolution-islamique-et-injustice-sociale/.

[487] Stockmans.

"Iranian option," arguing that their experience with the previous regime has taught them the dangers of enforcing a specific ideology through politics on society — which can only lead to an autocratic repressive regime.[488]

Teije Hidde Donker describes this as "a view that Islam should remain above and structure society and politics," which al-Naḥḍah shares with "Salafist movements."[489] However, not all who self-identify as Salafī draw the boundaries between religion and politics in the same way. "We have ideological problems with all Muslims who use Islam to engage in politics," explained one Salafī imam. "The Islamist party Ennahdha asked me to talk about them favourably in my [sermons] so that people would vote for them…. I refused."[490] Thus the strategic paradox of how to use the political process to depoliticize Islam came to be debated in relation to the same secularist binary that Bourguiba and Ben Ali had assiduously drawn in order to subsume Islam within the state in the first place.

The foregoing describes the conceptual and rhetorical environment in which *la crise des mosquées* transpired and the state responded. In making innumerable individual decisions as to the inclusion ("moderate") or exclusion ("radical") of religious figures, the state in some ways sustained and in some ways modified the pre-existing complexion of official Tunisian Islam. Tracing the continuities and disruptions will illuminate changing configurations of power as the Tunisian state reconsolidated its authority, while also confronting social instability and democratizing its political institutions.

Rhetorical continuities and contentions

Tellingly, rhetorical formations familiar from the time of Ben Ali featured prominently in the vocabulary of the 2010–2011 uprising, and were not seen to contradict the revolutionary impulse. In analyzing the verbal and visual motifs employed by the demonstrators, Amira Aleya-Sghaier finds that themes of Arab-Muslim identity, national unity, and the aspiration for a secular state appeared frequently.[491] Control or repression of religion was not a salient grievance, and very

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[488] Donker, 212.

[489] Ibid., 216.

[490] Pieter Stockmans, "One Salafist Is Not the Other," August 25, 2015, https://pieterstockmansorg.wordpress.com/2015/08/25/tunisia-blog/.

[491] Amira Aleya-Sghaier, "The Tunisian Revolution: The Revolution of Dignity," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 3, no. 1 (2012): 26–27.

few of the protestors indicated that their motivation was to bring about an Islamic government.[492] Rather, because the protest coalition drew upon so wide a range of social groups, whose respective interests were otherwise so divergent, only a broad formulation of grievance could have encompassed them all — hence the rhetorical emphasis upon *la dignité*[493] and the depiction of the uprising as "the revolution of dignity."[494] Explicitly Islamist sentiment was perceptibly muted, leading one Western analysis to confidently declare that "Tunisia's revolution is Islamist-free," in contrast to the later "Arab Spring" uprisings in Egypt and elsewhere in which Islamic political organizations played more overt roles.[495] Yet Islamists[496] were very much present in Tunisia and in its revolution, and the fall of the regime in January 2011 quickly opened the shared concepts of *tunisianité*,[497] Muslim identity, and secularism to vigorous contestation. Kenneth Perkins recounts that Islamists

> participated in the protests, at first as individuals and later in small cohorts of like-minded neighbors and colleagues. Certainly, these protesters had an Islamist vision of the revolution's ultimate outcome, but for as long as Ben Ali clung to power, and afterwards, for as long as [his] loyalists still figured prominently in the interim government … all the

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[492] "Arab Barometer II," 2011, http://www.arabbarometer.org/content/online-data-analysis. These survey responses are subject to the respondents' various interpretations of what is meant by the phrase "niẓām islāmī" on the questionnaire. Asked directly in the survey to define a "al-dawlah al-dīnīyah," respondents split nearly evenly between those who said it would base all its laws on "al-sharīʿah al-islāmīyah" and those who allowed for a constitutional democracy with Islam as only a "cultural and civilizational frame of reference." Among the minority (4%) of respondents who indicated that they did see the primary objective of the uprising as the installation of an Islamic government, only 38% defined a religious state as one that adheres fully to the *sharīʿah*, whereas 56% accepted the possibility of an Islamic constitutional democracy (excluding "I don't know" and null responses).

[493] Sadri Khiari, "La Révolution tunisienne ne vient pas de nulle part," interview by Béatrice Hibou, *Politique Africaine,* no. 121, 2011, 29.

[494] Aleya-Sghaier. "During the uprisings, protesters did not represent the future as 'Islamic' or 'secular.' They simply saw it as reconfigurable…. The religious/secular dichotomy, although an ordinary staple in the political narratives of authoritarian politics, did not help Tunisians articulate their political demands." Malika Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life: Islamism, Secularism, and Public Order in the Tunisian Transition," *Constellations* 20, no. 2 (2013): 254.

[495] Michael J. Koplow, "Why Tunisia's Revolution Is Islamist-Free," *Foreign Policy*, January 14, 2011, http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/14/why-tunisias-revolution-is-islamist-free-2/.

[496] "An Islamist is one who believes that Islam as a body of faith has something *crucial* to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary *ummah* and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion *as a matter of priority*." Frédéric Volpi, *Political Islam Observed* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2010), 14. This broad label encompasses, in the Tunisian context, not only al-Nahḍah but other parties "to their right," as well as all manner of organizations that may self-describe as Islamist and/or Salafī. See discussion in Monica Marks, "Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current," *Mediterranean Politics* 18, no. 1 (2013).

[497] "Importantly, the concept of Tunisianité is mainly used and disseminated by the (francophone) political elites and media. In general, Tunisians would rather speak about 'hawiyya attounsia' (the Tunisian identity)." Sami Zemni, "From Revolution to Tunisianité: Who Is the Tunisian People?," *Middle East Law and Governance* 8, no. 2–3 (2016): 137n18.

protesters recognized the priority of rooting out the remnants of the old regime.[498]

That some Islamists extended the "remnants of the old regime" to include preachers became clear almost immediately, and not only in Kairouan. From disparate parts of the country emerged accounts of *groupes de barbus* entering mosques and ordering out the imams (in some cases reportedly also beating them) before changing the locks and occupying the pulpits themselves. In their sermons, the newly installed preachers ranged well beyond denunciations of the *ancien régime* and its "collaborators." Mokhtar Trifi, chairman of the Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'homme, relayed that "some imams singled out individuals and called them apostates…. I was told that in a mosque in the area of Manar the imam called for the execution of a professor who is accused of insulting the Prophet…. There are reports of similar incidents happening everywhere in Tunisia."[499] At some mosques, congregants resisted the insurgents, leading to physical confrontations that prompted police intervention and the imposition of curfews. Protests by the *barbus*, or against them, frequently disrupted Friday prayers, which in some places were cancelled altogether as a preventive measure. Within a few months of the fall of Ben Ali, *la crise des mosquées* was in full swing.

In May, the minister of religious affairs in the interim government, Laroussi Mizouri, announced that unrest in the mosques was on the wane: "il y a de moins en moins d'imams qu'on oblige à quitter la mosquée."[500] However, when the ministry offered its first public tally in November, it estimated that some 150 to 200 mosques had been seized.[501] In the following March, the ministry pinned the number at 400 mosques, although it still insisted upon "la tendance à la baisse de ce phénomène."[502] Across the country, the pace of takeovers and disputes only quickened: imams continued to be "removed violently"[503] and new preachers "imposed by

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[498] Kenneth Perkins, "Playing the Islamic Card: The Use and Abuse of Teligion in Tunisian Politics," in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, Prospects*, ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 75.

[499] "Rise of Radical Islam Sparks Fears in Tunisia - Al-Jazeera," BBC Monitoring, April 30, 2011.

[500] Hajer Ajroudi, "Refus total de la politisation des mosquées," *Le Temps*, May 5, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/55708.

[501] Tom Heneghan, "Radical Islamists Seize Control of Tunisia Mosques," Reuters, November 2, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-islam-radicals/radical-islamists-seize-control-of-tunisia-mosques-idUSTRE7A14BR20111102.

[502] "Plus de 400 mosquées ont connu des tensions liées à l'expulsion de leurs imams."

[503] "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," International Crisis Group, February 13, 2013, 3n23, https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/tunisia-violence-and-salafi-challenge.

force"[504] at the behest of a "groupe de barbus"[505] or a "groupe de jeunes salafistes"[506] who interrupted the *khuṭbah* and demanded to be allowed to deliver a sermon themselves.[507] Physical altercations "regularly erupted near mosques" in many areas during the summer of 2012, often "involving knives and tear gas."[508] By 2013, official and unofficial sources were in agreement that around 1,100 mosques, more than one in five, had fallen out of state control at some point after the revolution.[509]

These incidents formed part of a broader wave of violence in the aftermath of the revolution, much of which had no overtly political dimension (looting, for example). A significant amount, though, was attributable to vigilante enforcement of a particular public morality — physical attacks on brothels, bars, cinemas, art exhibitions, and Ṣūfī shrines, all *bêtes noires* among Salafīs — which directly contested the state's dominance in matters of normativity and thus shared an impulse with the mutinies in the mosques. This trend intensified and diversified over the years to include political targets: aggression against trade unions, armed assaults on the military and police, and the stunning assassinations of the leftist politicians Chokri Belaïd and Mohamed Brahmi in 2013.[510] The violence took on an element of international jihadism with the storming of the United States embassy in 2012 and the slaughter of civilians at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis and on the beach at al-Qanṭāwī near Sousse in 2015. These events inevitably shaped the government's perception of and response to *la crise des mosquées*.

Not all of the impromptu turnover of imams was violent or even conflictual, however, and in some cases appeared to be consensual. At the important Sīdī al-Lakhmī mosque in the city of

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[504] "Un imam prédicateur imposé de force par des salafistes à Sidi Bouzid."

[505] "Des salafistes à la conquête des mosquées à Siliana et imposent leurs imams," Tunisie Numérique, August 8, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-des-salafistes-a-la-conquete-des-mosquees-a-siliana-et-imposent-leurs-imams/.

[506] "Un groupe de salafistes veut prendre le contrôle de la grande mosquée à Sfax," Tunisie Numérique, July 5, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-un-groupe-de-salafistes-veut-prendre-le-controle-de-la-grande-mosquee-a-sfax/.

[507] "Violence à la Grande Mosquée de Sfax," Tunisie Numérique, July 6, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-violence-a-la-grande-mosquee-de-sfax/.

[508] "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," 3.

[509] According to the minister of religious affairs (Hassine Bouazra, "68% des mosquées du Grand Tunis échappent au contrôle du ministère des Affaires religieuses," *Le Temps*, June 15, 2013, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/76999), the Ministry of the Interior ("La Tunisie veut récupérer les mosquées contrôlées par des radicaux," Agence France Presse, March 12, 2014), and one of the imams' unions (Olivesi).

[510] "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," 1–8. Anne Wolf, "An Islamist 'Renaissance'? Religion and Politics in Post-revolutionary Tunisia," *Journal of North African Studies* 18, no. 4 (2013): 568.

Sfax, Ridha Jaouadi was evidently chosen as new imam by the congregation itself, out of a desire for leadership more in line with the post-revolutionary political atmosphere ("ba'da al-thawrah ṭālaba ruwwād al-masjid bi-imām jadīd yastajību lil-taḥawwulāt allatī ḥaṣalat fī al-bilād wa-ikhtārū al-shaykh Riḍā al-Jawwādī").[511] Jaouadi, who had been barred from preaching and teaching under the previous regime, ascended the *minbar* just two weeks after Ben Ali's ouster.[512] His selection suggested a new model of "democratic" self-governance for the mosques in line with certain popular hopes for Tunisia's *deuxième république*.[513]

From this angle, the struggle for control of the mosques was intimately interrelated with the liberalization of religious practice — and challenged the political class to define the limits of that liberalization. Attendance at prayers dramatically increased; mosques reopened between prayer times, allowing for religious classes to be held;[514] the government no longer drafted sermons for all imams to read on Fridays;[515] and some imams began conducting prayers outdoors.[516] As one "Islamist youngster" put it, "Muslims started to act their faith in all freedom."[517] Yet each of these freedoms posed a vexing new question to the already strained state. Increased attendance fueled demands that the state build (and staff) additional mosques, on the order of hundreds of requests per month.[518] Fully open mosques provided space for the study circles (*ḥalaqāt*) where political opposition had crystallized in the 1980s and where once again, in the words of one report, "certains islamistes propagent leurs idées politiques."[519] Unscripted preaching cleared the way for even state-appointed imams to make problematic statements, adding a layer of complexity to *la*

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[511] Ḥasan al-Ṭarābulusī, "Masjid al-Lakhmī yastaqbilu al-shaykh Riḍā al-Jawwādī imāman jadīdan lahu," Al-Ḥiwār, March 16, 2011, https://www.alhiwar.net/ShowNews.php?Tnd=15903.

[512] Tunisie Islamique, "Al-khuṭbah al-ūlá lil-shaykh Riḍā al-Jawwādī ba'da 20 sana (2011/01/28) al-juz' al-awwal," Facebook, February 3, 2011, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=187820314572412.

[513] "La particularité de ces nouveaux imams est qu'ils sont acclamés sur la base d'un récit qui s'oppose à l'islam d'État et aux nominations administratives des imams de l'époque autoritaire. Dans ce nouveau récit mobilisé par des fidèles, les nouveaux imams « sont choisis par le peuple »." Ester Sigillò, "Ennahdha et l'essor des associations islamiques en Tunisie : revendiquer l'islam politique au-delà de la dimension partisane ?," *L'Année du Maghreb* 22 (2020).

[514] Donker, 211.

[515] Anne Wolf, "The Radicalization of Tunisia's Mosques," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 6 (2014): 18, https://ctc.usma.edu/the-radicalization-of-tunisias-mosques/; Ajroudi.

[516] "Rise of Radical Islam."

[517] Donker, 210–11.

[518] Ibid., 211.

[519] "La politique ne doit pas se propager dans les mosquées (ministre)," Agence France Presse, May 4, 2011.

crise.[520] And open-air prayers subverted the principle of religious regulation by circumventing the legal requirement that no activity take place *in the mosques* without state supervision.

An initial impediment to the state in containing the expulsion of imams was the suddenly manifest inability of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to enforce its decisions. "Despite the fact that the Ministry of Religious Affairs was responsible for religious institutions" under the Ben Ali–era legal structure, writes Donker, "in many instances the Ministry of Interior held control in practice: It was the police and secret services that ensured the loyalty of imams and monitored the sermons that they delivered in mosques."[521] The "omnipresent plain-clothes policemen"[522] had been especially active after September 11, 2001, and the passage of Tunisia's anti-terrorism law in 2003,[523] surveilling and even filming those who prayed at mosques.[524] Just hours after a stable interim government coalesced on March 7, 2011, the Ministry of the Interior announced the closure of its Direction de la sûreté de l'État (State Security Directorate) and the permanent suspension of all structures and practices "akin to political police."[525] The ministry noted that it had taken these measures "en symbiose avec les valeurs de la révolution… en vue de contribuer à la réalisation des attributs de la démocratie, de la dignité et de la liberté."[526]

However, from the perspective of Jamel Oueslati, chief of staff at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, now that "extremist tendencies [had] invaded certain mosques," his ministry had "no power to pressure them."

> Since the revolution did away with authoritarian methods, [Oueslati] said, [the ministry] could not ask the police to eject the salafists. "We're trying to discuss with them, but they won't agree to talk." … The ministry will be able to take legal measures only once the new

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[520] Wolf, "Radicalization," 18.

[521] Donker and Netterstrøm, 142.

[522] Rania Abouzeid, "How Tunisia's Once-Suppressed Islamists Are Re-emerging," *Time*, January 21, 2011, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2043839,00.html.

[523] Hélène Sallon, "Moi, Ahmed, 27 ans, torturé dans les geôles de Ben Ali," *Le Monde*, February 9, 2011, https://www.lemonde.fr/tunisie/article/2011/02/09/moi-ahmed-27-ans-torture-dans-les-geoles-de-ben-ali_1476731_1466522.html.

