



When Do Islamists Resort to Violence? A Study of Algeria and Egypt

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Abstract

This study compares the reactions of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in Algeria and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt following military coups, despite similar levels of regime repression. Drawing on the inclusion-moderation theory and employing Mill's Method of Difference, this research argues that the duration of political inclusion significantly shapes Islamist movements' behavioral responses. The findings indicate that prolonged exposure to political participation fosters moderation and reduces the likelihood of violent escalation, while limited inclusion increases the propensity for radicalization. The study contributes to debates on political Islam and democracy by demonstrating that Islamist movements are not inherently violent but are shaped by institutional experiences.

Keywords

Front Islamique du Salut; Freedom and Justice Party; Islamism; Mill's Method of Difference; Moderation.

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I. Introduction

Islamist revivalism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has highlighted the long-lasting unanswered questions about the compatibility of Political Islam (Islamism)¹ with the nation-state system on the one hand, and democracy on the other hand. The long history of repression of Islamist movements in MENA² countries by their dictatorships has hindered the investigation of such questions. However, luckily, some of these countries have experienced short periods of democratic transition, with an opportunity to observe the behavior of Islamist movements in the light of democracy.

Algeria, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, witnessed a transition from the single-party authoritarian polity of the National Liberation Front (FLN), which had ruled the country since independence in 1962, to a multi-party democratic system. In 1991, the country enjoyed the first democratic legislative elections in North Africa, with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) winning 47.27% of the total votes, defeating the ruling party since independence (FLN), which ended up winning only 23.38% of the total votes. However, the failure of democratic experimentation and the subsequent military coup thwarted this prospect.³ President Chadli was obliged to submit to political and economic concessions after the October Riots of 1988. He opted for immediate democratization of the political system, with sincere promises of transparent legislative elections to the sixty political parties that were formed at the time, including FIS.

² The Middle East and North Africa

³ Sebastian N, "Islamic Movements Engaging with Democracy: Front Islamique Du Salut (FIS) and the Democratic Experiment in Algeria - Sebastian N., 2015," *SAGE Publications* 71, no. 3 (2015), doi:10.1177/0974928415584025.

President Chadli instituted a new constitution that ended the governing party's monopoly on power, allowed for free expression, and allowed for multiparty elections. With the formation of the FIS, which was officially recognized as a political party in September 1989, this process served as a spur for increased unity among Islamist organizations under one primary political flag.⁴ Chadli's promise soon would be broken unwillingly. The army would put pressure on Chadli to make concessions with FIS to divide the ministries between FLN and FIS. Yet, this latter refused and insisted on keeping the results of the elections. The army forced Chadli to resign after postponing the second round of the elections, annulling the elections on January 11, 1992. The potential democratic multi-party system would transform into military administration, the *Haut Comité d'État* (HCE), with Khald Nezzar as Major-General and main decision-maker for the next dark decade to come. FIS's leaders were all imprisoned, and the party was dissolved.

The military coup was not a surprise, given that Algeria had always been controlled by the military since 1962. However, the reaction of FIS to the coup and the democratization experience was something new in the history of the MENA region, as it was the first Islamist party to go through a real democratic experience. The reaction of the party can be summarized in its co-founder Ali Belhadj's famous call for armed resistance, or what he called: Jihad, and his Takfiri⁵ discourse of the military and HCE (Hafez, 2000.⁶ Following Belhaj's open call for armed resistance, the party was divided into two streams, forming two insurgency groups: the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA), who wanted to replace the military regime with an Islamic state through a total war of all against all, and the *Armée Islamique du Salut* (AIS), who wanted to continue the

⁴ Claire Heristchi, "The Islamist Discourse of the FIS and the Democratic Experiment in Algeria," *Democratization* 11, no. 4 (August 1, 2004): 111–32, doi:10.1080/1351034042000234558.

⁵ To declare someone an unbeliever of Islam

⁶ 2010, 1991, 18-Juan على الارهاب في 18-جوان 1991, 2010 على بلحاج يحرض على الارهاب في 18-جوان 1991, 2010 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvJBVwYgFSw>.

election where they stopped, but through a total war against the regime.⁷The extremity of the two groups varies, yet the result is similar: resort to violent strategies, Jihad.

The story of Islamism and democratization was thought to end with the Algerian Civil War between the military and the newly formed insurgent groups. However, the surprise that the Arab Spring brought redirected all the expectations. In Egypt, the fall of Mubarak in February 2011, following the massive protests in Tahrir Square in Cairo, was followed by a period of democratic metamorphosis that did not last for long. After the fall of Mubarak, Egypt was ruled by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) under a provisional constitution. The first fair and democratic legislative and presidential elections in the history of Egypt took place from 2011 to 2012, under the High Presidential elections Commission. The legislative elections ended with the domination of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), which is constituted of Muslim Brothers, and the victory of the party's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, in the presidential elections in June 2012.

However, less than a year later, in his address to the nation on 3 July 2013, Egyptian Defense Minister Abdel Fattah El-Sisi proclaimed the removal of President Mohamed Morsi from office and the suspension of the December 2012 constitution. As a result, a brief but memorable rule of the Muslim Brotherhood came to an end.⁸The story of FJP is quite similar to that of FIS in Algeria. However, what is interesting is that the post-coup reaction and strategy of FJP is quite different from that of FIS. The military under El-Sisi exercised repression over the party and its affiliates and supporters, starting with the imprisonment of the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. The remaining members and supporters demonstrated in Rabaa Al-Adawiya and Al- Nahda

⁷ Mohammed M. Hafez, "Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria," *Middle East Journal* 54, no. 4 (2000): 572–91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4329544>.

⁸ Andrey Korotayev, Leonid Issaev, and Alisa Shishkina, "Egyptian Coup of 2013: An 'Econometric' Analysis," *The Journal of North African Studies* 21, no. 3 (May 26, 2016): 341–56, doi:10.1080/13629387.2015.1124238.

squares, where the military executed hundreds and killed thousands in the famous August 2013 Rabaa Massacre.

The Muslim Brotherhood's leadership in prison, including Mohamed Morsi, insisted on the necessity of sticking to peaceful resistance⁹. Young Muslim Brothers, with the absence of leadership, took a different direction from those of Algeria, who transformed into GIA and AIS. They started using their newfound liberty to reassess the previous ideas upon which the movement was founded and managed to create new discourses, practices, and ideals. Focusing on the relationship between the movement and its members, particularly at the individual level, reveals the extent to which many have begun to disengage from the organization entirely, seeing its structures as an impediment to the achievement of meaningful change.¹⁰ To sum up, the Muslim Brothers, whereas the leadership or the young Brothers, have taken a moderate direction in their response to the coup of 2013.

A. Research Question

Both FIS and FJP participated in elections to express their complex relations with the state and regime during the democratic transition. However, in the post-coup period, the reactions of the two Islamist parties varied significantly. In the aftermath of the victory of the Muslim Brothers in elections, many scholars and analysts warned of what they called “the Algerian Syndrome” that drove the country into a civil war.¹¹ This did not happen in Egypt. Therefore, why did the Egyptian military coup on the Islamist elections not lead to an armed conflict, as it did in Algeria, i.e., why did FJP adopt peaceful

كلمة الرئيس المصري المعزول محمد مرسي أمام المحكمة وشكواه من إجراءات غير مسبقة ضده في ⁹ السجن, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IriHGK_biNg.

¹⁰ Lucia Ardovalini and Erika Biagini, “Introduction to the Special Issue: ‘Assessing the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood after the 2013 Coup: Tracing Trajectories of Continuity and Change,’” *Middle East Law and Governance* 13, no. 2 (June 14, 2021): 125–29, doi:10.1163/18763375-13020007.

¹¹ Edward Schneier, *Muslim Democracy: Politics, Religion and Society in Indonesia, Turkey and the Islamic World* (Routledge, 2015).

resistance, while FIS resorted to armed resistance, despite experiencing similar levels of regime repression?

By answering these questions, we aim to add insights to the broader discussion about the compatibility of political Islam with democracy and the nation-state system.

B. The Algerian Civil War

The literature on why the crisis in Algeria escalated into a civil war is divided between those who attribute the violence to political Islam or Islam in general viewing it as inherently violent, and those who move beyond ideological explanations to consider broader political, social, and structural factors. Mohapatra argues that terrorists, in general, are a group of psychopaths; they are the product of an ideology, which he labels “radical Islamic fundamentalism”. At the heart of this philosophy is the conviction that modern time constitutes a new Jahiliyya, or neo-paganism, alluding to the pre-Islamic times. The incursion of Western mate, together with contemporary nationalism and secularism, has caused Islam to degenerate.¹² This view dominates the scholarship on religious violence. However, the example of FJP illustrates that Islamists can be pacific.

Ross argues that oil-rich states are more likely to escalate conflicts into wars because oil provides a good motive to opposition groups to engage in armed conflict.¹³ Furthermore, oil can be an indirect cause of violence because oil-rich states tend to rely heavily on their resources, which creates a flawed economic structure, vulnerable to corruption and economic crisis, and human rights violations, which themselves lead to violence, with the population being dissatisfied.¹⁴ Shabafrouz developed the rentier state theory to explain the causal

¹² Aswini K. Mohapatra, “Radical Islam: Ideology Behind Global Terrorism,” *India Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2002): 93–112, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45073495>.

¹³ Michael L. Ross, “What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War? - Michael L. Ross, 2004,” *SAGE Publications* 41, no. 3 (2004), doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304043773>.

¹⁴ Indra De Soysa and Eric Neumayer, “Resource Wealth and the Risk of Civil War Onset: Results from a New Dataset of Natural Resource Rents, 1970–1999,” *Conflict*

mechanism that led to the *décennie noire* by adding the contextual dimension. Shabafrouz argues that oil states are more likely to have certain domestic and international conditions: resource-specific conditions that make them prone to violence.¹⁵

Nonetheless, resource-specific conditions such as economic failure, corruption, and others also characterize non-rentier states, such as the case of Egypt around the time of the 2011 uprising. Furthermore, many rentier states have one of the lowest corruption indices globally. The United Arab Emirates ranks 27th internationally among the least corrupt states.¹⁶ Therefore, oil does not necessarily create conflict.

Other scholars opt for the failed state hypothesis that advocates that socio-economic and political circumstances that preceded the conflict. Accordingly, terrorists use failed states to plan and organize for operations. The state failure in this context is not a total failure of the state, but the failure of a portion of its population: disenfranchised segments of the populace can turn into terrorists.¹⁷ However, Gurr in *Why Men Rebel?* explains that individuals resort to violent means when they are faced with relative (perceived) deprivation.¹⁸ Hence, FIS's members were just expressing their perceived deprivation in the form of a coup on their elections through means of violence. However, this view as well cannot explain the case of the Muslim Brothers in the post-coup period

Management and Peace Science 24, no. 3 (2007): 201–18, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26275214>.