[524] "Ramadan sans Ben Ali en Tunisie: liberté de culte retrouvée ou activisme islamiste?," Agence France Presse, August 12, 2011.

[525] "Suppression de la police politique et de la direction de la sûreté de l'État," Présidence du gouvernement, March 7, 2011, http://www.pm.gov.tn/pm/actualites/actualite.php?lang=fr&id=2909.

[526] Ibid.

government is formed and establishes its authority.[527]

By "new government," Oueslati referred to the permanent government expected to take office following an election, which would be held that October. In the meantime, the ministry turned to persuasion and its power (in theory, at least) to appoint and dismiss the staff at mosques. To this end, the ministry published a statement in late February calling on the faithful "to respect the *minbar*" and to seek dialogue rather than simply ousting imams. Worshippers with concerns about their imams were directed to the supervisory *prédicateurs* in each province; these in turn were advised to "replace outgoing or disputed imams" with qualified candidates, preferably graduates of Zaytūnah.[528] The *prédicateurs*, though, felt they had little recourse: in response to a series of ousters in his region, one *prédicateur* remarked that "son rôle est d'informer les autorités régionales ainsi que le ministère des Affaires religieuses et de mettre en garde contre les conséquences de ces agissements."[529] A ministry staffer diagnosed that "le problème de l'utilisation des mosquées par des groupes extrémistes ne pourra pas être résolu sans l'implication du ministère de l'Intérieur."[530] The minister of religious affairs himself, when queried about "le discours politique sur les plates-formes religieuses," admitted that "la fonction du ministère des Affaires religieuses n'est pas sécuritaire."[531]

As expulsions persisted through the month of March, the ministry issued a second communiqué in which

> les imams-prédicateurs ont été appelés à garantir la neutralité des mosquées, à ne pas exploiter les lieux de culte à des fins politiques, à se limiter aux aspects religieux et à éviter d'appeler à l'adhésion aux partis et d'attiser la haine…. Le ministère des Affaires religieuses a demandé aux imams-prédicateurs de s'engager dans leur prêche à respecter l'éthique du discours religieux et les règles régissant les lieux de culte, fondées sur la bonne prédication, l'orientation et la lutte contre la corruption, et à éviter la diffamation.[532]

Differently from the February statement, which spoke of the expulsions mostly as a procedural

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[527] Heneghan.

[528] "Respect de la sacralité des mosquées."

[529] "Des salafistes à la conquête des mosquées à Siliana et imposent leurs imams."

[530] "Le ministère du culte veut remettre de l'ordre dans les mosquées," Agence France Presse, March 31, 2012.

[531] "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses : Les enseignantes religieuses jouent un grand rôle."

[532] "Rappel à l'ordre : les mosquées pour la prière et non pour la politique," *Leaders*, March 30, 2011, https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/4655-rappel-a-l-ordre-les-mosquees-pour-la-priere-et-non-pour-la-politique.

matter, this new text directly dealt with what was taking place in the mosques under the new preachers: "political" and "partisan" speech. The introduction of the latter adjective drew attention to the timing of this second statement, which came on the heels of the state's authorization of more than 100 political parties — most notably al-Nahḍah, now legalized after twenty years of official proscription. It also seemed that, as in the Egyptian and Algerian cases discussed above, the inclusion of corruption (referring principally to the notion of transitional justice, i.e., the prosecution of Ben Ali's relatives and associates) demonstrated that permitted preaching included not only the cited "aspects religieux"[533] but also certain "political" topics that happened to coincide with the government's current priorities. Moreover, while the mention of stoking hatred ("attiser la haine") and the allusion to *takfīr* ("diffamation"[534]) showed the government's concern with the incidence of violence, the appeal to "la neutralité des mosquées" clearly evoked the rhetoric of the former regime.

These features did not go unnoticed in the mosques. Two weeks after the ministry's communiqué, a rejoinder in the name of "the *prédicateurs* (*al-wuʿʿāẓ*) and the sermon imams (*a'immat al-khaṭābah*) of Tunisia" appeared on Facebook.[535] It condemned the ministry for "accusing imams of spreading discord (*fitan*)" and "treating them as if they were children who need tutelage and guidance on [religious] knowledge and morality." The imams' counterpoint described their "amazement" that the ministry's statement coincided with a "media campaign focused on Islamic discourse, imams, and the role of the mosques." Most pointedly, the (anonymous) preachers accused the minister of "dealing with religious affairs from the mindset of the previous regime, which sought to use the mosques in the service of secular political interests, separating religion from life and imposing a merely moral discourse disconnected from the reality of life and the concerns of society, turning the mosque into an exact replica of the church in

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[533] Which meant everyday moral issues: the ministry advised that "l'imam du prêche du vendredi est appelé à choisir minutieusement un sujet ayant une dimension humaine pour le traiter d'un point de vue religieux." "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses : Il y a des dérives dans certaines mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, July 25, 2011, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/ministre-des-affaires-religieuses-il-y-a-des-derives-dans-certaines-mosquees/60329.

[534] Cf. the statement of the minister of education that "imams have been removed and replaced by other imams who delivered political speeches and made defamatory statements about certain individuals." "Rise of Radical Islam."

[535] Tūnis Ṣawt al-Islām wa-al-ʿUrūbah Tūnis Ṣawt al-Aṣālah wa-al-Ḥadāthah, "Bayān radd[an] ʿalá balāgh wazīr al-shuʾūn al-dīnīyah," Facebook, April 10, 2011, http://bit.ly/bayan-radd. On the significance of *ʿurūbah* in the history of Islamic politics in Tunisia, see Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi, "An Analysis of the History and Discourse of the Tunisian Islamic Movement al-Naḥda: A Case Study of the Politicisation of Islam" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1996), 211–20.

Europe." The statement concluded with a series of demands:

> We demand that [the minister] fulfill his duty to the nation by activating the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the service of Islam, completely independent of political interference in the mosques, in Islamic discourse, and preachers; and by activating its role in combating the deliberate attacks on the Holy Qur'ān, the prophetic *sunnah*, the definitive teachings of Islam, and on the Prophet and his Companions; and that [the ministry] participate, along with the Fatwá Foundation and Zaytūnah University, in preserving the identity of Tunisian society and its spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and social education. We deem the statement from the minister to express his private opinion and nothing more.[536]

The preachers pointed to the fact that discrimination between "religious" and "political" speech inherently could not be a "neutral" exercise and alleged that when the state did so it followed a foreign model of secularity. In contrast, the preachers made reference to the unique nature of *tunisianité* as a "spiritual" and "social" identity rooted in the tradition of Zaytūnah. The decades-old cleavage between the Mediterranean and Arab-Muslim aspects of Tunisian identity, couched in terms of foreignness versus indigeneity, proved to be no less potent in the post-revolutionary milieu; in fact, it would continue to furnish a common vocabulary through which questions of normativity were debated.

The ministry did not respond to the preachers' statement. Nonetheless it had made its posture evident the week prior by asking the imam of Zaytūnah, Mohamed Cherif — of the *'ulamā'* family that had managed the mosque for two centuries — to step aside and allow Mizouri, the minister of religious affairs, to deliver the *khuṭbah*.[537] His appearance not only reinforced the notion that, whereas imams could not "politicize" the mosques, state officials could deploy the symbolism of the *minbar* as they saw fit. It also inaugurated a succession of temporary preachers upon Tunisia's most important pulpit, the vacuum of leadership that, several months later, Houcine Laabidi would exploit to proclaim himself *shaykh*.[538]

As *la crise des mosquées* gathered steam, the Ministry of Religious Affairs made progressively fuller use of the rhetorical tools it had inherited. In addition to "le refus du ministère

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[536] Tūnis Ṣawt al-Islām wa-al-'Urūbah Tūnis Ṣawt al-Aṣālah wa-al-Ḥadāthah.

[537] Azza Turki, "Une histoire de traditions…," *Réalités*, August 23, 2012, https://www.realites.com.tn/2012/08/une-histoire-de-traditions/.

[538] Ibid.

de toute forme de politisation des mosquées,"[539] Mizouri reaffirmed the type of speech expected from the *minbar*: "Les lieux de culte … sont faits pour diffuser un discours religieux éclairé, modéré et tolérant," and the ministry would intervene to ensure "la diffusion des préceptes de l'Islam et des valeurs universelles."[540] These descriptors came to feature in nearly all of the minister's statements and to encompass activity beyond the *khuṭbah*. For example, Mizouri stated that the ministry's educational programming for Ramaḍān 2011 aimed to "instaurer un message religieux modéré, fondé sur l'esprit de dialogue et visant, en outre, à la promotion du rayonnement de l'esprit éclairé."[541] Furthermore, the minister frequently paired those labels with another assertion: the need to "préserver les acquis de la Révolution du 14 janvier au service de l'intérêt de la Tunisie."[542] This maneuver had the effect of associating the revolution, and the duty of all Tunisians to ensure its success[543] — portrayed as an objective above partisanship[544] — with the discourse of official Islam. Any other articulation was, by definition, counterrevolutionary.

The rhetorical terrain of *la révolution* was, of course, far from uncontested. One writer found the promise of the "glorieuse Révolution" in the very fact that "toutes les anciennes structures rouillées et moisies par les longues années de dictature" were breaking down — especially the mosques:

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[539] Salah Ben Hamadi, "Pas de politisation des mosquées," *Le Temps*, July 31, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/57957.

[540] "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses : Il y a des dérives dans certaines mosquées."

[541] D. Ben Salem, "Dialogue avec les imams pour un discours éclairé," *La Presse de Tunisie*, July 31, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/34097. In the same context, he emphasized that the customary charitable works during the holy month, such as the communal *ifṭār*, fell within the government's *ressort exclusif*, meaning that civil-society groups — not only political parties but even charitable associations — were barred form engaging in such activity. Ben Hamadi. Andrea Khalil characterizes this as an "explicitly stated … policy … to prohibit civilian control of religion and mosques." Andrea Khalil, *Crowds and Politics in North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria and Libya* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 66. His statement was of a piece with complaints from the ministry's *prédicateurs* that mosque committees were springing up to manage places of worship in competition with the ministry. "Le ministre des Affaires religieuses : Il y a des dérives dans certaines mosquées."

[542] "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses appelle au respect de la neutralité des lieux de culte," Tunisie Numérique, July 19, 2011, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses-appelle-au-respect-de-la-neutralite-des-lieux-de-culte/58579.

[543] "Réaliser les objectifs de la révolution": Ben Salem. "Assurer le succès de la Révolution exemplaire": Ben Hamadi. "Protéger la Tunisie de toute dérive ou danger et réaliser les principes de la révolution": "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses appelle au respect des croyances religieuses et à la tolérance," ibid., October 11, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/59692.

[544] As was the ministry, which Mizouri said belonged "à tous les Tunisiens et non pas à quelques partis." Ajroudi. Others argued that the ministry should be more "religious": Donker "observed how a female civil servant, without a headscarf, was harassed by Islamist activists shouting that such a person should not be able to work for the *wizārat al-Muqadisa* [*sic*] (holy ministry). They demanded that people who worked within the ministry … behave according to religious norms." Donker, 218.

Il suffit d'entrer dans les mosquées pour saisir la portée de cette métamorphose…. On a fait appel à une nouvelle vague de jeunes prédicateurs imprégnés des valeurs nobles de l'Islam. On a réellement rompu avec tous les acolytes nommés par les "décideurs" de l'ère obscure. Désormais, les nouveaux prédicateurs, du haut du Minbar, tiennent un discours inspiré des seules directives de Dieu et de son Prophète. Le temps des prêches préparés d'avance par le ministère de l'Intérieur et soigneusement fignolés par les gouverneurs et les délégués est pratiquement révolu. La prédication a coupé court avec la propagande politique mensongère et le tapage pompeux en faveur du président déchu. Aujourd'hui, le seul discours parle des valeurs telles que droiture, solidarité, fraternité, sens de la responsabilité.[545]

The transitional government agreed that scripted sermons were a relic of the authoritarian past, expressing its "confiance aux imams désignés quant au choix du sujet du prêche du vendredi."[546] Nonetheless it insisted that the relevant ministries retained the authority to adjudicate "la propagande politique" and indeed to specify what constituted the "valeurs nobles de l'Islam" worth preaching. Under mounting pressure from *la crise*, Mizouri and his ministry became comfortable espousing those values positively and asserting the state's role in demarcating religion and politics. Conspicuously, however, the transitional government by and large avoided the reactive characterizations of Bourguiba ("le mal tunisien") and Ben Ali ("l'extrémisme") toward those it sought to discipline. That would soon change.

The Salafī challenge to state control

The election of October 2011 delivered al-Nahḍah a plurality of seats in the National Constituent Assembly, the legislative body in charge of drafting a new constitution. The party's victory brought *la crise des mosquées* to the fore amid questions (and suspicions) as to how it would approach the governance of religion, given the party's provenance and its experience of repression under those very mechanisms of state. As a principle, al-Nahḍah "was unwilling to return to actively managing mosques as this [was] associated with the rule of the previous authoritarian regime."[547] On the other hand, the party newspaper denounced the "radical secularism" (*'almānīyah mutaṭarrifah*) of *laïcité*, which it described as a totalizing (*shāmilah*)

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[545] Mounir Gaida, "Un vent de liberté dans les mosquées," *La Presse de Tunisie*, February 7, 2011, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/22040.

[546] Ajroudi.

[547] Donker, 219.

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quest "to eliminate religion from … public space and from life altogether."[548] Between these two negative positions, party president Rached Ghannouchi advocated for "'liberating religion from the state' and constructing a balance that prevented the state from dominating religion while not entirely removing religion from politics."[549] His vision therefore

> favor[ed] secularism as "a procedure" that makes the state, in a position of neutrality, guarantee freedoms and in particular religious freedom, over secularism as a "Jacobin model" or a "separation [between state and religion] in the French sense" of an "atheist philosophy" that excludes religion from the public realm.[550]

Indeed Ghannouchi spoke with a decidedly secular accent when he declared that the "primary orbit for religion is not the state's apparatuses, but rather personal/individual convictions."[551]

However, casting the state as the guarantor of religion, and moreover postulating the state's religious "neutrality," came unmistakably close to Ben Ali's rhetoric portraying the state as the sole "defender of the religion" and state Islam as "immune to political trends." Al-Nahḍah's approach, therefore, was hardly disestablishmentarian; for as much as party members were clamoring for "the liberation of the mosques," they also "insist[ed] that the state must organize (*tanẓīm*) religion without controlling it."[552] As Malika Zeghal writes, the party's

> emphasis on democracy was also accompanied by a desire to keep established religion at the heart of the polity, in continuity with the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. This allowed the movement to speak of the state as a "civil state" (*dawlah madanīyah*) that was nonetheless the guardian and the regulator of Islam and to keep Islam — and conservative moral values — at the center of politics.[553]

Al-Nahḍah saw its distinctive quality — and Tunisia's — as this ability to pair democratic process with Islamic politics.[554] The civil state could thus "revive the mosques, and the mosque pulpits,"

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[548] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 264. The article uses language consonant with the imam Taïeb Ghozzi as well as the Facebook statement from the "preachers and imams of Tunisia," above.

[549] McCarthy, 735. Cf. the support of "Muslim activists" in Indonesia for a strong Ministry of Religious Affairs as "a middle way between the theory of the separation of religion from the state and the theory of the unity of religion and the state": Ropi, 106.

[550] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 265.

[551] McCarthy, 735.

[552] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 261. Romanization adjusted.

[553] Ibid., 260. Romanization adjusted.