¹⁵ Miriam Shabafrouz, "Oil and the Eruption of the Algerian Civil War: A Context-Sensitive Analysis of the Ambivalent Impact of Resource Abundance," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2010, doi:10.2139/ssrn.1541906.

¹⁶ "2022 Corruption Perceptions Index: Explore the Results," *Transparency.Org*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>.

¹⁷ Anna Simons and David Tucker, "The Misleading Problem of Failed States: A 'Socio-Geography' of Terrorism in the Post-9/11 Era," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 387–401, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4017704>.

¹⁸ Tiffany Howard, *Failed States and the Origins of Violence: A Comparative Analysis of State Failure as a Root Cause of Terrorism and Political Violence* (Routledge, 2016).

C. Why Did the Muslim Brothers Remain Pacifist?

This particular question has not been investigated before. However, there is enough literature on why some Islamist parties become moderate with time, i.e., they have less tendency to resort to violence in times of crisis. Smith argues that the Muslim Brotherhood already benefited from the short time of execution of power. Then, an opposition already developed and manifested in mass protests against President Morsi. Abdul Fatah al-Sisi fired the administration just days after anti-Morsi rallies drew millions of Egyptians to the streets on June 30 to demand the president's resignation.¹⁹ Therefore, even if the Muslim Brothers wanted to resort to violence, they could not, given the strong opposition they have. However, tens of thousands gathered to protest against the coup²⁰. This shows that the party had a strong social base that could easily resort to violence. Moreover, a similar scenario occurred in the case of FIS when mass protests of more than 300.000 people came out against the primary victory of FIS in legislative elections.²¹ Yet, this did not stop the party from calling for violence later. Smith's work is the only literature on why FJP didn't resort to violence after the 2013 coup. This lacuna in literature is what gives this study a special authenticity, especially since no other work has compared the two cases of FIS and FJP so far.

D. Research Gap and Significance

¹⁹ Jack A Smith, "Egypt's Coup: Progressive or Regressive?," *Foreign Policy Journal*, 2013.

²⁰ "'Turning Point': What Happened during Egypt's Rabaa Massacre 10 Years Ago?," *Al Jazeera*, accessed January 5, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/14/turning-point-what-happened-during-egypts-rabaa-massacre-10-years-ago>.

²¹ "Manifestation à Alger « pour sauver la démocratie », " *Les Echos*, January 3, 1992, sec. 1992, <https://www.lesechos.fr>.

There is extensive literature on political Islam and democratization; nonetheless, few studies have comparatively examined why Islamist movements respond differently to repression. The existing literature explains the Algerian civil war from different perspectives, including ideology, economy, and structure. Research on the Muslim Brotherhood mainly focuses on democratization and authoritarianism. Very little attention is given to the Muslim Brothers, who largely adopted peaceful resistance after the 2013 coup. In addition, little attention has been given to why the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) in Algeria resorted to violence after the 1992 coup. Moreover, no study has systematically compared the two cases within a single analytical framework.

This study addresses this gap by comparing FIS and FJP through the lens of inclusion-moderation theory. The study is significant because it contributes to debates on political Islam, democracy, and political violence by showing that Islamist movements are not inherently violent, but that their behavior is shaped by institutional and political experiences, particularly the duration of political inclusion

II. Methods

In this paper, we will base our analysis on the “inclusion-moderation theory,” which dismisses the idea that Islamist parties use democracy to rise to power to establish a theocracy. Instead, it stipulates that democracy and inclusion of these parties have moderating effects on them. In summary, the inclusion-moderation thesis is based on the assumption that competitive election processes tame extreme ideas, causing extremist parties to become more moderate. As parties are included in their electoral systems, competitive procedures and agreements drive them from the tail end of their ideological spectrums to stances that are more acceptable to larger constituencies.²²

Religious party researchers have determined that parties can primarily moderate in two dimensions: doctrine and/or behavior. Behavioral moderation

²² Sultan Tepe, “The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis: An Overview,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Sultan Tepe (Oxford University Press, 2019), doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.788.

is defined as "the adoption of electoral, conciliatory, and nonconfrontational strategies that seek compromise and peaceful resolution of disputes over non-electoral, provocative, and confrontational strategies that are not necessarily violent but may involve contentious action. Ideological moderation is defined as a process by which political actors espouse ideas that do not contradict the principles of popular sovereignty, political pluralism, and limits on arbitrary state power."²³

In this study, we will focus solely on behavioral moderation, as the Islamist parties studied did not have the opportunity to rule after the elections due to the coup; therefore, we cannot examine their ideological transformation.

It is important to note that moderation "entails change that should be understood as a movement along a continuum from radical to moderate," and that "party change is not necessarily an all-encompassing process and may comprise simultaneous moderation and immoderation processes."²⁴ In other words, to explain the behavioral change of FIS and FJP, we should look at the origins of the parties and their historical development since the parties were formed. Hence, it is not enough to look at the period around the coups and the uprisings, but long before that.

We argue that the FJP's long history of inclusion and exclusion allowed it to develop behavioral moderation, which explains its persistence with peaceful resistance. On the other hand, FIS was prone to violence due to its brief inclusion and exclusion history, which hindered behavioral moderation.