[554] Ibid.

without violating democratic norms; in fact, one proposal for synthesizing the two was to allow congregations to choose their imams in lieu of state appointment.[555] At the same time, leading party members maintained that mosques "must not be a space for political struggle, but for worship: they do not belong to political parties."[556]

The Nahḍah-led government appointed as minister of religious affairs Noureddine Khadmi, a prominent imam at al-Fatḥ, a mosque in Tunis with a Salafī reputation.[557] His background, in combination with al-Nahḍah's talk of "liberation" and "revival," gave rise to misgivings about his resolve with respect to *la crise*. Early in his tenure, Khadmi received a cross-party delegation of lawmakers who pressed him to "take a position" on the usurpation of pulpits and to initiate a plan to end the practice.[558] A few weeks later, the ministry issued a statement of its policy on mosques, stipulating:

a)   that the ministry alone had the power to staff mosques and that no other party had the right, under any circumstances, to intervene;

b)   that any solicitation for a change in staffing, on the part of congregations, must be made in writing to the ministry; and

c)   that mosques constituted *biens publics* and that any interference with their operation was not only a criminal offense but also "a source of anarchy."[559]

The policy directly reaffirmed the 1988 law that had made mosques part of the "domaine public de l'État" and criminalized "disturbances," signaling that the new government did not envision any significant change to the structural relationship between the state and the mosque. The warning against "anarchy" explicitly tied the maintenance of social order to the principle of state oversight of religion. Much in the same vein, the statement went on to emphasize that the ministry would select imams "in accordance with the *sharī'ah*" but also in line with "the national interest," given

[555] Ibid., 263, 271n8. The idea had earlier appeared in the work of Mohamed Charfi, leader of the Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'homme and Ben Ali's minister of education. He advocated a religious authority as a "fourth power" within the state, modelled on the independent judiciary. Charfi, 129.

[556] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 263.

[557] In a change from the previous regime, Khadmi and indeed all ministers of religious affairs after the revolution served as independents.

[558] "Des représentants de partis politiques appellent le ministre des Affaires Religieuses à stopper l'avancée des salafistes," Tunisie Numérique, January 26, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-des-representants-de-partis-politiques-appellent-le-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses-a-stopper-lavancee-des-salafistes/.

[559] "La nomination des Imams des mosquées dépend du ministère des Affaires religieuses," Tunisie Numérique, March 7, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-la-nomination-des-imams-des-mosquees-depend-du-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses/.

the role of religion in ensuring "la stabilité sociale, la concorde, la tolérance et la solidarité."[560]

Khadmi shortly followed this statement with an elaboration of his strategy for the nomination of imams. The minister called for preachers with the requisite educational credentials (a master's in theology or equivalent) as well as "haute moralité et … popularité," acknowledging that a lack of rapport between imams and congregations had initially driven *la crise des mosquées*. In a significant divergence from previous practice, the minister also urged imams to have "une opinion sur les affaires publiques et le mode de gouvernance dans le pays." This he carefully balanced with a restatement of the necessity to keep the mosque "loin de la politique et des intérêts partisans" and in support of "l'unité nationale et le respect du rite malékite."[561] Under a policy of "regularization," the same criteria would be applied to the retention of imams who had been installed since the revolution: accordingly, the ministry recognized Ridha Jaouadi at Sīdī al-Lakhmī in Sfax[562] and, spurred by a court decision, Houcine Laabidi at Zaytūnah in Tunis.[563] "Regularization" thus reflected Khadmi's preference for engaging with Salafī imams through "dialogue and persuasion" rather than what he called "mesures sécuritaires imposées et hâtives," which might isolate them or leave their mosques unstaffed.[564] In terms of politics, opening channels of communication would also, it was hoped, allow al-Nahḍah "to strengthen common ground within the Islamist movement and gain a level of trust and control."[565]

On the whole, Khadmi's policies preserved the state's firm institutional control of religion as well as the close conceptual association of official Islam and *tunisianité* (in the form of national unity, moderation, and the Mālikī tradition).[566] Concurrently, he aimed to give new substance to

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[560] Ibid.

[561] "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses annonce une stratégie pour la nomination des prédicateurs," Tunis Afrique Presse, March 9, 2012, https://www.turess.com/fr/tapfr/120894.

[562] Teije Hidde Donker, "The Sacred as Secular: State Control and Mosques Neutrality in Post-revolutionary Tunisia," *Politics and Religion* 12 (2019): 507.

[563] Derouich.

[564] "Noureddine El Khademi: « La question du salafisme est complexe et ne peut être résolue par des mesures sécuritaires »," Tunisie Numérique, April 21, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/noureddine-el-khademi-la-question-du-salafisme-est-complexe-et-ne-peut-etre-resolue-par-des-mesures-securitaires/. Khadmi related the hollowness of official Islam to Ben Ali's neglect (*déshérence*) of the mosques, which left many without the requisite staff. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, in his estimation, had been little more than a "façade" with the true power over mosques and Islamic discourse held by the Ministry of the Interior. "Le ministère du culte veut remettre de l'ordre dans les mosquées."

[565] Donker, "Re-emerging Islamism," 219–20.

[566] "Le ministre … a souligné que l'imam assume une importante responsabilité dans 'la diffusion d'un discours religieux modéré qui rassemble et ne divise pas.' … Il a, dans ce sens, mis l'accent sur la nécessité de rénover le

official Islam *through* those structural and discursive tools of state. To remedy the "vide intellectuel et religieux" of Tunisia's authoritarian past, Khadmi envisioned a corps of imams who could speak to current events while remaining within the government's conception of "apolitical" speech. In this regard he referred to the need for "des penseurs et des responsables religieux *éclairés*"[567] — employing a favorite descriptor of the previous regime, with a subtly modified definition. The ministry contended that it was not policing imams' "ideological orientations," but rather ensuring their respect for the law and "les spécificités de la société tunisienne"; Salafī preachers were just as welcome as anyone else, as long as they abided by the criteria.[568] One journalist gave voice to the many Tunisians who saw the entire construct as an impossible contradiction:

> comment les imams-prédicateurs salafistes peuvent-ils respecter les spécificités de la société tunisienne, son mode de vie, ainsi que les institutions républicaines de l'État, et prêcher en même temps les dogmes salafistes? N'y a-t-il pas un paradoxe à soulever? … Il entrera en contradiction de fait avec les fondamentaux de l'État tunisien, telles la démocratie, la tolérance…. L'islam d'orientation salafiste est en contradiction totale avec l'islam malékite modéré, réformé, tunisien…. Comment peut-on considérer alors que les orientations idéologiques des imams ne soient pas du ressort de l'État? Comment accepter des prêches de *takfīr*, d'appels à la haine, des prêches qui prétendent que la démocratie est *kufr*, une mécréance?[569]

If Khadmi had intended his gambit to lead to détente between the Nahḍah government and more revolutionary Islamist preachers (and their supporters), events on the ground steered in another direction. In early 2012 the Egyptian imam Wajdī Ghunaym embarked on a highly publicized preaching tour through Tunisia. The press reported extensively on Ghunaym's sermons in major cities (including at Ridha Jaouadi's mosque in Sfax) in which the imam urged Tunisia to implement the *sharī'ah* and lambasted the country's secularists as "ceux qui détestent Dieu, détestent la religion, détestent l'Islam et le combattent, des criminels qui combattent le hijab et le

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discours religieux conformément au référentiel tunisien." "Refus du ministère des affaires religieuses de l'occupation des tribunes de prêche des mosquées," Tunis Afrique Presse, July 14, 2012.

[567] "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses annonce une stratégie pour la nomination des prédicateurs." Emphasis mine.

[568] Hella Habib [Lahbib], "Bras de fer autour de la gestion du sacré," *La Presse de Tunisie*, June 20, 2012, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/51544.

[569] Ibid. Romanization adjusted.

niqab et qui assiègent les mosquées."[570] Some 30 civil-society organizations sought an injunction to interrupt Ghunaym's tour and addressed an open letter to the government, citing in particular his rhetoric tantamount to *takfīr* against democrats as a case of incitement. Surely, the letter argued, his speech represented "l'exploitation illégale des mosquées pour la diffusion de discours obscurantistes … en contradiction avec l'esprit et l'essence même de notre religion, mais aussi tout à fait en rupture totale avec notre patrimoine culturel et civilisationnel."[571] A group of lawyers also filed a complaint alleging "l'utilisation des mosquées à des fins politiques" and "une atteinte à la souveraineté de la Tunisie."[572]

In offering policy responses, President Moncef Marzouki placed particular emphasis on the practice of *takfīr*, which he linked to violence: "Il ne sera toléré à quiconque d'imposer ses opinions par la violence, de traiter autrui de mécréant et de porter atteinte à tout citoyen tunisien pour ses choix idéologiques ou politiques quels qu'ils soient."[573] Marzouki advised the Assembly to criminalize *takfīr*.[574] He also drew a line in terms of peaching: "Il ne sera pas permis à quiconque de s'autoproclamer détenteur d'une autorité religieuse."[575] The position of Marzouki, head of a social-democratic party, appeared to converge with that of the Naḥḍah government in drawing *takfīr* outside the bounds of normativity: Khadmi, too, enjoined Salafīs to abandon the practice at the risk of destabilizing society. Rather, the minister suggested, Salafīs should "mieux maîtriser les sciences" and "mieux faire connaître les préceptes de la religion islamique, particulièrement les valeurs de tolérance et de modération."[576] Yet explicit criminalization by the state evidently was a step too far for al-Naḥḍah, and the legislature did not take up such a measure. Abū 'Iyāḍ, a militant Salafī leader, reacted with derision and, caustically, further *takfīr*: "Cette proposition fait rire…. Marzouki ne comprend rien à la charia. Je dis qu'il est un mécréant et, même s'il propose

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[570] "Wajdi Ghenim prône l'instauration de la chariâa en Tunisie (vidéo)," Business News, February 14, 2012, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,520,29322,3.

[571] Taïeb Lajili, "Levée de boucliers de la société civile," *Le Temps*, February 17, 2012, https://www.turess.com/fr/letemps/63587.

[572] "Un prêcheur radical égyptien relance les craintes des 'modernistes'," Agence France Presse, February 15, 2012.

[573] "Tunisie : le président Marzouki lance un avertissement aux fondamentalistes," Radio-Canada, March 12, 2012, https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/553393/tunisie-marzouki-salafistes-drapeau.

[574] Isabelle Mandraud, "Les cent jours de Moncef Marzouki," *Le Monde*, March 23, 2012.

[575] Seif Soudani, "Marzouki prononce un discours fondateur d'une stature présidentielle," *Le Courrier de l'Atlas*, March 12, 2012, https://www.lecourrierdelatlas.com/no-data-tunisie-marzouki-prononce-un-discours-fondateur-d-une-stature-presidentielle-2204/.

[576] "El-Khademi appelle les salafistes à ne pas accuser les gens de mécréance," Tunis Afrique Presse, March 3, 2012, https://www.turess.com/fr/tapfr/120430.

1,000 ou 100,000 lois, c'est la charia qui décide."[577]

The *sharī'ah* would, in fact, present the next challenge to state control of Islamic discourse. As the process of drafting a constitution got underway, al-Nahḍah's leadership made a pragmatic decision not to press for a reference to the *sharī'ah* in the document.[578] From a Salafī perspective, though, the choice constituted a betrayal of the very purpose of an Islamist party.[579] A series of audacious Salafī protests and street violence had already taken place when Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī, the *amīr* of al-Qā'idah, released a statement excoriating al-Nahḍah for "inventing an Islam (*yabtakiruna islāman*)" with "no *sharī'ah*, no Qur'ān, no *sunnah*." Al-Ẓawāhirī mocked the party's "moderate, illuminated, middle Islam (*al-islām al-mu'tadil al-mustanīr al-wasaṭī*)," which he deprecated as a futile attempt to separate religion from politics. He called upon Tunisians: "the masks have fallen and the faces have been unveiled, so rise up to support your *sharī'ah*. Incite your people to a popular uprising (*habbah sha'bīyah da'wīyah*)."[580] Several days of severe rioting ensued across the country until decisive police action and negotiations between al-Nahḍah and Salafī groups achieved a truce.[581]

In an effort to tamp down tensions, Noureddine Khadmi personally returned to al-Fatḥ in Tunis to deliver a *khuṭbah* appealing to the "unité du peuple tunisien" and warned of "la sédition."[582] The minister also, for the first time, described the "instrumentalisation politique ou idéologique des mosquées" as a "ligne rouge qu'il est interdit de transgresser."[583] A spiral nevertheless seemed to be afoot, with ousters of imams continuing unabated — and not only at

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[577] Mandraud.

[578] Zeghal writes that, aside from the political calculus around a coalition government and steadfast liberal opposition, the party was able to rationalize its decision out of a "recognition that the institutions of the modern state made the implementation of a Muslim state conceivable" — along the lines sketched above — "without recourse to shari'a in the constitution." Malika Zeghal, "Constitutionalizing a Democratic Muslim State without Shari'a: The Religious Establishment in the Tunisian 2014 Constitution," in *Shari'a Law and Modern Muslim Ethics*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 112–13.

[579] "All Salafists are clearly opposed to any form of democracy that is outside the bounds of sharia law. In this sense they approve of democratic mechanisms of representation as long as the legislative outcomes are not in contradiction with sharia." Fabio Merone and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafist Movement and Sheikh-ism in the Tunisian Democratic Transition," *Middle East Law and Governance* 5, no. 3 (2013): 327–28.

[580] "As-Saḥāb Media Presents a New Video Message from al-Qā'idah's Dr. Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī: 'Oh People of Tunisia Support Your Sharī'ah'," Jihadology, June 11, 2012, http://bit.ly/zawahiri.

[581] "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," 3.

[582] "Sécurité renforcée et appel au calme dans les mosquées ce vendredi," Agence France Presse, June 15, 2012.

[583] "Al-Khademi met en garde contre toute instrumentalisation politique ou idéologique des mosquées," Tunis Afrique Presse, June 13, 2012, https://www.babnet.net/cadredetail-50655.asp.

small, local mosques but even at the Great Mosque of Sfax.[584] An advisor to Khadmi announced that the phase of "flexibility" following the revolution had ended and that the ministry was moving "at full speed" to apply the law, with recourse to the security services if necessary;[585] another advisor flatly stated that "anyone who does not recognize the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs over the mosques will be referred to the judiciary."[586] Enforcement now proceeded: a preacher who called the security services "apostates" during a Friday sermon, for example, was arrested for incitement.[587] At Zaytūnah, Houcine Laabidi issued his infamous tirade against artists who had "insulted" the Prophet at an exhibition near Tunis, thrice condemning a blasphemer as "kāfirun bi-ṣarīḥ al-naṣṣ yuhdaru damuhu wa-yuqtal": a heretic (deviant, apostate), according to explicit texts, whose blood is shed with impunity and who is killed.[588] In response, the ministry banned Laabidi from preaching. Clearly he had crossed the "ligne rouge," for the ministry had only a month earlier "regularized" his incumbency — indicating that an additional criterion of qualification, a rhetorical criterion, was under construction.

Unrest crescendoed through Ramaḍān in the summer of 2012, with numerous clashes among Salafī groups and between Salafīs and supporters of al-Nahḍah,[589] as it became evident that the government would not satisfy Salafī demands — in terms of both the place of Islam in society (most pointedly around the status of the *sharī'ah*) and the specific matter of state control of religious speech.[590] In September, just days after a similar incident in Benghazi, Libya, the United States embassy in Tunis was attacked by a crowd of rioters with the participation and possible coordination of Abū 'Iyāḍ's group, Anṣār al-Sharī'ah. Following the attack, Abū 'Iyāḍ brazenly delivered a sermon — at Khadmi's al-Fatḥ mosque, no less — decrying Tunisia's "new

[584] "Violence à la Grande Mosquée de Sfax."

[585] Habib [Lahbib], "Bras de fer autour de la gestion du sacré."

[586] "Mustashār wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah lil-Shurūq: 100 masjid khārij 'an al-sayṭarah wa-14 milaff uḥīlat 'alá al-qaḍā'," Marsad, Centre pour la gouvernance du secteur de la sécurité, October 17, 2012, http://bit.ly/mustashar-wazir.

[587] "L'Imam de la mosquée « Erahma » à Jendouba arrêté pour incitation à la violence contre les agents de l'ordre," Tunisie Numérique, June 18, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-limam-de-la-mosquee-erahma-a-jendouba-arrete-pour-incitation-a-la-violence-contre-les-agents-de-lordre/.

[588] "Imām jāmi' al-Zaytūnah yad'ū ilá ihdār dam fannānī ma'riḍ al-'Abdillīyah," Tunisie Numérique, June 15, 2012, http://bit.ly/fannani; "Imām al-Zaytūnah yad'ū ilá ihdār dam fannānī ma'riḍ al-'Abdillīyah," Tounes Arrakmia (YouTube), June 15, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2bpS8ZGPw0.

[589] "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," 3.

[590] "Attempts by Noureddine Khademi to implement a type of semi-independent religious sphere in practice … intersected with a conflict … with those Islamist activists, especially Salafists, who did not recognize any type of state tutelage at all." Donker and Netterstrøm, 147.

dictatorship … based upon the creation of an imaginary enemy (*bi-ījādi ʿadūwin mawhūm*), the Salafī movement."[591] He would later label the government *ṭāghūt*, a classical Islamic term that denotes "tyrannical Muslim rulers" who "have fallen into disbelief by failing to rule by the *shariʿa*" and therefore "should be fought and removed."[592] Abū ʿIyāḍ's deployment of such labels marked the irruption of transnational *jihādī* discourse (and tactics) into the field of Tunisian domestic politics.[593]

The embassy attack is widely regarded in retrospect as a "turning point in the relationship between Ennahda and the Salafists,"[594] although this judgement primarily refers to the security response by the Ministry of the Interior. For its part, the Ministry of Religious Affairs again rebuked the "unlawful conduct on the side of the Salafists" and promised that "the non-partisanship of mosques would be more closely supervised."[595] However, the problem now extended far beyond the pulpits. Contestation was ceaseless: when Al-Nahḍah insisted upon "la neutralité des mosquées,"[596] an imam retorted that the imposition of "neutrality" was a way to suppress political Islam[597] and threatened that the "whole country would be set on fire" if the party continued to push

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[591] "Intervention d'Abou Iyadh à la mosquée Al Fatah," Tixup TV (Vimeo), September 18, 2012, https://vimeo.com/49672240. He said elsewhere that the Salafī movement was the "victime d'une répression systématique." "Tunisie: un imam appelle à la guerre contre le gouvernement," *L'Express*, November 2, 2012, https://lexpansion.lexpress.fr/actualites/1/actualite-economique/tunisie-un-imam-appelle-a-la-guerre-contre-le-gouvernement_1182430.html. "Ennahdha inflige à Ansar Chariâa les mêmes pratiques dont elle a été victime il y a des années," wrote one self-professed member of the militant group. "Dans la peau d'un salafiste d'Ansar Chariâa," Business News, August 30, 2013, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,519,40464,1.

[592] Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 90–91. *Ṭāghūt* originally referred to an idol or false god. Among others, Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī "considers man-made laws and their legislators to be other gods" and therefore "refers to them as *ṭawāghīt*." This designation of rulers/governments as essentially *kuffār* allows militant ideologues and leaders to call for *jihād* against them. Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 66–68.

[593] Stefano Maria Torelli, "A Portrait of Tunisia's Ansar al-Shari'a Leader Abu Iyad al-Tunisi: His Strategy on Jihad," *Militant Leadership Monitor* 4, no. 8 (2013).

[594] Donker, "Re-emerging Islamism," 220. A senior member of government called it "the end of the game" in which the *deuxième république* would go out of its way to protect everyone's rights of expression. Karin Brulliard, "In Tunisia, Embassy Attack Tests Fledgling Democracy," *The Washington Post*, September 20, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-tunisia-embassy-attack-tests-fledgling-democracy/2012/09/20/19f3986a-0273-11e2-8102-ebee9c66e190_story.html.

[595] Donker, "Re-emerging Islamism," 220.

[596] "Ennahdha favorable à la neutralité des mosquées, des syndicats, des lycées et des maisons de culture," Business News, March 1, 2013, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,520,36629,3.

[597] "Un imam affirme que la neutralité des mosquées est une 'idée diabolique'," Algérie1, January 27, 2013, https://www.algerie1.com/index.php/actualite/tunisie-un-imam-affirme-que-la-neutralite-des-mosquees-est-uneidee-diabolique-video.

the policy.[598] Another imam proclaimed on television that he was preparing his funeral shroud, and that the youth should do the same, in advance of "waging war" on al-Nahḍah.[599] From another direction, Fadhel Achour, head of a large union representing imams, denounced the government for its inaction against *takfīr* in the mosques[600] and its failure to "put an end to religious extremism."[601]

Khadmi's vocabulary did change, albeit slowly: in addition to "la sédition," he came to admonish "le fanatisme" and "un discours extrémiste qui incite à la haine et au désordre et appelle à la violence ainsi qu'à se rebeller contre la loi."[602] Ghannouchi, too, staked out his own red line as to what was and was not Tunisian, insisting that

> there will be no ground in Tunisia for religious extremism. According to Ennahda's leader, Tunisia features a specifically moderate Islamic legacy that reconciles Islam with modernity, by contrast with the global and sometimes violent approach of many Salafists. By suggesting that Salafism is a phenomenon that is foreign to the country with little social base inside it, Ghannouchi asserts that Ennahda is the true heir to Tunisian Islam.[603]

These leaders' recourse to labels like *extrémiste* and *takfīr*, though, was never as ready as, say, Achour's, given al-Nahḍah's general aversion to the heavy hand of the state in the religious domain. The party adhered to its "accommodationist approach," premised on the fear that "cracking down on young Salafis or demonizing them [would] … only serve to further marginalize and isolate them."[604] Accordingly, Khadmi focused on dialogue, the policy of "regularization," and a determination to avoid "ideological policing." In comparison with his predecessor, Khadmi's rhetoric markedly de-emphasized ideational boundaries (moderation, political speech); yet his

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[598] "L'imam Salmi menace de mettre le feu au pays en cas d'application de la neutralité des mosquées," Business News, January 26, 2013, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,534,35907,3.

[599] "Tunisie: un imam appelle à la guerre contre le gouvernement."

[600] "Top Tunisia Imam Calls Eid Strike," Magharebia, October 1, 2013.

[601] "Des imams observent la prière funéraire pour le gouvernement de Lâarayedh," Tunisie Numérique, October 23, 2013, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-des-imams-observent-la-priere-funeraire-pour-le-gouvernement-de-laarayedh/.

[602] "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses met en garde les extrémistes contre l'incitation à la haine," Tunisie Numérique, September 19, 2012, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses-met-en-garde-les-extremistes-contre-lincitation-a-la-haine/.

[603] Wolf, "Islamist Renaissance," 568. Similarly, Abdelfattah Mourou described "radical Salafis" as "invaders": "Report on 'Secular' Salafism, 'Jihadist' Salafism in Tunisia," BBC Monitoring, May 22, 2013.

[604] Monica Marks, "Ennahda's Rule of Engagement," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 18, 2012, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/49728.

focus instead on matters of state control (sedition, rebellion, social cohesion, the rule of law) certainly encouraged the perception among some Salafīs of an all-too-familiar securitized discourse — the "new dictatorship."

A series of blows over the course of 2013 steadily eroded the viability of the Nahḍah coalition. After the assassination of the human-rights attorney and party chairman Chokri Belaïd, Khadmi again returned to al-Fatḥ to preach "reconciliation,"[605] but there was little mood: in light of massive demonstrations, much of the government resigned. After the assassination of the Assembly member Mohamed Brahmi, opposition parliamentarians resigned and, amid further protests, the Assembly president suspended the body's activities. In both cases, accusations arose that the victims had been the targets of *takfīr* during sermons prior to their murders.[606] (Both assassinations were eventually claimed by a member of the Islamic State organization who taunted the Tunisian government with the language of *ṭāghūt*[607] and threatened further violence "as long as Tunisia does not apply Islamic law."[608]) Al-Nahḍah released a statement calling upon the "youth of Tunisia" to respect Islamic moderation, which eschews *takfīr* and bloodletting ("tatawajjahu ilá shabāb Tūnis bi-al-daʿwah ilá al-iltizām bi-fikr al-iʿtidāl wa-manhaj al-wasaṭīyah al-islāmīyah allatī tarfiḍu al-takfīr wa-al-tawarruṭ fī al-dimāʾ wa-al-nayl min al-aʿrāḍ").[609] Rhetorical injunctions, however, were increasingly seen as insufficient to stem the tide of violence.

Constitutionalizing takfīr

To rescue the National Constituent Assembly from paralysis, the group of civil-society organizations known as the National Dialogue Quartet hosted inter-party negotiations that

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[605] "Le ministre tunisien des Affaires religieuses, Noureddine El Khademi, lors d'un preche a la mosquee Jamaa El Fath de Tunis," Alamy, February 15, 2013, http://bit.ly/ministre-preche.

[606] Comité pour le respect des libertés et des droits de l'homme en Tunisie, "Une année après l'assassinat de Chokri Belaïd : L'énigme reste entière," February 10, 2014; "Zouheir Hamdi : Le gouvernement et Ennahdha sont responsables de l'assassinat de M. Brahmi," Directinfo, July 25, 2013, https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2013/07/25/zouheir-hamdi-le-gouvernement-et-ennahdha-sont-responsables-de-lassassinat-de-m-brahim/; Pieter Stockmans, "Imam or Politician?," August 25, 2015, https://pieterstockmansorg.wordpress.com/2015/08/25/tunisia-blog/.

[607] "Des jihadistes revendiquent les assassinats d'opposants tunisiens de 2013," France 24, December 18, 2014, https://www.france24.com/fr/20141218-tunisie-jihadistes-revendiquent-assassinats-politiques-2013-belaid-brahmi.

[608] "Tunisie : des djihadistes ralliés à l'EI revendiquent l'assassinat de deux opposants," *Le Monde*, December 18, 2014, https://www.lemonde.fr/tunisie/article/2014/12/18/tunisie-des-djihadistes-rallies-a-l-ei-revendiquent-l-assassinat-de-deux-opposants_4543261_1466522.html.

[609] "Ḥarakat al-Nahḍah: al-qatalah yastaḥiqqūna ʿiqāban ṣariman fī mustawá jarīmatihim," *Al-Tūnisīyah*, February 27, 2013, https://www.turess.com/attounissia/83077.

produced a roadmap for, among other things, completing Tunisia's new constitution. (The Quartet would later receive the Nobel Peace Prize for its achievements.) The Assembly spent the month of January 2014 voting on the final draft, article by article. On January 4, the body took up Article 1, which read:

> La Tunisie est un État libre, indépendant et souverain, l'Islam est sa religion, l'arabe sa langue et la République son régime.

> Tūnis dawlah ḥurrah, mustaqillah, dhāt siyādah, al-islām dīnuhā, wa-al-ʿarabīyah lughatuhā, wa-al-jumhūrīyah niẓāmuhā.

The Assembly adopted the article after rejecting amendments to add "et la source principale de sa législation" after "l'Islam est sa religion," and to add the line "Le Coran et la Sunna sont les sources principales de sa législation."[610] (In line with its earlier decision on the *sharīʿah*, al-Nahḍah's leadership opposed these amendments, "explain[ing] that the language of Article 1 adequately affirmed Tunisia's Arab-Islamic identity, and reiterat[ing] the party's hope that this identity would permeate the rest of the constitution."[611])

Later that same day, the body took up Article 6, which read:

> L'État est gardien de la religion. Il garantit la liberté de conscience et de croyance et le libre exercice du culte. Il est le protecteur du sacré, garant de la neutralité des mosquées et lieux de culte par rapport à toute instrumentalisation partisane.

> Al-dawlah rāʿiyah lil-dīn, kāfilah li-ḥurrīyat al-muʿtaqad wa-al-ḍamīr wa-mumārasat al-shaʿāʾir al-dīnīyah, ḥāmiyah lil-muqaddasāt, ḍāminah li-ḥiyād al-masājid wa-dawr al-ʿibādah ʿan al-tawẓīf al-ḥizbī.

Again the Assembly voted down amendments, including a proposal to remove "la liberté de conscience," and approved the article as a whole.[612] However, in the course of the debate on freedom of conscience — understood to protect the right of disbelief — Nahḍah member Habib Ellouze accused Mongi Rahoui, a member from the late Chokri Belaïd's party, of being an "enemy

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[610] "Votes sur la constitution," Marsad (Al-Bawṣala), 2014, https://anc.majles.marsad.tn/fr/votes/constitution. On al-Nahḍah's internal dynamics vis-à-vis this vote, see Sharan Grewal, "From Islamists to Muslim Democrats: The Case of Tunisia's Ennahdha," Princeton University, February 24, 2018, 11–13, https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/grewal/files/grewal_seculardiffusion_1.pdf.

[611] Feuer, *Regulating Islam*, 188.

[612] "Votes sur la constitution."

of Islam."[613] The comment set off a firestorm, especially after security officials disclosed that Rahoui had received death threats as a result of the charge. Opposition members quickly introduced an amendment adding a second paragraph to Article 6: "Sont prohibés l'accusation d'apostasie et l'incitation à la violence. / Yuḥjaru al-takfīr wa-al-taḥrīḍ ʿalá al-ʿunf." The amendment passed the following day by a wide margin.[614]

Religious leaders reacted strongly, with some imams declaring the amendment itself to be *kufr* (heresy[615]) and the *muftī* of the republic denouncing the Assembly's removal of a "pillar" of Islam.[616] The Ministry of Religious Affairs complained that it had not been consulted in the matter; Noureddine Khadmi said that the state, as *gardien de la religion*, could not also forbid *takfīr*, and called for a compromise.[617] The second paragraph was renegotiated and on January 23 the Assembly adopted a new version, again by a wide margin:

> L'État s'engage à diffuser les valeurs de modération et de tolérance, à protéger les sacrés de toute violation, à proscrire l'accusation d'apostasie et l'incitation à la haine et à la violence et à s'y opposer.

> Taltazimu al-dawlah bi-nashr qiyam al-iʿtidāl wa-al-tasāmuḥ wa-bi-ḥimāyat al-muqaddasāt wa-manʿ al-nayl minhā, kamā taltazimu bi-manʿ daʿwāt al-takfīr wa-al-taḥrīḍ ʿalá al-karāhiyah wa-al-ʿunf wa-bi-al-taṣaddá li-hā.[618]

The Assembly's compromise still forbade *takfīr*, meaning that Khadmi's contradiction ended up unresolved yet codified. From another perspective, though, Khadmi's objection was not so much that the text was contradictory in nature — after all, for centuries the *ʿulamāʾ* had both

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[613] Bouazza Ben Bouazza, "Death Threats Delay Tunisian Constitution Vote," Associated Press, January 6, 2014, https://apnews.com/article/4a143b1c5d5845c2991fedf69dba864e; "Tunisia Constitution Debate Halted after 'Death Threat'," Al Arabiya, January 5, 2014, https://english.alarabiya.net/News/africa/2014/01/05/Tunisia-constitution-debate-halted-after-death-threat-.

[614] "Votes sur la constitution."

[615] Following Taylor, 198. See also Lewis, 58–60.

[616] Amna Guellali, "Liberté d'expression et interdiction de l'atteinte au sacré dans la nouvelle Constitution tunisienne," Human Rights Watch, January 27, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2014/01/27/liberte-dexpression-et-interdiction-de-latteinte-au-sacre-dans-la-nouvelle.

[617] "Noureddine Khademi opposé à la criminalisation du 'takfir'," Kapitalis, January 22, 2014, http://www.kapitalis.com/politique/20256-tunisie-politique-noureddine-khademi-oppose-a-la-criminalisation-du-takfir.html.