Prolonged political inclusion contributes to behavioral moderation by gradually socializing Islamist movements into institutional and electoral politics. Repeated participation in elections, parliament, coalition-building, and other democratic processes encourages Islamist actors to adopt more pragmatic, conciliatory, and non-violent strategies to preserve political legitimacy and

²³ Günes Murat Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation* (University of Texas Press, 2010).

²⁴ Manfred Brocker and Mirjam Künkler, "Religious Parties: Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis1 - Introduction," *Party Politics* 19, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 171–86, doi:10.1177/1354068812473673.

broaden electoral support.²⁵ Over time, political inclusion increased the party's organizational investment in legal political participation, including elections, parliament, professional syndicates, and coalition-building. This gradual integration into formal politics raised the costs of violent confrontation and encouraged more pragmatic and peaceful strategies of political engagement.²⁶

The choice of FIS as a case study has implications in terms of authenticity and methodology. FIS is a rarely studied political party. Most of the research focuses on FIS after being divided into insurgencies, GIA, and AIS. Thus, very limited research perceives the party as an actual actor in the failed democratic transition in the region.

In addition, choosing FIS is methodologically suitable to be compared with FJP. The two parties share many variables in common, such as ideology, regime repression, political inclusion, and contextual conditions: they were both born during Arab nationalism, they both developed during economic opening, and most importantly, they both were the main actors during the first democratic experiences in Algeria and Egypt. The two parties lost their elections due to military coups. Hence, it is possible to exclude many possible extravagant variables. Despite the many similarities between the two cases, two opposite scenarios occurred; hence, the two cases are comparable.

We will employ a genealogical comparison between the two parties, FJP and FIS, to compare and contrast their history of political inclusion and/or exclusion, using an extensive literature review and archival review. Furthermore, we will employ "Mill's method of difference" to eliminate extraneous variables, allowing us to identify the causal variables. We shall use this method when two situations are identical except for one factor, and the phenomenon happens in one but not the other, then the difference is likely the cause or a key part of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Khalil Al-Anani, "The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis: Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Khalil Al-Anani (Oxford University Press, 2019), doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1332.

cause of the phenomenon.²⁷ Our independent variable is the “history of inclusion” and the dependent variable is “post-coup behavior” whether violent or peaceful.

A. Defining Concepts

This study distinguishes between violent groups, insurgency, and terrorism, which are often used interchangeably in the literature despite important analytical differences. While a significant body of literature characterizes groups such as GIA and AIS as terrorist organizations.²⁸ This study focuses primarily on behavioral responses to political exclusion and repression rather than on legal classifications of terrorism. Therefore, the concept of violence in this study refers broadly to the adoption of armed or coercive strategies in response to political crises.

The definition of terrorism is variant and controversial. Bruce Hoffman defines terrorism in relation to four criteria: “a) the use or threat of violence; b) the targeting of civilians, property, or government; c) the intent of creating fear aimed at altering the status quo; and d) a group activity.”²⁹ Although GIA and AIS fall under the first criterion, which is the use of violence, we are not trying to classify the two groups, but we only aim to find out why they actually resort to violence. However, we do not claim that the two groups are not terrorist groups.

A very important concept we want to clearly define in this study is “Islamism.” While Islamism as a concept is debated and can signify different ideas. In this study, we approach Islamism as “an intellectual, moral, societal, economic, political, and inter-state movement that is based on Islam as the main reference point and aims for a ‘new’ conception of the person, society, politics/state, and thus a new model of social organization and universal Islamic

²⁷ Hans Keman and Jaap J. Woldendorp, eds., *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), doi:10.4337/9781784710828.

²⁸ Anneli Botha, “Terrorism in the Maghreb,” 2008.

²⁹ Heather S. Gregg, “Defining and Distinguishing Secular and Religious Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 2 (2014): 37.

Union.”³⁰ In other words, “it is Islam coming to life, following its authority and ideals, with the intention of it to be established in every historical and societal condition in the world.”³¹ There are three generations of Islamists that we can trace back. First Generation Islamists (1850-1924) aimed to save the Ottoman Empire from Western domination and decline through returning to the Qur’an and Sunnah, reopening *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), and reviving the spirit of *jihad* against colonialism. This generation saw Islam as the solution to Muslim political and civilizational decline. Second Generation Islamists (1950-2000) aimed to build an Islamic state and Islamic society. The modern nation-state became its reference framework. This generation is more politicized, including engineers, doctors, academics, journalists, and politicians. It is also Western-educated, but it tried to “Islamize” modern political structures. This generation transformed Islamism into a modern political project centered on the Islamic state. Third Generation Islamists (2000s-present) emerged after Turkey’s 1997 political crisis, Khatami’s presidency in Iran, and the Arab Spring in Egypt. Its main goal is not simply to seize the state, but to rethink and transform the concept of the state itself according to Islamic principles.³² In this study, we study a combination of the second and third generations of Islamists.

III. Result and Discussion

A. The Genesis of FJP

FJP is the offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; it is a political party that was formed by Muslim Brothers with the outbreak of the 2011 uprising. The Muslim Brotherhood's political branch in Egypt is the most significant of these parties because of its large attendance and impact on the Egyptian people's political, economic, and social lives. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB), sometimes known as “the mother of the FJP,” is the largest and most widespread Islamic movement in the Muslim world, with chapters in over 80 countries. Since its inception in 1928, MB has worked tirelessly to fulfil its

³⁰ Ali Bulaç, “On Islamism: Its Roots, Development and Future,” *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 4 (2012): 67–68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³² *Ibid.*, 69–73.

renowned motto (Islam is the Solution) and to put al-Shari'ah³³ into the practice of politics.³⁴

Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brothers' Society, was born in Mahmudiyya, a tiny hamlet near Alexandria, in 1906. Young Hasan studied Rashid Rida's al-Manar and visited the Hasafiyya Sufi order under the influence of his father, who was a religious expert. He founded the Muslim Brothers' Society in the late 1920s and made Cairo its headquarters in 1932. Throughout the 1930s, the Muslim Brothers became increasingly politicized, with the purpose of creating an Islamic State.³⁵ Al-Banna was killed by the secret police in 1949, and his son-in-law, Said Ramadan, replaced him during the 1950s. In 1952, the Free Officers rose to power after the famous Egyptian Revolution in a coup against King Farouk. Gamal Abdel Nasser became president of the newly founded republic, and all political activity was banned. The Brothers faced a period of extreme repression by the new military regime, faced with radicalism, and even attempted to assassinate Nasser, which reflects the radicalization of the group. Sayyid Qutb, who spent most of his life in Nasser's prisons, promoted the radical idea that Muslim societies are not Muslim because they are ruled by a secular nationalist and that these societies and their regimes are similar to Western societies in terms of Kufur.^{36 37} This idea would be the basic foundation of Global Jihad. Qutb's writings reflect the radicalization of the early Muslim Brothers.

B. A Brief History of Inclusion and Exclusion of FJP

The Freedom and Justice Party might be a short-lived political party; however, its beginning can be traced back to the early 1940s when the Muslim

³³ Islamic law

³⁴ Ahmed Atawna, Mohammad Othman, and Abu Hanifah Haris, "Political Pluralism from the Perspective of the Islamic Parties: Study on Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt," *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research* 21 (January 1, 2014): 1541–49, doi:10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2014.21.09.21722.

³⁵ Ana Soage and Jorge Franganillo, "The Muslim Brothers in Egypt," 2010, 39–56, doi:10.1057/9780230106871_4.

³⁶ Disbelief in the God of Islam

³⁷ Soage and Franganillo, "The Muslim Brothers in Egypt."

Brotherhood had started its formal contribution to politics. The Muslim Brotherhood participated in official politics from the early 1940s. But when the movement ran afoul of Nasser's dictatorship in the 1950s and 60s, it was outlawed and hundreds of its supporters were tortured and imprisoned. Beginning in the early 1970s, with Nasser's death, the Brotherhood entered politics again. The leaders of the Brotherhood were freed from prison by President Sadat, Nasser's successor, enabling them to reestablish their social and organizational networks.³⁸

The group enjoyed a period of political inclusion during the 1970s. However, later, with the decrease in Sadat's popularity, he had to practice more authoritarianism and started targeting both secular and Islamist opposition. Later, he was assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1981. During Mubarak's Era, the multi-party system initiated by Sadat improved along with civil rights and political inclusion of different political segments, including the Muslim Brothers. Nonetheless, during the 1990s, Mubarak shrank his political liberation, fearing the opposition to exploit this liberation, including the Muslim Brotherhood³⁹. Other developments happened between inclusion and exclusion. This brief history of FJP demonstrates that the party has roots embedded in history and that the group is radical, whether in terms of ideology or behavior. However, the short period of inclusion that followed the 2011 uprising demonstrates a kind of moderation, at least in terms of behavior.

The Brotherhood increased its social network, gained more political influence, and entered official politics under Mubarak. It cleverly took advantage of Mubarak's partial political opening to increase its influence on the political and social fronts⁴⁰. As a result, the movement took part in the elections of 1984 and 1987 and made notable progress. Additionally, the movement made connections with liberal, communist, and secular organizations to form electoral coalitions with them during the elections. Members of the Brotherhood were

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Larbi Sadiki, *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization* (Routledge, 2014).

forced to compete as independent candidates in elections since their movement was outlawed. The Brotherhood had to form electoral coalitions with other political groups in this system, which was based on the absolute list and needed political parties to receive 8% of the votes to acquire seats in parliament. It partnered with Labour and the al-Wafd Party and produced unexpected outcomes⁴¹. The Brotherhood also held a dominant position in several professional syndicates, as they were not happy with the syndicates' low socioeconomic performance and corruption.⁴²

Engineers, physicians, and solicitors have all attempted to replace the executive boards. The Brotherhood ran a large number of candidates in the professional syndicate and associations elections, buoyed by its recent political successes. The bulk of seats in engineering, medicine, and pharmacy were obtained by the movement. The Brotherhood established itself as the main opposition force in Egypt by the end of the 1980s as it grew its social and organizational network throughout the nation and solidified its position in the political sphere. But Mubarak concluded that the Brotherhood's social and political growth may endanger his National Democratic Party (NDP) and jeopardize his legitimacy. Consequently, it was inevitable that Mubarak and the Brotherhood would clash by the early 1990s. The state's worst campaign against the Brotherhood since the 1950s was carried out by the Mubarak administration in the 1990s.⁴³

Mubarak employed the upsurge in violence that occurred in Egypt in the first part of the 1990s as an excuse to persecute all Islamists, regardless of their methods, beliefs, or degree of moderation and peace. In response, the Brotherhood aimed to undermine the legitimacy of Mubarak's government and denigrate the NDP. As a result, it turned to liberal and secular forces and abstained from the 1990 legislative election. It also broadened its social network and became more visible in civic society. Numerous university and syndicate

⁴¹ Al-Anani, "The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis."