[618] "Votes sur la constitution."

acted as *gardiens de la religion* and circumscribed the destabilizing practice of *takfīr*.[619] Rather, what troubled the minister and his allies was *the migration of the discourse* of *takfīr* from the *‘ulamā’* to the state. Khadmi's statement shows that he conceptualized the state as guarding the discourses of Islam but not intervening in their content: in other words, he anticipated that the *‘ulamā’* would continue to formulate Islamic knowledge (truth) and that the state would protect this system from "external" threats (to include contestation by "deviant" Muslims). The Assembly, however, acting for the state as arbiter of Islamic legitimacy, had identified *takfīr* as a unique threat to social order and had determined to render it deviant, a component of the "radical" discourse that the state and its official moderation could not tolerate. This change in authorities, this new configuration of power, represented a further shift away from the *‘ulamā’* and *turāth* and toward the ever-centralizing state, to such a degree that even Khadmi, a champion of establishmentarianism, could not acquiesce.

Yet al-Nahḍah largely endorsed the criminalization of *takfīr*, voting 53–11 with 14 abstentions on the initial version and 70–3 with 8 abstentions on the compromise.[620] Ellouze's fellow Nahḍah members in the Assembly roundly denounced his outburst and offered prayers for Rahoui's safety.[621] The transfer of the discourse of *takfīr* from the religious to the political — or, put another way, the redrawing of the boundary between religion and politics such that *takfīr* now fell on the latter side — thus represented another in the series of cross-party consensuses that characterized Tunisia's democratic transition. It followed the consensus constructed around Article 1 without a reference to the *sharī‘ah*,[622] the consensus on the necessity of a democratic republic,[623] and the consensus on state organization of religion.[624] But the formation of "consensus," too, represents an act of definition and therefore inherently excludes some points of view.

Nadia Marzouki and Hamza Meddeb caution that "the widespread celebration of consensus

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[619] Camilla Adang et al., eds., *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 12–14.

[620] "Votes sur la constitution."

[621] "'God protect our colleague, his wife and children. If one hair on Mongi Rahoui's head is touched, we will all bear responsibility,' Yamina Zoghlami, a member of Ennahda, told the chamber, calling her colleague's comments 'catastrophic.'" Ben Bouazza.

[622] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 260.

[623] Ibid., 255.

[624] On the opposing interpretations submerged in this "consensus," see Malika Zeghal, "The Implicit Sharia: Established Religion and Varieties of Secularism in Tunisia," in *Varieties of Religious Establishment*, ed. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan and Lori G. Beaman (London: Ashgate, 2013), 126–29.

… does not merely reflect an objective balance of power among political forces. It also contributes to naturalizing an interpretation of Tunisian politics in which dissent is a threat to national unity rather than an ingredient of democracy."[625] In analyzing patterns of governance after the revolution, they find a politics "based on the neutralization of dissent much more than on a positive consent to an ideology," in which situation "the narrative of Tunisian modernity functions as an ideology by default."[626] The rhetorical continuities we have explored attest to the persistence of that narrative. Likewise, Nahḍah lawmakers not only justified their support for Article 6 with reference to *l'ordre public*; they also accepted that the compromise text constitutionalized the labels of official Islam that had been mainstays of modernist state rhetoric since independence — *modération, tolérance, la neutralité des mosquées*. As components of *tunisianité* or *al-huwīyah al-tūnisīyah*, these descriptors "became an unavoidable frame for all political forces wanting to create the possibilities for political compromise."[627] On the other hand, they also served to signal that "Salafists, mainly but certainly not exclusively represented within the lower social strata, remained and remain largely outside the scope of this 'deal,'" and that Salafī practices would continue to be "depicted as an imported religiosity that does not [form] part of the Tunisian identity."[628] These types of "consensus," then, are self-reinforcing in that they represent "a form of closure," advancing "a certain definition of who belongs and who does not belong to the Tunisian nation," with Salafīs to a significant extent on the outside.[629] In turn, those Salafī actors reject the "consensus" as "an institutional democratic compromise" unable to "radically change social relations in Tunisia because it is fundamentally a bourgeois pact."[630] These mechanisms of social and political exclusion give rise to the sensation of disenfranchisement or marginalization (*tahmīsh*)[631] as well as the perception of a failed revolution and, *à la* Abū ʿIyāḍ, "a new

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[625] Marzouki and Meddeb, 119.

[626] Ibid., 128.

[627] Zemni, 133.

[628] Ibid., 146. On class aspects of this social divide and the rise of Anṣār al-Sharīʿah, see Fabio Merone, "Enduring Class Struggle in Tunisia: The Fight for Identity beyond Political Islam," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015).

[629] Zemni, 149.

[630] Merone and Cavatorta, 319. Zemni also observes how Salafīs distance themselves from the symbolic repertoire of consensus in that "all movements, parties and civil society organizations ostensibly used the Tunisian flag to embed their claims and grievances… with the notable exception of the Salafists — who used their black and white flag with the *shahada*," thereby rejecting a shared "discursive patriotism." Zemni, 141.

[631] Merone and Cavatorta, 326.

authoritarian discourse on unity that hampers pluralism and diversity so as to pre-empt any alternative political project."[632]

Given that concepts of political belonging and of religious belonging continue to be so closely associated, the exclusion of the Salafī identity possesses a particular potency in that it "[marries] discourse on the limits of the political community to discourse on the limits of the religious community."[633] Not coincidentally, *takfīr* and its proscription function in the same way, by controlling who may determine who is a *kāfir* and therefore who is a Muslim.[634] Here we may refer back to the observation that some discourses "enable new knowledges and difference(s)" and thereby "potentially offer sites where hegemonic practices can be contested, challenged and resisted," while others, with the "status and currency of truth … constrain the production of knowledge, dissent and difference."[635] In taking control of the discourse of *takfīr*, the state works to transform it from the former category to the latter, in effect foreclosing it as a potential site of resistance. What principally generates contestation, as we saw with Khadmi, is the state's assertion of its authority to do so, more than the content of *takfīr* as a "doctrine" *per se*. Solidifying this new relationship of power — this *orthodoxy* — helps the state to shape not only Islamic normativity but also the political field[636] and the boundaries of the nation itself. Furthermore, it advances the state's monopolistic claim to be the only actor who can make those determinations, and is therefore a means of centralization. This tool is especially valuable "in moments of high contingency, when the question of belonging is paramount"[637] — whether amid the "fugitive democracy" of a revolution[638] or the critical juncture of a constitutional process.[639]

Resistance on this point, R. I. Moore has taught us, is the genesis of an exclusionary label like "heretic," and we can observe as much in the ensuing practices of governing. Upon ratification

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[632] Zemni, 150.

[633] Ian M. Hartshorn and Stacey Philbrick Yadav, "(Re)Constituting Community: Takfir and Institutional Design in Tunisia and Yemen," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (2018): 973.

[634] Ibid. Note also that in Tunisia the *muftī* of the republic, a state employee, must certify conversions to Islam.

[635] Recalling Pinkus, above.

[636] Hartshorn and Philbrick Yadav, 972.

[637] Ibid., 980.

[638] Zeghal, "Competing Ways of Life," 254, citing Sheldon Wolin.

[639] Hartshorn and Philbrick Yadav, 972–74. These are finite "moments" in time, of course, but as discussed above the assertion of monopoly is incessant. Zemni, citing Sofia Näsström, points out that "the constitution of the people, then, should not be seen as a historical event … that once and for all defines what the people is but rather as an ongoing claim." Zemni, 147.

of the constitution, the Naḥḍah-led coalition resigned and a technocratic government took office. Mounir Tlili replaced Noureddine Khadmi as minister of religious affairs and quickly faced criticism from the security services over his ministry's "lack of cooperation" with regard to *la crise des mosquées*.[640] The Ministry of the Interior now took the initiative of tallying the number of mosques "under *takfīrī* control" (counting 380, as opposed to the final figure of 50 generically "out of state control" given by Khadmi's administration); moreover, it submitted to Tlili a list of imams whom it had designated as "extremist" and "*takfīrī*" for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to dismiss.[641] From this point forward the descriptor *takfīrī*, practically nonexistent in public statements and press accounts prior to 2014, regularly accompanied the standard repertoire of *extrémistes*, *radicaux*, *salafistes*, *barbus*, and so on. Tlili, already comfortable speaking of "la lutte contre la mouvance extrémiste pour sauver le pays du terrorisme,"[642] also adopted language expressing the need to "combat the subversive discourse of *takfīr*" in order to "purify the religion."[643] While Tlili read the new constitution to guarantee imams' right to speak on matters of public interest, including politics ("al-dustūr ḍamina lil-a'immah mu'ālajat qaḍāyā al-sha'n al-'āmm wa-kull mā lahu ṣilah bi-ḥayātinā al-'āmmah tarbawīyan wa-ijtimā'īyan wa-siyāsīyan"), he also affirmed that the ministry upheld red lines that, if crossed ("tajāwaza al-ḥadd al-masmūḥ"), would trigger an investigation under a three-strikes policy.[644]

By criminalizing *takfīr* — and by extension "rhetoric *perceived* to constitute *takfīr*,"[645] like Wajdī Ghunaym's — Article 6 converted it into a legal designation and the principal yardstick by which the state could gauge the radicalism or extremism of an imam. This development was

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[640] "L. Ben Jeddou: Le ministère des Affaires religieuses n'a pas été coopératif dans le contrôle des mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, February 23, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-l-ben-jeddou-le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses-na-pas-ete-cooperatif-dans-le-controle-des-mosquees/.

[641] "Le ministère de l'intérieur dresse une liste des imams à limoger," Tunisie Numérique, March 2, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-ministere-de-linterieur-dresse-une-liste-des-imams-a-limoger/.

[642] "Le ministre des affaires religieuses veut reprendre le contrôle des mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, February 19, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses-veut-reprendre-le-controle-des-mosquees/.

[643] "Mounir Tlili : Il ne peut y avoir de sécurité globale sans l'éradication du terrorisme," Directinfo, March 4, 2014, https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2014/03/04/mounir-tlili-il-ne-peut-y-avoir-de-securite-globale-sans-leradication-du-terrorisme/.

[644] Sonia Brinsi, "Munīr al-Talīlī (wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah) li-« al-Tūnisīyah »: ḥarraranā 108 masājid …. wa-112 buniyat bi-lā tarkhīṣ," *Al-Tūnisīyah*, July 18, 2014, https://www.turess.com/attounissia/129300. Tlili said that "hunāka a'immah … taḥt anẓar al-wizārah, mu'akkadan annahu lan yasmaḥu bi-tamrīr ayy khuṭab mutashaddidah." "Wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah: Tūnis dawlah islāmīyah wa-'alá al-jamī' murā'āt dhālika," Ḥaqā'iq, March 9, 2014, http://bit.ly/wazir-khutab.

[645] Hartshorn and Philbrick Yadav, 974.

advantageous to state control because *takfīr*, a speech act, is a bounded and observable event, and thus can serve to ground the subjective categorization of "radical" in something tangible and indeed legible.[646] As Tlili, still keen to avoid the impression of ideological policing, said: "We do not judge any person except through behavior, and if it is substantiated that someone is advocating extremist thought, we will take measures against him."[647] The chief method of substantiation was now *takfīr* and its attendant rhetorical complex (*ṭāghūt*, etc.), although the state now had to confront the question of how far this complex extended, as we will see. Importantly, criminalization also placed *takfīr* within the ambit of the Ministry of the Interior, allowing law enforcement (rather than *'ulamā'*) to classify not only certain forms of speech as *takfīr* but also certain religious figures as *takfīrī* and therefore excludable.

Government action on *la crise* accordingly came to rest with an *ad hoc* commission including the Ministries of the Interior, Religious Affairs, and Justice, which triaged the outstanding *takfīrī* mosques and assigned new "imams réputés modérés" at a pace of 15 to 19 per week.[648] The government even seemed to encourage a public countdown with regular announcements of how many mosques had been recovered recently,[649] maps showing target mosques by province,[650] and press conferences to broadcast the nomination of new imams.[651] The explicit intention was to secure a "favorable climate" for elections due in the autumn,[652] linking the efforts against *takfīr* to the principle of "la neutralité des mosquées et lieux de culte par rapport à toute instrumentalisation partisane." The government also operationalized *la neutralité* itself as

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[646] In the sense of "legibility" as explored in James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[647] Brinsi. Considering this comment in juxtaposition to *innamā al-a'māl bi-al-niyyāt* is unavoidable.

[648] "Plan d'action pour reprendre 149 mosquées," Directinfo, March 11, 2014, https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2014/03/11/tunisie-plan-daction-pour-reprendre-en-main-149-mosquees/.

[649] "Le ministère des affaires religieuses reprend le contrôle des mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, April 2, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses-reprend-le-controle-des-mosquees/; "Mounir Telili : 90 mosquées toujours hors contrôle de l'État," Tunisie Numérique, May 3, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-mounir-telili-90-mosquees-toujours-hors-controle-de-letat/; "Le ministère des Affaires religieuses récupère le contrôle de 100 mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, June 16, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses-recupere-le-controle-de-100-mosquees/.

[650] "Classées « dangereuses » : la carte des 149 mosquées échappant au contrôle de l'État," Webdo, March 10, 2014, https://www.webdo.tn/2014/03/10/classees-dangereuses-la-carte-des-149-mosquees-echappant-au-controle-de-letat/.

[651] Khalil Abdelmoumen, "15 mosquées reviennent dans le giron de l'État," Webdo, April 7, 2014, https://www.webdo.tn/2014/04/07/15-mosquees-reviennent-giron-letat/.

[652] Ibid.; "98 mosquées contrôlées par des extrémistes reviennent dans le giron de L'État," Tunisie Numérique, June 1, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-98-mosquees-controlees-par-des-extremistes-reviennent-dans-le-giron-de-letat/.

a program of "neutralization" (*taḥyīd*) under which the Ministry of Religious Affairs limited the operating hours of all mosques[653] and an overt police presence reappeared in some contested mosques.[654] (A rumor circulated that the government was preparing to reinstate standardized sermons nationwide,[655] but Tlili quickly denied it.[656]) At Zaytūnah, Houcine Laabidi voiced some imams' discomfort at the return of these restrictions as well as the language of "neutralization" itself, all of which had been part of the "program adopted by Bourguiba and Ben Ali that turned the mosques into megaphones for those regimes."[657] (Tlili and other state elites exacerbated this discomfort with their propensity to speak of "recovering the prestige of the state (*haybat al-dawlah*)," a distinctly pre-revolutionary concept.[658]) The imams' opposition only increased after a militant attack in July killed 15 soldiers, in response to which the prime minister, Mehdi Jomaa, ordered the interministerial commission to close outright the remaining noncompliant mosques.[659] Al-Nahḍah urged the government to reopen the mosques quickly as a matter of religious freedom;[660] Ridha Jaouadi called their closure a "dangerous precedent" that conflated the fight

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[653] "Horaire légal d'ouverture des mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, March 10, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-horaire-legal-douverture-des-mosquees/.

[654] "The police would arrive with a new imam appointed by the ministry for the Friday prayer. Sometimes there were discussions between salafists and the police. The police would note down the people who had opposed the imam and interrogate them." Donker and Netterstrøm, 148–49.

[655] "L'unification du prêche du vendredi pour la neutralisation des mosquées?," Tunisie Numérique, February 2, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-lunification-du-preche-du-vendredi-pour-la-neutralisation-des-mosquees/.

[656] "Hādhā mawqif wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah min tawḥīd al-khuṭab fī al-masājid," Ḥaqā'iq, February 4, 2014, https://www.turess.com/hakaek/55910.

[657] "La Tunisie veut récupérer les mosquées contrôlées par des radicaux." The government's frame of "neutralization" prompted objections from liberals, too, over the fact that state figures regularly delivered speeches in mosques. Civil-society groups organized to block Noureddine Khadmi from the *minbar* on these grounds, even after he had left office. Complaints arose that "neutralization" was unevenly applied when imams actively working in mosques became candidates for Parliament; the Ministry of Religious Affairs answered by calling upon the imams to resign their posts. The ministry's announcement that voting in the elections was a religious duty (*wājib shar'ī*) also elicited heckles: some Tunisians characterized the statement as a "*communiqué-fatwá*" and asked whether refusing to vote was therefore an act of *kufr*.