⁴² Hesham Al-Awadi, *The Muslim Brothers in Pursuit of Legitimacy: Power and Political Islam in Egypt Under Mubarak* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

⁴³ Ibid.

elections were won by its candidates. A new political generation that would spearhead the movement in the ensuing decades was also born during this period.⁴⁴

By adopting a progressive rhetoric, this generation made it possible for the Brotherhood to improve ties with liberal and secular forces. Additionally, it led to major shifts in the Brotherhood's philosophy in the ensuing ten years. Thus, a turning point in the doctrinal and political development of the Brotherhood came with the release of a "political reform" program in 2004. Three main goals were established by the initiative: political change, pluralism, and democracy. In addition, the Brotherhood has made contact with various political and ideological groups to block Mubarak's plan to hand over power to his son Gamal. Thus, it sufficiently cooperated with the Kefay movement, backed judges' calls for more independence, and advocated for further political and constitutional reform. Unexpectedly, the Brotherhood gained 20% of the parliamentary seats in 2005 before Mubarak launched a severe and extensive crackdown campaign against the movement. Many of the prominent leaders of the Brotherhood were detained by the security apparatus, including Khairat al-Shater, Hasan Malek, and Mohamed Ali Beshr. These individuals were convicted before a military tribunal and received sentences ranging from three to ten years.⁴⁵ Many of the leaders of the Brotherhood were not liberated and granted political freedom until the 2011 revolt.

After the overthrow of Mubarak in February 2011, the Brotherhood represented by FJP emerged as a prominent actor in Egypt's incipient political system. It came to power in June 2012, and Mohamed Morsi, its leader, was chosen freely and democratically to become Egypt's first elected president. After acting as a temporary government-in-waiting,⁴⁶ Egypt's new government, the Brotherhood, came with all the problems and ambitions of authority. Ironically embodying both identities, the Brotherhood's inability to make the necessary

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Al-Anani, "The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis."

⁴⁶ Tom Perry, "As the Government-in-Waiting, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Finds Its Voice," *Reuters*, February 28 (2012).

shift from a vociferous opposition movement to a dominant power became starkly apparent during Morsi's presidency. The Brotherhood also faced significant political, social, and economic obstacles that necessitated a radical overhaul of the movement's platform and tactics. Morsi took office on June 30, 2012, and was overthrown on July 3, 2013, by a military coup supported by public demonstrations.⁴⁷

Therefore, the history of inclusion and exclusion of FJP is a one-century story, which is a pretty long period. During this time, the Muslim Brothers moved from radicalism to the centre in the electoral spectrum, from anti-law rebels to an electoral participant in the political competition in Egypt. This can explain why FJP did not respond violently to the military coup in 2012; instead, they continued using peaceful methods of resistance, such as demonstrations.

C. The Genesis of FIS

The history of FIS is quite short and simple compared to FJP. Islamism in Algeria has grown extremely slowly due to multiple factors. French colonization lasted for so long, from 1830 to 1962, making the ultimate goal of revolutionary groups to be nationalist rather than religious in politics. After independence, the state exercised absolute censorship of religion, including mosques and imams' sermons. Mosques were only used for praying; gatherings there were illegal⁴⁸. In addition, Algeria did not have a traditional Islamic center such as Zitouna in Tunisia and Qarawyin in Morocco.⁴⁹

The founders of the Algerian Islamic movement are Abdellatif Soltani and Mohammed Sahnoun during the 1970s. The two figures attacked Algerian socialism, established after independence under President Houari *Boumédiène*. They criticized the governance of secular FLN for contributing to the decadence of moral values due to exporting Western conduct and atheist USSR's economic values. However, it was hard for them to achieve popular influence due to the

⁴⁷ Al-Anani, "The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis."

⁴⁸ Schneier, *Muslim Democracy*.

⁴⁹ Norman R. Larson, *Islamic Resurgence in Algeria: The Rise of the Islamic Salvation Front* (TEXAS UNIV AT AUSTIN, 1993).

heavy repression by the state. Censorship in mosques started to loosen in the early 1970s, and the creation of the so-called “free mosques” became increasingly popular, especially after the death of Boumédiène. This new web of mosques became the social base for the Islamist movement.⁵⁰

FIS was already there in the mosques in a hidden way; however, the catalyst for its formal formation was the 1988 October Riots. Oil prices fell drastically in 1986, causing a loss of \$US 7 billion annually, creating the economic failure that spurred the riots. An Islamist rebellious group, Algerian Renewal, with Ali Belhaj as its leader, exploited the riots to attract the rioting youth. The group called for amending the constitution to remove the ban on Islamist activity, increase civil rights and minimum wage, and other measures. President Chadli appointed three representatives of the Islamists to meet with him to negotiate their demands: Abassi Madani, a university professor; Ali Belhadj, a teacher and the Imam of the Bab-el-Oued mosque; and Mahfoudh Nahnah, a university professor. Through these negotiations, FLN recognized these Islamists as counter-elites. Following the outcome of the negotiations, Chadli agreed to draft a new constitution in 1989, opening the door for a multi-party system and democratic transition. Many political parties were formed, and FIS, with the leadership of the same Islamist representatives, met with President Chadli⁵¹.