[658] E.g., Brinsi. On the concept of *haybat al-dawlah*, see Zemni; Corinna Mullin and Brahim Rouabah, "Discourses of Power and State Formation: The State of Emergency from Protectorate to Post-uprising Tunisia," ibid.

[659] "Closure of Mosques in Tunisia Not under State Control Likely to Prompt Salafist Protests," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, July 23, 2014.

[660] "Ennahdha somme Jomâa d'accélérer la réouverture des mosquées fermées," Tunisie Numérique, July 24, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-ennahdha-somme-jomaa-daccelerer-la-reouverture-des-mosquees-fermees/.

against terrorism with a fight against imams.[661]

Five days before the second round of the 2014 presidential election, the Ministry of Religious Affairs announced that it had, after nearly four years of *la crise*, "récupéré toutes les mosquées échappant jusque là à son contrôle."[662] Yet the antiphony of political violence and mosque closures was only beginning, and would force the government to continually redefine its objectives and its criteria in the effort to classify certain expression as "extremist" or "political" and pursue enforcement through "neutralization." It would also prompt high-profile imams like Jaouadi to continually resist those definitions and the state's monopoly in delineating them — most acutely when the hammer of enforcement fell upon those imams themselves.

Ridha Jaouadi and the "new dictatorship"

On the heels of constitutional ratification, the Tunisian state, now fully possessed of its *deuxième république*, was doubly empowered to define normativity with respect to Islamic expression. First, the constitutionalization of *la neutralité* authorized the state (as a function of secularity) to dictate the boundary between the religious and the political and to construe incursions across that boundary as criminal. Second, the constitutionalization of *takfīr* authorized the state to control the demarcation of belief (i.e., status as a Muslim) and deviation (i.e., status as a *kāfir*) and to construe competition with its monopoly as seditious. The imams who were the principal object of these regulations largely accepted the terms of the discussion but vigorously contested what constituted an incursion and what constituted *takfīr*. In the final stages of *la crise des mosquées*, this contestation crystallized around Ridha Jaouadi, the imam chosen by the congregation at Sīdī al-Lakhmī mosque in Sfax in January 2011 and recognized under the policy of "regularization" the following year.

In one of his first sermons after the revolution, Jaouadi drew a line, compatible with the language of al-Nahḍah, between a secularism (read as *'ilmānīyah*[663]) that does not conflict with Islam and a secularism (read as *'almānīyah*) that "separates religion from life, separates religion

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[661] "Des Imams protestent contre la reprise du contrôle des mosquées par l'État," Tunisie Numérique, December 17, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-des-imams-protestent-contre-la-reprise-du-controle-des-mosquees-par-letat/.

[662] "Le MAR récupère le contrôle de toutes les mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, December 17, 2014, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-mar-recupere-le-controle-de-toutes-les-mosquees/.

[663] Supposing a connection to *'ilm*. See Asad, *Formations*, 206n2.

from the state, and from politics," which, Jaouadi said, "is where the danger lies."[664] Less in keeping with al-Nahḍah's outlook, Jaouadi then discussed the fate he said had befallen the nationalist movements that had fought colonial rule in Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco: although 'ulamā' had led those movements, a secularist class had "hijacked" them (*tamma ikhtiṭāfuhā*) after liberation to "rule with constitutions imported from abroad, which separated religion from life and restricted it to the mosques and to religious rulings (*qaḍāyā fiqhīyah*)" on personal matters.[665] He warned of counterrevolutionaries who would thwart the new revolution (*ifshāl al-thawrah*) in the same way.

On occasion, Jaouadi's exhortations went farther. In a December 2012 sermon, he condemned former partisans of Ben Ali who, he said, had infiltrated trade unions and leftist organizations. To combat their influence, Jaouadi pledged that "we are fully ready for martyrdom for the sake of God (*naḥnu 'alá isti'dād kāmil lil-shahādah fī sabīl Allāh*)."[666] Hundreds of lawyers joined a suit against him, with no result.[667] Neither did the Nahḍah-led government discipline Jaouadi, even though by this time it had barred Houcine Laabidi from preaching at Zaytūnah; perhaps by saying "kāfir" explicitly, Laabidi had violated the norm against *takfīr* too directly to ignore. This also seemed to be where the government drew its red line when in 2014 Jaouadi accused the minister of tourism of an "assault on Islam (*ta'addin 'alá al-Islām*)":[668] Mounir Tlili declined to take action since Jaouadi had not called for the minister's death.[669] Nonetheless the imam's "outspoken Friday sermons, often skirting close to takfirism,"[670] as well as his penchant for identifying political figures as "enemies of Islam" in his frequent Facebook posts, would continue to attract scrutiny.

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[664] Al-Ṭarābulusī.

[665] Ibid.

[666] "L'imam de la mosquée Sidi Lakhmi à Sfax : « Nous sommes prêts à mourir en martyrs »," Business News, December 7, 2012, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/tunisie--limam-de-la-mosquee-sidi-lakhmi-a-sfax--nous-sommes-prets-a-mourir-en-martyrs-video,520,34996,3; Shabāb Ḥarakat al-Nahḍah fī taẓāhurah li-ḥall Ḥizb al-Nahḍah, "Khaṭīr: imām jāmi' al-Lakhmī bi-Ṣafāqis yad'ū ilá qatl ittiḥād al-shughl wa-al-mu'āraḍah," Facebook, December 8, 2012, https://www.facebook.com/Tunisians.Against.Extremism/videos/478687432175146.

[667] "Appels au meurtre contre l'UGTT : Ridha Jaouadi non inquiété, l'avocat plaignant poursuivi," Business News, July 26, 2014, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/appels-au-meurtre-contre-lugtt--ridha-jaouadi-non-inquiete-lavocat-plaignant-poursuivi,520,48271,3.

[668] Ridha Jaouadi, "Wazīrat al-siyāḥah tad'ū ilá ḥajj al-muslimīn ilá Gharībah al-yahūd," Facebook, April 26, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/videos/750244481673863.

[669] "Wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah: Tūnis dawlah islāmīyah wa-'alá al-jamī' murā'āt dhālika."

[670] Donker, "Sacred as Secular," 508.

A new government under Prime Minister Habib Essid (including al-Nahḍah as a junior coalition partner) took office in February 2015.[671] Just weeks later, militants attacked the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, killing more than 20 tourists. The incident prompted the Ministry of Religious Affairs to turn its attention to not only the 12 mosques it said remained out of state control (notwithstanding its announcement of victory the previous December) but also 187 others that had been built without authorization.[672] The ministry urged them all to "regularize" their status (for the latter category, this meant donating the property to the state) or face closure. "Any excess or inclination to radicalization will be brought back into line," said the new minister, Othman Battikh.[673] The government also moved to shutter dozens of religious kindergartens[674] and several Qur'ānic associations.[675] In June, a gunman killed 38 tourists at the resort of al-Qanṭāwī north of Sousse. The government responded once more by sanctioning out-of-status mosques, listing 80 for closure due to nonconformity with the 1988 law.[676] Yet the numbers again seemed out of step with prior statements. Presumably the 80 mosques represented part of the 187, but the ministry had initially designated those as procedurally noncompliant *buildings* rather than rhetorically deviant *imams*. Now, however, the 80 mosques were universally described as "hotbeds for radical groups,"[677] "suspectées de véhiculer le radicalisme islamiste,"[678] "tombées sous la coupe

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[671] An independent, Essid had held senior posts under Ben Ali and was minister of the interior in the transitional government in 2011.

[672] "Li-mādhā baká wazīr al-shu'ūn al-dīnīyah 'Uthmān Baṭṭīkh amāma al-a'immah?," *Al-Shurūq*, April 18, 2015, https://www.turess.com/alchourouk/1104695.

[673] "187 mosquées toujours hors contrôle," Tunisie Numérique, June 8, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-187-mosquees-toujours-hors-controle/.

[674] "Fermeture de 40 jardins coraniques," Tunisie Numérique, March 26, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-fermeture-de-40-jardins-coraniques/. The Ministry of Women, Children, and the Elderly estimated that some 800 kindergartens were "anarchic."

[675] "La fermeture de trois associations coraniques suscite le courroux de certains partis politiques," Tunisie Numérique, June 4, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-sidi-bouzid-la-fermeture-de-trois-associations-coraniques-suscite-le-courroux-de-certains-partis-politiques/.

[676] "Entrée en vigueur de la fermeture des mosquées illégales," Tunisie Numérique, June 30, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-entree-en-vigueur-de-la-fermeture-des-mosquees-illegales/.

[677] Olivesi.

[678] "Fermeture de deux mosquées à Sidi Bouzid, malgré les protestations des fidèles," Tunisie Numérique, July 3, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-fermeture-de-deux-mosquees-a-sidi-bouzid-malgre-les-protestations-des-fideles/.

d'extrémistes,"[679] and "mosquées jihadistes."[680] The Ministry of Religious Affairs called the effort a "campaign … to better organize the mosques and place them under state control in order to prevent *takfīrī* speeches and avoid any excesses."[681] Essid argued that the mosques "continuent à propager leur venin pour inciter au terrorisme"[682] and expressed frustration that "nous changeons un jour l'imam au discours radical d'une mosquée, le lendemain, il est débouté et remplacé par un autre aussi extrémiste."[683]

The conflation of unlicensed mosques or preachers with criminal speech confounded and often angered the affected congregations.[684] Hamdi Derbali, an imam in a small town in Sidi Bouzid province, "readily admitted that his position … was always unofficial," the result of a "compromise between the congregation and local officials" after the revolution. He was removed rather than "regularized" after the attack at al-Qanṭāwī despite having, in his words, "condemned the extremists" for harming tourists, who were "guests of Tunisia."[685] Protests broke out in front of the district government building and the police station, with congregants claiming that "le prêche de l'imam n'était pas radical."[686] Larger crowds demonstrated (and engaged in "minor confrontations" with police) in the town of Masākin when the ministry dismissed the well-known imam Béchir Ben Hassen.[687] Ben Hassen had begun preaching in Masākin after the revolution, but the Ministry of Religious Affairs under Noureddine Khadmi removed him in 2013 while the imam

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[679] "Récupération de 37 mosquées," Tunisie Numérique, July 4, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-recuperation-de-37-mosquees/.

[680] "Jihadisme: la Tunisie peine à fermer ses mosquées hors de contrôle," Radio France internationale, July 6, 2015, https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20150706-jihadisme-tunisie-peine-fermer-mosquees-hors-controle-sousse.

[681] "Toutes les mosquées hors contrôle de l'État seront totalement fermées d'ici dimanche 5 juillet," Tunisie14, July 4, 2015, https://tunisie14.tn/article/detail/tunisie-toutes-les-mosquees-hors-controle-de-l-etat-seront-totalement-fermees-d-ici-dimanche-5-juillet.

[682] Marlène Panara, "Tunisie : qu'ont fait les autorités tunisiennes depuis l'attentat à Sousse?," *Jeune Afrique*, July 10, 2015, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/245224/politique/tunisie-lutte-contre-terrorisme-menace-t-democratie/.

[683] Olfa Belhassine, "« Le ministère de l'Intérieur n'est pas infiltré » : Entretien avec Habib Essid, chef du gouvernement," *La Presse de Tunisie*, July 5, 2015, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/101373.

[684] Only the employment minister offered the nuance that "toutes les mosquées illégales n'ont pas forcément un lien avec le terrorisme." Panara.

[685] Frédéric Bobin, "En Tunisie, la difficile reprise en main des mosquées salafistes," *Le Monde*, July 17, 2015, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/07/23/en-tunisie-la-difficile-reprise-en-main-des-mosquees-extremistes_4694818_3212.html.

[686] "Grogne des fidèles après la fermeture d'une mosquée," Tunisie Numérique, July 4, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-sidi-bouzid-grogne-des-fideles-apres-la-fermeture-dune-mosquee/.

[687] "Jihadisme: la Tunisie peine à fermer ses mosquées hors de contrôle."

faced legal trouble in France.[688] Ben Hassen resumed preaching upon his return to Tunisia in 2014, rendering him something of an *autoproclamé*. In January 2015, just after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris, a video circulated online of a sermon in which Ben Hassen spoke of executing those who blasphemed the Prophet, using language parallel to that of Houcine Laabidi.[689] Nonetheless, the ministry as recently as April 2015 had "confirmed" Ben Hassen in his position.[690] In expelling him in July, the ministry did not offer any new justification or cite problematic speech, instead characterizing the decision simply as enforcement of the 2013 dismissal order.[691] Press reports offered their own justification: "à cause de [ses] discours extrémistes."[692] Protestors called the decision "political" and demanded that the government substantiate a connection to terrorism.[693] Ben Hassen defended himself by claiming that his sermons did not contain incitement to violence, much less *takfīr*;[694] rather, he expressed his "commitment to the law" and condemned those "deviant extremists (*al-ghulāh al-māriqīn*) who follow the path of *takfīr* and criminality."[695]

After the Bardo attack, Jaouadi had organized a protest at his mosque in Sfax "condemning the statements of the minister of religious affairs and denouncing the incitement by the media against mosques, imams, and religious freedoms."[696] He had immediately called for another, larger demonstration in Tunis, again to "condemn the minister's humiliating remarks about imams …

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[688] Before the revolution, "le sulfureux Béchir Ben Hassen" was a preacher at a mosque outside Paris that was later investigated for recruiting fighters for the war in Syria. Sébastien Duval, "La mosquée fait pénitence," *Le Parisien*, September 29, 2016, https://www.leparisien.fr/val-de-marne-94/la-mosquee-fait-penitence-29-09-2016-6159091.php.

[689] "Tunisian Cleric Bechir Ben Hassen: Anyone Cursing the Prophet Muhammad Should Be Executed," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 9, 2015, https://www.memri.org/tv/tunisian-cleric-bechir-ben-hassen-anyone-cursing-prophet-muhammad-should-be-executed.

[690] "Des imams et cadres des mosquées protestent devant le ministre des Affaires religieuses," African Manager, April 16, 2015, https://africanmanager.com/la-kasbah-des-imams-et-cadres-des-mosquees-protestent-devant-le-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses/.

[691] "Béchir Ben Hassen limogé de la Grande mosquée de Msaken," Business News, July 1, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/beir-ben-hassen-limoge-de-la-grande-mosquee-de-msaken,520,57142,3.

[692] "Interdit en Tunisie, Béchir Ben Hassen chaleureusement accueilli en Espagne," Jawhara FM, July 14, 2015, https://www.jawharafm.net/fr/article/interdit-en-tunisie-bechir-ben-hassen-chaleureusement-accueilli-en-espagne/90/25749.

[693] "Le limogeage de l'imam Béchir Ben Hassen a été décidé par Noureddine Khadmi," Business News, July 2, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/le-limogeage-de-limam-beir-ben-hassen-a-ete-decide-par-noureddine-khadmi,520,57152,3.

[694] "Béchir Ben Hassen limogé de la Grande mosquée de Msaken."

[695] Béchir Ben Hassen, "Al-ḥamdulillāh 'alá qaḍā'ihi…," Facebook, July 1, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/Bechir.ben.hassen0/photos/a.762996683714308/1105283219485651. On *ghulāh*, see Lewis, 53–54.

[696] Ridha Jaouadi, "Al-ḥamdulillāh: ḥushūd ghafīrah…," Facebook, April 11, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/938971456134497.

which circumvent the gains of the revolution vis-à-vis the mosques."[697] A few days later, a crowd of imams and supporters had gathered outside the ministry's headquarters to voice their dissent over "infringements of their rights," the "use of the war on terrorism to restrict religious freedom," and the "arbitrary dismissal" of imams.[698] Othman Battikh, the minister, had met with the protest leaders and even signed an accord with Chihebeddine Tlich, head of the imams' trade union of which Jaouadi was also a leading member (although the media credited Jaouadi with bringing Battikh to the table[699]). In the accord, the minister had committed to, *inter alia*:

a) not touching (*'adam al-mass*) any religious freedoms won after the revolution;

b) reassigning the imams whom the ministry had "arbitrarily" dismissed (*al-a'immah al-ma'zūlīn ta'assufīyan*) if the imams agreed to observe the law;

c) making arrangements (*taswiyah*) to resolve out-of-status mosques rather than closing them outright;

d) involving union representatives in decisions related to the nomination and removal of imams; and

e) reopening the shuttered mosques, as long as the imams assumed responsibility to protect the mosques "from any violation of law or anything related to violence, terrorism, or extremism (*min kull mukhālafah lil-qānūn aw mā lahu 'alāqah bi-al-'unf wa-al-irhāb wa-al-taṭarruf*)."[700]

Jaouadi had viewed the accord primarily as a victory for the imams dismissed "unjustly" and for the congregations whose will he expected the ministry to respect, especially in cases where the ministry had dismissed "qualified imams" despite congregants' attesting to their moderation (*yashhadu lahum al-muṣallūn bi-al-i'tidāl*).[701] The ministry, for its part, had cast the accord primarily as "measures to confront terrorism and *takfīr*,"[702] with Battikh highlighting that he had

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[697] Ridha Jaouadi, "Waqfah silmīyah iḥtijājīyah…," Facebook, April 11, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/938993132798996.

[698] "Tunisia's imams protest against 'strict state control of mosques'," BBC Monitoring, April 16, 2015.

[699] "Ridha Jaouadi obtient gain de cause contre Othman Battikh," Business News, April 16, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/article,520,55182,3.

[700] Ridha Jaouadi, "Al-ḥamdulillāh: maḥḍar ittifāq…," Facebook, April 15, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/941267352571574.

[701] Ridha Jaouadi, "Mā zāla al-ba'ḍ yughāliṭu…," Facebook, December 9, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/photos/a.223323414365975/1059225430775765/.

[702] "Tunisia's imams protest against 'strict state control of mosques'."

"asked Jaouadi not to call for hatred and violence against opponents."[703]

The government's announcement to close mosques and dismiss unofficial imams following the attack near Sousse, therefore, seemed to abrogate the accord. Allies of Jaouadi began to agitate for Battikh to be removed as minister for "not honoring his commitments,"[704] decrying a "step backwards from the gains made after the revolution."[705] Here another red line evidently was crossed: in relatively quick succession, the ministry ousted a number of high-profile dissenting imams: Noureddine Khadmi, who had returned to preaching at al-Fatḥ in Tunis after his term as minister;[706] Chihebeddine Tlich, the union leader;[707] and Mohamed Affès, the imam at the Great Mosque of Sfax.[708] Again the ministry justified the dismissals on procedural rather than rhetorical grounds — allowing a television crew into a mosque without ministerial permission,[709] "manque de discipline,"[710] "insoumission à la réglementation"[711] — but they were widely perceived to have been motivated instead by the imams' "discours jugés extrémistes."[712] (Battikh asserted that, in any case, mosque staff technically were not ministry employees but akin to contractors, such that

[703] Stockmans, "Imam."

[704] "Le syndical des imams demande le limogeage du ministre des Affaires religieuses," Directinfo, August 6, 2015, https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2015/08/06/tunisie-le-conseil-syndical-des-imams-et-cadres-des-mosquees-de-lott-appelle-au-limogeage-du-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses/.

[705] "Le syndicat des Imams demande le départ du ministre des affaires religieuses," Tunisie Numérique, August 6, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-syndicat-des-imams-demande-le-depart-du-ministre-des-affaires-religieuses/. They also again voiced fears that the ministry was planning to announce scripted sermons, and to empower provincial governors to remove imams.

[706] "Noureddine Khademi, limogé de la mosquée El Fath," Jawhara FM, August 8, 2015, https://www.jawharafm.net/fr/article/noureddine-khademi-limoge-de-la-mosquee-el-fath/90/26422.

[707] "L'OTT dénonce la décision de révocation d'un Imam Khatib parmi ses adhérents," Directinfo, August 10, 2015, https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2015/08/10/tunisie-lott-denonce-la-decision-de-revocation-dun-imam-khatib-parmi-ses-adherents/.

[708] "Othmen Battikh limoge le prêcheur de la grande mosquée de Sfax," Tunisie Numérique, September 3, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-othmen-battikh-limoge-le-precheur-de-la-grande-mosquee-de-sfax/. Affès pointed out that the *'ulamā'* were the inheritors of the Prophet ("min ahl mīrāth al-nabī"), and a banner went up in his mosque quoting a *ḥadīth*: "al-'ulamā' warathat al-anbiyā'." Ridha Jaouadi, "Taqrīr Qanāt al-Zaytūnah ḥawla al-i'fā'āt al-ẓālimah li-a'immah akfā' min Ṣafāqis," Facebook, September 3, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/videos/1015173928514249/.

[709] "Noureddine Khademi limogé de la mosquée El Fath," Business News, August 8, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/noureddine-khademi-limoge-de-la-mosquee-el-fath,520,58081,3.

[710] "Une plainte déposée contre le ministère des Affaires Religieuses," African Manager, August 13, 2015, https://africanmanager.com/12_tunisie-une-plainte-deposee-contre-le-ministere-des-affaires-religieuses/.

[711] "Sfax : les fidèles de la Grande Mosquée obligent le nouvel imam à interrompre la prière du vendredi," Shems FM, September 11, 2015, http://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_tunisie-news_news-nationales/119886/sfax-les-fideles-de-la-grande-mosquee-obligent-le-nouvel-imam-a-interrompre-la-priere-du-vendredi-119886.

[712] "Sfax : L'imam Ridha Jaouadi appelle à manifester demain," Kapitalis, September 4, 2015, http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2015/09/04/sfax-limam-ridha-jaouadi-appelle-a-manifester-demain/.

the ministry could dismiss them at will, without justification.[713]) Protests broke out at the dismissed imams' mosques, particularly in Sfax, where the congregation prevented the ministry-designated replacement imam from conducting Friday prayers for two consecutive weeks,[714] drawing a "massive" security presence around the mosque[715] and a number of arrests.[716]

Ridha Jaouadi now seemed to be the last man standing among his coterie of activist imams. When asked about his position, the Ministry of Religious Affairs initially reaffirmed that he was a duly appointed preacher — though a spokesperson did reiterate, not entirely subtly, that Battikh had asked Jaouadi to "ne prononcer que des prêches avec un contenu modéré."[717] However, just prior to the wave of dismissals, Jaouadi had stoked the ire of Parliament by accusing one member of "fabricating charges of terrorism and *takfīr*" against him; in a scathing Facebook post he called on God to "protect our country, our religion, our revolution, our mosques, and our imams from incitement and the flames of *fitnah*."[718] More than 80 parliamentarians signed a letter urging the prime minister to "apply the law" and remove Jaouadi from his *minbar* in light of the "extremist rhetoric (*al-khiṭāb al-mutaṭarrif*) that he embraces against the state and its symbols." (The letter expressed the lawmakers' hope that the *minbar* at Sīdī al-Lakhmī would return to being "a moderate Islamic pulpit in its rhetoric and its outlook (*minbar islāmī muʿtadil fī khiṭābihi wa-ruʾyatihi*).")[719] The prime minister did not remove the imam. Yet following the expulsion of Affès, Jaouadi again stepped to the fore: he described the dismissal as a "catastrophe (*muṣībah*)"[720] and announced another protest, entitled "A Cry of Rage (*Ṣayḥat Ghaḍab*)," with the aim of "supporting

[713] "Othmane Battikh : Le ministère ne fait pas de différence entre les Imams," Jawhara FM, August 20, 2015, https://www.jawharafm.net/fr/article/othmane-battikh-le-ministere-ne-fait-pas-de-difference-entre-les-imams/92/26792.

[714] "Sfax : les fidèles de la Grande Mosquée obligent le nouvel imam à interrompre la prière du vendredi."

[715] "Sfax : les partisans d'un imam limogé interdisent l'imam de la grande mosquée de prêcher," Shems FM, September 4, 2015, http://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_tunisie-news_news-regionales/119318/sfax-les-partisans-d-un-imam-limoge-interdisent-l-imam-de-la-grande-mosquee-de-precher-119318.

[716] "Libération de onze prévenus dans les incidents de la Grande Mosquée de Sfax," Tunisie Numérique, September 14, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-liberation-de-onze-prevenus-dans-les-incidents-de-la-grande-mosquee-de-sfax/.

[717] "Ridha Belhaj et Béchir Ben Hassan interdits de conduire la prière," *La Presse de Tunisie*, July 3, 2015, https://www.turess.com/fr/lapresse/101285.

[718] Ridha Jaouadi, "Faḍīḥat al-nāʾibah Hājar al-ʿArūsī…," Facebook, July 22, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=992061857492123.

[719] "80 députés signent une pétition pour limoger l'imam Ridha Jaouadi," Business News, July 23, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/80-deputes-signent-une-petition-pour-limoger-limam-ridha-jaouadi,520,57695,3.

[720] Ridha Jaouadi, "Innā lillāhi wa-innā ilayhi rājiʿūn…," Facebook, September 2, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/1014658305232478.

the imams and defending freedoms."[721] The provincial government in Sfax denied the protest permit[722] and, several days later, the Ministry of Religious Affairs removed Jaouadi from his post on the grounds of having conducted "union activity in the mosque under the guise of religion" as well as "a sermon inciting hatred against the ministry."[723]

Reaction to his ouster came swiftly. Khadmi deemed the dismissal "political" and said that the ejection of popular, moderate imams showed that the ministry's true aim was not to combat terrorism.[724] Tlich described it as "persécution des imams modérés," which would turn religion into a propaganda tool for whichever political party was in power.[725] Béchir Ben Hassen, ever bombastic, called Jaouadi's removal the "last brick in the wall against free speech," and warned of the "restoration of the dictatorial regime, oppressive of religion, its preachers, and its *'ulamā'*," enabled by "this heretic minister (*hādhā al-wazīr al-muharṭaq*)."[726] Again crowds gathered in Sfax, reportedly some 10,000 strong,[727] blocking the ministry's replacement imam from conducting prayers for four successive Fridays[728] and expressing their refusal to allow that "le pouvoir central à Tunis 'impose ainsi son choix.'"[729] (They also had a specific demand: "Battikh,

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[721] Ridha Jaouadi, "Bismillāh…," Facebook, September 4, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/photos/a.223323414365975/1015377258493916/.

[722] Ridha Jaouadi, "Manaʿat al-sulṭāt al-jihawīyah…," Facebook, September 5, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/1015850345113274.

[723] "Ridha Jaouadi limogé de la mosquée Sidi Lakhmi de Sfax," Business News, September 15, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/tunisie-ridha-jaouadi-limoge-de-la-mosquee-sidi-lakhmi-de-sfax,520,58928,3. Later Battikh would elaborate that Jaouadi's words were "inflammatory, and did not spread virtue, love, and morals," evidently the criteria for a *khuṭbah*. "Uthmān Baṭṭīkh: al-khiṭāb alladhī kāna yurawwiju al-Jawwādī 'taḥrīḍī' wa-qaḍīyat Jāmiʿ al-Lakhmī fī ṭarīqihā ilá al-ḥall," *Al-Shurūq*, November 23, 2015, https://www.turess.com/alchourouk/1144404.

[724] "Noureddine Khademi appelle Othmane Battikh à réviser ses décisions de limogeage des imams modérés," Shems FM, September 17, 2015, http://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_shems-news/120366/noureddine-khademi-appelle-othmane-battikh-a-reviser-ses-decisions-de-limogeage-des-imams-moderes-120366.

[725] "Limogeage de Ridha Jaouadi : Le conseil syndical des imams dénonce une régression des libertés religieuses," *Réalités*, September 16, 2015, https://www.realites.com.tn/2015/09/limogeage-de-ridha-jaouadi-le-conseil-syndical-des-imams-denonce-une-regression-des-libertes-religieuses/.

[726] Béchir Ben Hassen, "Al-ḥamdulillāh nāṣir al-dīn kābit al-munāfiqīn…," Facebook, September 15, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/Bechir.ben.hassen0/photos/a.201786733168642/1150558608291445.

[727] "Les fidèles de Ridha Jaouadi empêchent la tenue de la prière du vendredi," Tunisie Numérique, October 16, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-sfax-video-les-fideles-de-ridha-jaouadi-empechent-la-tenue-de-la-priere-du-vendredi/.

[728] "Sfax: reprise de la prière du vendredi à la grande mosquée," Tunisie Numérique, November 20, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-sfax-reprise-de-la-priere-du-vendredi-a-la-grande-mosquee/.

[729] "Tunisie: manifestation à Sfax contre le limogeage d'un imam," Radio France internationale, October 30, 2015, https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20151030-tunisie-manifestation-limogeage-imam-extremiste.

dégage!"[730]) Protestors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Tunis, too, echoed the hope behind Jaouadi's initial ascent on the *minbar* back in 2011: "nous avons le droit de choisir nos imams."[731]

As in the cases of Houcine Laabidi, Ben Hassen, Khadmi, Tlich, and Affès, the ministry's stated rationale in dismissing Jaouadi was procedural. The ministry did refer to his speech, but in terms of incitement against the ministry (similar to the charge of *insoumission* leveled against Tlich) rather than ideology. On the other hand — also as in the earlier cases — a cloud of semi-official allegations, these of a more rhetorical or ideological nature, amassed around Jaouadi's dismissal. The press readily identified the premises for his removal as his "prêches jugés virulents" and the state's desire to "reprendre le contrôle idéologique d'un certain nombre de minarets."[732] As a rule, state officials did not say as much themselves, although in a spontaneous interview Battikh did offer that Jaouadi's *acts* were "considered extremist" and that the imam was a *political* problem because he "supported not the Revolution but a specific political party."[733] Only a spokesperson for the public prosecutor's office in Sfax would go so far as to say that Jaouadi had been removed for *extrémisme* as well as improper union activity.[734] One journalist commented on the acrobatics that officials were performing to avoid hazardous terrain: "le gouvernement tente de contourner le noyau du problème et de baser ses décisions sur des faits incontestables, n'ayant rien à avoir avec l'idéologie ou la religion."[735]

Speaking at a protest march, Jaouadi perhaps sought to call the government's bluff: he challenged "anyone who has a video proving that he called for violence or *takfīr* to show it to the people and public opinion, and if they did so, he would apologize to the people and immediately

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[730] Benoît Delmas, "Tunisie - Sfax : Sidi Lakhmi, la mosquée de la crispation," *Le Point*, October 30, 2015, https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/tunisie-sfax-sidi-lakhmi-la-mosquee-de-la-crispation-30-10-2015-1978231_3826.php.

[731] "Tunisie: manifestation contre le limogeage contesté d'un imam de Sfax," ibid., October 21, 2015, https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/tunisie-manifestation-contre-le-limogeage-conteste-d-un-imam-de-sfax-21-10-2015-1975694_24.php.

[732] Delmas.

[733] "Otheman Batikh contre-attaque Ridha Jaouadi qu'il décrit comme 'extrémiste'," Tunisie Numérique, October 21, 2015, https://www.tunisienumerique.com/otheman-batikh-contre-attaque-ridha-jaouadi-quil-decrit-comme-extremiste/. "Qaḍīyat hādhā al-imām aṣbaḥat qaḍīyah siyāsīyah baʿda an thabata munāṣaratuhu li-aḥad al-aḥzāb": "'Uthmān Baṭṭīkh fī Tawzar: al-waḍʿ al-dīnī mustaqirr… wa-qaḍīyat al-Jawwādī siyāsīyah," *Al-Shurūq*, October 21, 2015, https://www.turess.com/alchourouk/1137560.