The ideology of the FIS is a combination of the Muslim Brotherhood, represented by Abassi Madani, and Salafism, represented by Belhaj. Abassi Madani represents the Islamist trend that advocates for an Islamic nationalist viewpoint that prioritizes political factors as defined by a complicated national environment. These Islamists, also referred to as “Algerianists”, are not solely motivated by religious belief. Instead, they take into account the facts of the political setting as well as a reasonable calculation of what would benefit society.⁵² Thus, Madani represents the pragmatic, politically experienced, and intellectual

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

figure.⁵³ Jihad or armed resistance for this group is to establish an Islamic state; however, through returning to the democratic elections where it was left before the 1992 coup. This mission would be represented by AIS.

Ali Belhaj represents the Salafis. The movement's goal is overtly religious and ideological, rather than pragmatic or national. Salafis think that, over centuries of religious practice, Sufism and other popular rituals introduced significant changes to the faith. As a result, society follows a deviant version of Islam, as opposed to "sirat al-mustaquim."⁵⁴ Jihad or armed resistance for this group is the sixth pillar of Islam, and it is a mission from God to establish an Islamic State. This trend would be represented by GIA in the Civil War.

D. A Brief History of the Inclusion and Exclusion of FIS

Riots of the late 1980s led to the creation of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). There were significant disagreements amongst the many Islamist factions that created FIS, which ranged from moderates to extremists/fundamentalists on several matters. The association quickly became a major political force in Algeria because of the representation of many groupings. This aspect was highlighted by popular judgments from elections conducted in Algeria throughout the 1990s.⁵⁶

Ali Bellhedj's organization was opposed to democracy as a concept and all of its associated institutions, including elections and political parties. However, Madani's branch of the FIS was pro-democracy in that they saw elections as a means of seizing power and establishing an Islamic state afterward⁵⁷. Belhaj's

⁵³ Hugh Roberts, "From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition: The Expansion and Manipulation of Algerian Islamism, 1979-1992," *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, 1994, 428–29.

⁵⁴ The correct way of Islam

⁵⁵ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 2001, 65–82.

⁵⁶ Arun Kapil, "Algeria's Elections Show Islamist Strength," *Middle East Report*, no. 166 (1990): 31–36.

⁵⁷ Ray Takeyh, "Islamism in Algeria: A Struggle between Hope and Agony," *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 2 (2003): 62, <https://search.proquest.com/openview/6a3972aafa9f68bde33b2834246cc67e/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=31168>.

domination in the FIS exposed the conflict between Islamists and secular nationalists. The FIS exploited the newfound latitude to further its anti-democratic Islamist ideology, which went against the spirit of the democratization process in the regions where they emerged victorious in the first round of elections. In this instance, the army became involved in politics to defend the state's secular nature. The army's engagement in Algerian politics from the outset undermined the democratic process and caused the public's support to shift to the Islamists.⁵⁸

The goal of the formation of several new political groups was to address the democratic deficit. The FIS obtained legal legitimacy on the basis of a new constitution on 16th September 1989 (two other Islamic parties Hamas and Al-Nahda were also created with the FIS). The educated class and students alike were big fans of the FIS. As a result, the majority of the nation's institutions, universities, and schools were heavily politicized. The new Islamic parties, particularly the FIS, did a good job of articulating the social, economic, and political issues that the community was facing. Additionally, they expanded and strengthened their influence among the nation's religious sectors. Overall, the country's socioeconomic conditions at the end of the 1980s were ideal for Islamist organizations.⁵⁹ It is quite evident that the FIS's worldview opposed a secular country. The Algerian government at the time was allegedly anti-Islamic, according to the FIS.

The party was presented by them as a heavenly manifestation of the people's desire. "To vote against FIS is equal to voting against God," they declared during the elections. It was a given that the FIS's theocratic beliefs ran counter to democratic norms and secular traditions. This fundamentalist-secularist divide was the main impetus behind the 1992 military intervention in Algerian

⁵⁸ Sebastian N, "Islamic Movements Engaging with Democracy: Front Islamique Du Salut (FIS) and the Democratic Experiment in Algeria - Sebastian N., 2015."

⁵⁹ Robert Mortimer, "Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria," *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 4 (1991): 575–93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328350>.

politics.⁶⁰

June 1990 saw the first multiparty elections in Algerian independent history, with municipal and provincial councils being chosen based on the new constitution. The FIS, as the main opposition party, could effectively leverage the negative feelings towards the FLN. The FIS received 54.25% of the total votes cast, a majority of the seats in 55% of local councils (consisting of 853 communes out of 1540), and 66% of provincial councils (comprising 32 provinces out of 48). Only 28% of the votes were cast for the FLN. The FIS wanted an instant election to the parliament, buoyed by their success in the local and provincial council elections. On May 25, 1991, the FIS announced an extended nationwide strike to exert pressure on the government. The strike continued until June 7, 1991, during which time there were several violent events and legal infractions. Madani called for Benjedid's resignation, citing the government's inability to maintain peace and order. In light of this, the administration issued an emergency proclamation and even issued a warning regarding the postponement of the planned parliamentary elections. Numerous FIS leaders were imprisoned, and the group experienced severe persecution.⁶¹

Eventually, the army cancelled the elections and started important changes in the government. The FIS called for Jihad against the state and created a series of intentional provocations to the security forces.⁶² This marked the beginning of the Algerian Civil War. Therefore, the history of inclusion and exclusion of FIS in politics in Algeria is extremely short, lasting a couple of years. This short experience did not help the party to abandon its radical behavior, let alone ideology.