[734] "Tunisie: arrestation d'un imam dont le limogeage fait polémique," Agence France Presse, October 27, 2015.

[735] Myriam Ben Zineb, "Nidaa Tounes – Ennahdha : La guerre froide des imams," Business News, September 15, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/nidaa-tounes--ennahdha--la-guerre-froide-des-imams,519,58939,3. When Jaouadi was arrested on a charge of embezzlement for having continued to manage the mosque's finances without authorization, another journalist speculated that the government's aim was to "attaquer l'imam rebelle sur un autre terrain": see Delmas.

present his resignation as imam."[736] Of course, *takfīr* appeared nowhere in the charges laid against Jaouadi, yet he understood that these were the rhetorical grounds on which he had to mount a defense, just as Ben Hassen had instinctively distanced himself from unnamed *takfīrī* extremists (*ghulāh*). Critics in the press, in turn, sought to call Jaouadi's own bluff: was not the December 2012 video — "we are fully ready for martyrdom" — precisely the proof of his calling for violence against leftists, and tantamount to *takfīr*?[737] But Jaouadi had not used the word itself, as Laabidi had done, posing the question of how broadly the state would draw the boundaries of speech tantamount to *takfīr*. Here again the fragility, or superficiality, of "consensus" became readily apparent: even if "all" parties in the "mainstream" had agreed to criminalize *takfīr*, their respective conceptions of that discursive structure and its scope varied widely. In fact, the *avoidance* of labels like *takfīrī* on the part of state officials underscored just this point: *takfīr* was the constitutional standard, the codified red line, but the meaning of that term was so contested that, dizzyingly, an accusation of *takfīr* was as toxic as *takfīr* itself. At precisely the moment when the government might have taken full advantage of its constitutionalized normative vocabulary — amid a state of emergency following a series of stunning terrorist attacks — officials demurred when speaking about individual imams, relying instead on procedural technicalities and innuendo.

This behavior differed markedly from the practice of the prior government, in which Mounir Tlili (in close cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior) had more freely categorized individual forms of speech, and speakers, as *takfīrī*. But Othman Battikh did not operate very differently with respect to the security services; in fact, he was criticized for further strengthening cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and "hand[ing] the oversight of mosques largely to the police."[738] Rather, it was Battikh's paramount emphasis on state control that appears to have rendered him unwilling to engage in disputation on the precise contours of *takfīr*. In other words, the minister recognized that, while *takfīr* was the constitutional red line, it was too relational, too disputed, and ultimately too narrow to serve the state's needs in enforcing discipline. As a result,

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[736] Fathi Boujnah, "Masīrah ḥāshidah bi-Ṣafāqis munaddidah bi-qarārāt 'azl al-a'immah," *Al-Tūnisīyah*, October 19, 2015, https://www.turess.com/attounissia/160357.

[737] Sarra Hlaoui, "Affaire Sidi Lakhmi : Quand des imams takfiristes mentent pour démentir des faits avérés," Business News, October 25, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/affaire-sidi-lakhmi--quand-des-imams-takfiristes-mentent-pour-dementir-des-faits-averes,519,59804,3.

[738] Carlotta Gall, "Tunisia's Secular Government Cracks Down on Mosques in Aftermath of Massacre," *The New York Times*, July 24, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/24/world/africa/rift-widens-in-tunisia-as-government-cracks-down-on-mosques.html.

officials relied on the broader, albeit informal, vocabulary of "radicalism" and "extremism" to telegraph further, unwritten red lines — a tactic familiar from other Muslim states.[739] A focus on state control and the rhetoric of sedition, rule of law, etc., were trademarks of Khadmi's tenure but reached a zenith under Battikh, who oversaw the removals of imams (including, ironically, Khadmi himself) on explicit grounds of insubordination to the ministry.

The lack of a reliable standard by which to judge the lawfulness of religious speech, in combination with Battikh's evident insistence upon obedience, drove imams' rejection of the ministry's decisions as "arbitrary" and "unjust." Al-Naḥḍah, too, condemned the "arbitrary expulsion … of imams known for their moderation," blamed Battikh for a "policy of reprisals," and warned of "ideological cleansing … [a] policy inherited from the dictatorship."[740] Jaouadi likewise spoke of

> a policy of tyranny (*istibdād*) that reminds us of the unjust years … a political setback … and evidence of a blow to the revolution, a backsliding…. It is also a type of partisan domination of the houses of God, undertaken to return Islamic discourse to what it was before the revolution, when it was a mouthpiece for the propaganda of the ruling party.[741]

Taunting Battikh as the "the *muftī* of Ben Ali," Jaouadi accused the minister of "wanting to impose his own judgements and wishes in the name of the law (*yurīdu an yafriḍa ra'yahu wa-shahwatahu bi-ism al-qānūn*)."[742] Resonant with the language used to refute *ijtihād*, Jaouadi's statement semantically merged the *ancien régime* with the current minister of religious affairs, transferring the autocratic policies of the former onto the latter (recall Turner's "transitive property" of polemics). In so doing, Jaouadi labeled Battikh a counterrevolutionary and therefore suggested that the revolution — and indeed *la crise des mosquées* — was yet incomplete.

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[739] "Muslim states" in the sense conveyed in Zeghal, "Constitutionalizing," 107. Consider how the accord signed by Battikh and Tlich had, momentarily, established another rhetorical standard — the proscription of "mā lahu ʻalāqah bi-al-ʻunf wa-al-irhāb wa-al-taṭarruf." One of the justifications that the Ministry of Religious Affairs offered for dismissing Jaouadi was precisely "pour ne pas avoir respecté ses engagements signés." Perhaps, if the accord had not fallen apart (in the eyes of both parties), further accusations of rhetorical excess would have been tested against this clause. "Abdelhamid Ben Romdhane : Les perturbateurs de la prière du vendredi à Sidi Lakhmi ne sont pas originaires de Sfax," Business News, November 13, 2015, https://www.businessnews.com.tn/abdelhamid-ben-romdhane--les-perturbateurs-de-la-priere-du-vendredi-a-sidi-lakhmi-ne-sont-pas-originaires-de-sfax,520,60242,3.

[740] Rached Ghannouchi, "Bayān Ḥarakat al-Nahḍah bi-munāsabat iftitāḥ al-mawsim al-siyāsī wa-al-dirāsī al-jadīd," Ḥarakat al-Nahḍah, September 11, 2015, http://bit.ly/bayan-iftitah.

[741] "Qarārāt al-Wizārah haddadat al-silm al-ijtimāʻī bi-Ṣafāqis," *Al-Ḍamīr*, October 28, 2015.

[742] Ibid.

A few months after Jaouadi's dismissal, Essid shuffled his cabinet and removed Othman Battikh as minister of religious affairs. The press attributed his ouster to pressure from al-Nahḍah, which had repeatedly tangled with Battikh for the year he was in office.[743] Was it not also a victory for the dismissed imams, for whom Battikh had been a tool of the "eradicationists" of religion, the "minister of *fitnah*"?[744] They certainly rejoiced — as Jaouadi, for example, wrote:

> Finally, Battikh, the *muftī* of Ben Ali, has left the government…. We will not forget the great achievements of the failed minister … closing mosques, dismissing moderate imams and fabricating charges against them…. We hope that the new minister will repair what Battikh has ruined, and that he will be a token of a new phase of religious freedom, lifting up the houses of God … and respecting the will of the worshippers to choose who leads them in prayer, removed from partisan domination or ideological animosity.[745]

From another perspective, however, the particular involvement of al-Nahḍah in this episode "represented the Islamic social movement's last challenge against the normalisation of post-revolutionary contentious politics"; that is to say that "the grassroots Islamist movement, if it wanted to survive, had to renounce never-ending mobilisation and draw on Nahda's role of mediation" to achieve its goals within the framework of the *deuxième république*.[746] Any victory, then, was institutional, and only through existing patterns of governance, now largely settled, could Tunisian society consider further revolutionary transformations, such as the self-governance of the mosques.

The ideas themselves were not dead, of course, but had to be channeled in new ways, according to the configurations of power under the new *status quo*. The removal of Othman Battikh did not mean that Ridha Jaouadi was restored to his *minbar*; much like Abderrahman Khelif before him, Jaouadi bided his time as a teacher in the state system[747] until 2019 when, also like Khelif, he was elected to Parliament. His choice to enter party politics demonstrates his own recognition of

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[743] "Le cheikh Battikh, mufti de la République : peut-on parler d'une disgrâce?," *Leaders*, January 12, 2016, https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/18886-battikh-mufti-republique-tunisie.

[744] Béchir Ben Hassen, "Al-ḥamdulillāh 'alá farajihi…," Facebook, October 29, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/Bechir.ben.hassen0/posts/1175104142503558.

[745] Ridha Jaouadi, "Al-ḥamdulillāh.. akhīran raḥala…," Facebook, January 6, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/1074613732570268.

[746] Fabio Merone, Ester Sigillò, and Damiano De Facci, "Nahda and Tunisian Islamic Activism," in *New Opposition in the Middle East*, ed. Dara Conduit and Shahram Akbarzadeh (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[747] Ridha Jaouadi, "Al-ḥamdulillāh.. an'ama Allāh 'alayya…," Facebook, April 6, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/RidhaJaouadi/posts/1132474550117519.

the institutional victory — but only to a point. Jaouadi did not run as a member of al-Nahḍah; rather, he was one of 21 deputies elected from a new political formation,[748] I'tilāf al-Karāmah (the Dignity Coalition), an avatar of "right-wing religious populism" that "present[ed] itself as a revolutionary force aiming to help the oppressed and marginalized" and to "fulfill the unaccomplished goals of the 2011 revolution."[749] Among those goals: the continuing struggle against the "betrayal" of the revolution by the political elite — both the *extrémistes laïques* in thrall to their French identity[750] as well as al-Nahḍah — and the omnipresent specter of restrictions on religious practice under a "new dictatorship."

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[748] Among them was also Mohamed Affès.

[749] Jasmin Lorch and Hatem Chakroun, "Salafism Meets Populism: The Al-Karama Coalition and the Malleability of Political Salafism in Tunisia," Middle East Institute, May 12, 2020, https://www.mei.edu/publications/salafism-meets-populism-al-karama-coalition-and-malleability-political-salafism.

[750] "Affes (Al-Karama) à Fakhfah : « Vous êtes un extrémiste laïc »," Kapitalis, February 27, 2020, http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2020/02/27/affes-al-karama-a-fakhfah-vous-etes-un-extremiste-laic-et-on-ne-va-pas-voter-la-confiance-a-votre-gouvernement-video/.

V. Conclusion

This study sought to understand which religious figures the Tunisian state understood to be "radical imams," how political elites spoke about them, and why they relied on such labels. I took *la crise des mosquées* as the centerpiece of investigation because the state's rapid loss of control over the religious sector, followed by its explicit project to restore its writ, provided a bounded and relatively compressed period in which to observe actors' structural and rhetorical strategies play out. The theoretical literature equipped us to recognize that the marginalized discourse of "radical Islam," in its counterposition to the authorized discourse of "official Islam," reflected relationships of power — an *orthodoxy* — that took shape in post-colonial Tunisia and set the terms by which *la crise* would be interpreted and contested after the 2011 revolution. In the Tunisian press, *la crise des mosquées* was also called "la guerre des mosquées" or "la guerre froide des imams" and, at one level, individual imams and their pulpits certainly were at the heart of the dispute. More fundamentally, however, *la crise* was a conflict of definitions: that of the "proper" relationship of religion and politics, and that of inclusion in and exclusion from the Muslim community. What qualified as "radical" Islamic speech under this secularized discursive structure? Who had the authority to say so — the state? If so, what made this *deuxième république* different from the previous regime after all?

Labeling became one method for rhetorically demarcating licit and illicit forms of speech, especially when formalized standards either did not exist or — as with the crime of *takfīr* — they proved ineffective because of their imprecision or the disputation they induced. Only the application of labels in practice, then, can illuminate the unwritten red lines, which the state asserts and subsequently endeavors to enforce. This pattern is not exclusive to the Tunisian state or even to modernity, as Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke highlight:

> It is perhaps the rulers and official policies that call for more critical attention than they have hitherto received…. The role of Sunni caliphs and Muslim rulers more generally in setting the boundaries of legitimate expressions of the faith remains to be studied…. The caliphs were … intimately concerned with defining and defending correct belief and practice … and by the same token, preventing heresy and apostasy, and not necessarily as mere executioners only, lending their sword to the men of the pen. The same applied to princes from the Buyid *amīr*s to the Saljuk sultans and the Moghul emperors with no immediate claim to religious authority but wide-ranging powers which were by no means limited to the "secular" domain…. What has perhaps been studied least are the instances

of rulers imposing a particular interpretation of Islam as the "state religion" in their territories…. But what does the term "state religion" mean in an Islamic context, pre-modern as well as modern?[751]

To furnish some clarity to this question, we looked back to the tactics that caliphs employed to substantiate their own authority vis-à-vis the *'ulamā'* and to enforce obedience at critical historical junctures. One of the caliph's principal tools was to label dissent as heresy, an act of categorization that construed the caliph as an objective arbiter and thus reinforced his social role. State Islam(s) function in the same way by permitting modern and "secular" states, through a claim of neutrality, to arbitrate not only "correct" Islam (i.e., inclusion and exclusion from the Muslim community) but also the proper place of Islam in society (i.e., its circumscription). This assertion of hegemony serves to centralize social control in the state and is therefore particularly prevalent at moments of transition.

Much like "heretic," labels such as "radical" and "extremist" emerge to describe figures who resist extensions of hegemony. During *la crise des mosquées*, these figures rejected (to varying degrees) the notion of a post-revolutionary consensus around the nature of the Tunisian state and its relationship to Islam. They represented segments of the citizenry who saw in the revolution an opportunity to renegotiate that relationship — whether through reconstituting the traditional authority of the *'ulamā'* (Houcine Laabidi) or advancing a distinctly modern and Salafī style of activism (Ridha Jaouadi).[752] Also like "heretics," these figures do not regard themselves as deviants, repeatedly characterizing their own position as moderation in opposition to the aberrant hegemony being imposed upon them.[753] Hence they (re)deploy labels of "radicalism" and "extremism" to describe those forces of secularization perceived as totalizing, which they associate with "draining the wellsprings of piety (*tajfīf manābi' al-tadayyun*)"[754] and "religious desertification (*al-taṣaḥḥur al-dīnī*)."[755] These, they contend, are the true drivers of Islamist

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[751] Krämer and Schmidtke, 10–12.

[752] Donker and Netterstrøm, 144.

[753] On "aberrant," consider how Anṣār al-Sharī'ah promoted the teachings of "two historically significant Tunisian Maliki scholars," which allowed the group "to co-opt Tunisian Islamic history by insinuating that [it] is descendant from those scholars. The eras of Bourguiba and Bin 'Ali are then cast as outliers in Tunisia's broader history." Aaron Y. Zelin, *Your Sons Are at Your Service: Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 152.

[754] "Qarārāt al-Wizārah haddadat al-silm al-ijtimā'ī bi-Ṣafāqis."

[755] Abū Lubābah [pseud.] al-Tūnisī, "Silsilah ḥawla asbāb intishār al-ghulūw fī shabāb Tūnis," August 21, 2015, https://justpaste.it/n731.

political violence, for having severed Tunisian Islam from its indigenous tradition (centered around Zaytūnah), thereby leaving politically marginalized groups open to uncontrolled, foreign influences.

If there is a consensus to be found amid the competing discourses and definitions, it is this: the desirability of a Tunisian form of Islam, rooted in its native scholarship, and conversant with the lived experience of its practitioners. Nevertheless, contestation over who can determine the contours of that Islam, its liberties and its limits, will continue to implicate profound questions of religion and politics, of belonging and exclusion, for the foreseeable future.

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