F. Applying Mill's Method of Difference

To summarize the results of our analysis, we employ "Mill's method of difference" to exclude all the irrelevant variables and to link the hypotheses'

⁶⁰ Sebastian N, "Islamic Movements Engaging with Democracy: Front Islamique Du Salut (FIS) and the Democratic Experiment in Algeria - Sebastian N., 2015."

⁶¹ Mortimer, "Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria."

⁶² Sebastian N, "Islamic Movements Engaging with Democracy: Front Islamique Du Salut (FIS) and the Democratic Experiment in Algeria - Sebastian N., 2015."

variables together. The analysis reveals that both FIS and FJP enjoyed a period of inclusion, yet the FJP had a more complex history that shifted between exclusion and inclusion over time. Both parties were equally repressed by the military after winning the elections, and both experienced a coup that ended their electoral victory.

Ideologically, both FJP and FIS share the same goal of establishing an Islamic state. While FIS represents a combination of Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism, the FJP is solely guided by the ideals of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, both branches within the FIS, GIA (Salafists) and AIS (Muslim Brothers), resorted to violence. Therefore, this minor difference has little to do with the two parties' reaction to the coup.

In terms of popular support, both parties had a strong social base, yet also faced significant opposition. Both parties relied on extensive networks of religious, social, educational, and syndical activities that mobilized large segments of society, creating a large electorate. However, the victory in the elections provoked large protests by those who viewed them as a threat to the secular character of the state. In both cases, the military invoked this as one of the pretexts for the coup.

The crucial difference between the two cases lies in the history of inclusion. The prolonged inclusion of the FJP allowed it to internalize institutional norms, thereby reducing its propensity for violent mobilization after exclusion. In contrast, the FIS was abruptly excluded from the political process after its first encounter with electoral politics. This brief history of inclusion and exclusion resulted in less political maturity, which manifested in internal fragmentation and violence: both its military branches, GIA and AIS, organized in insurgent groups.

Table 1 below shows that two Islamist parties in both Algeria and Egypt share many independent variables(X) in common, except for the history of inclusion (x). The consequence (Y): the reaction of the party to the coup is different, which shows that the history of inclusion determines the response of the party to the coup. Therefore, our hypothesis can be accepted. The table demonstrates that the only significant divergent variable is the duration of

political inclusion, supporting the causal inference that inclusion history shapes post-coup behavior.

Table 1: Mill's method of difference to explain the response of FIS and FJP to the coup

Party	FIS/ FJP
Inclusion	Similar
Regime repression	Similar
Democratic experience	Similar
Coup on the elections	Similar
Popular support	Similar
Original Ideology	Similar
History of Inclusion (X)	Different
Reactions to the coup (Y)	Opposite

The contrasting reactions of the FIS and the FJP to military coups in Algeria and Egypt, respectively, underscore the pivotal role of political inclusion experience in shaping Islamist parties' responses to repression.

The FJP's complex history of inclusion and exclusion fostered behavioral moderation, which led to a commitment to peaceful resistance, while the FIS's brief history of inclusion contributed to a lack of behavioral moderation, resulting in its resort to violence.

What does this reveal about the compatibility between political Islam, democracy, and the nation-state? While this study is limited in scope, focusing solely on behavioral moderation and not addressing ideological moderation, it nonetheless provides valuable insights into this critical question. First, Islamist parties are not exceptional in the political realm; the same principles that apply to other radical political parties also apply to them. Second, Islamist parties are more likely to adhere to the rules of the game if they have undergone a prolonged history of inclusion and exclusion.

We might infer that while political Islam is not necessarily (in)compatible with democracy, the rules of the game compel Islamist parties to adapt, a dynamic also observed in other radical political parties. However, generalizing this to ideological moderation is challenging due to the limited time these two Islamist parties spent in power. Notably, both parties remained steadfast in their core ideological objective: establishing an Islamic state.

IV. Conclusion

This study contributes to terrorism studies by demonstrating that violent outcomes are not ideologically predetermined but institutionally conditioned. The findings suggest that exclusionary political systems increase the likelihood of violent escalation, highlighting the importance of sustained political inclusion in preventing radicalization.

Future research could expand its scope to include ideological moderation and the long-term evolution of Islamist parties after inclusion. Further comparative research can examine if prolonged inclusion can gradually also change the ideological foundation of Islamist movements in terms of their understanding of democracy on the one hand and their general goal of establishing an Islamic state on the other hand. Another important area for future research is the impact of civil war contexts on Islamist moderation. The Syrian case is the best example. The current Syrian government, which is dominated by an Islamist leadership under President Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa, who also played the role of the opposition during the civil war, can be a good case study to observe the evolution of Islamism while in power. This case is also a perfect stage to study the role of foreign intervention in reshaping the behavioral and ideological tendencies of Islamist groups through funding, ideological support, or military operations. Such analysis would enrich our understanding of how international dynamics interact with domestic processes of inclusion and moderation.

Further, the Syrian case would allow for testing whether the inclusion-moderation hypothesis remains valid in the context of conflict and post-conflict.

In addition, studying Islamist actors that transitioned from armed struggle to political participation can add valuable insights into the conditions under which ideological flexibility is possible. Expanding the analytical scope beyond electoral cases like FIS and FJP towards a hybrid or a post-conflict context can deepen our understanding of the relationship between Islamism, political inclusion, and democratic transformation.

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