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Moderations among Salafists & Jihadists

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MODERATIONS AMONG SALAFISTS & JIHADISTS

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Chapter I - Introduction

How do radical Islamists (both violent and non-violent ones) undergo ideological and behavioral transformation? The existing corpus of scholarship offers limited insights into this extremely complicated process. While there is a great deal of work on the converse process of radicalization, there is no systematic study on how Salafist and Jihadist groups undergo moderation. There are existing theories on moderation, however, they do not offer much clarity on what 'moderation' means as an end state – much less provide for an explanation of how Islamist actors undergo it in terms of a process. The inclusion-moderation hypothesis, deradicalization and post-Islamism are not able to explain how ideological and behavioral transformation takes place among Salafist and Jihadists. Most of the work focused on these theories examines Muslim Brotherhood type movements, which unlike Salafists and Jihadists, do not reject the existing political structures and processes.

This research seeks to fill this gaping hole in the academic literature and is thus original in two respects. First, it offers a new theory of moderation which argues that Islamists change their ideas and behavior when their existing positions become untenable in the faces of changes in their geopolitical operating environment. Second, it examines how two key noteworthy political actors – Egypt's al-Dawah al-Salafiyah and Afghanistan's Taliban movement – changed their ideas and actions on how they sought to achieve their stated objectives of an Islamic state. It chronicles the journey of the Egyptian movement from a group that embraced democracy after decades of viewing it as an un-Islamic practice. Likewise, it traces the efforts of the Afghan group to move from being a purely armed insurgent entity to one that can negotiate a power-sharing arrangement. Through a compare and contrast of these

two very different type of radical Islamist actors I make the case for multiple types of Islamist moderations.

I unpack the enabling factors that both facilitate and inhibit the process of moderation and produces multiple outcomes. I argue that moderation among radical Islamists is not a function of the degree to which they are willing to accept western political ideas. Rather these actors moderate only when faced with geopolitical threats and opportunities, which force them to reinterpret their religious texts so as to adopt newer ways of pursuing their goal and even modifying the objective itself. I gauge this through the changes in their perception of the ideological "self" and "others". A key issue that I explore in this regard is the birth, adoption and rejection of new concepts within the body. What is the outcome of the struggle between the need to steadfastly adhere to core principles and the imperative to modify them in the face threats and latitudes.

The theoretical side to my research seeks answers to the following questions: What is Islamist moderation? How do radical Islamist groups moderate and what factors propel them towards ideological and behavioral change? What are the geopolitical antecedents that force Islamists to undergo these shifts? What is the relationship between the variant Islamist attitudes towards democracy and the corresponding scope of moderation? Is ideological moderation the outcome of the weakening of autocratic systems? What is the interplay between interests and ideas in the making of moderation?

As regards the empirical component of this study I looked into a number of related questions. How do these two groups view the relationship between Islam and democracy? What is the degree to which they were willing to cooperate with ideological opponents? Why did they cease to reject mainstream politics how did

this change (to the extent that it did occur) take place? How do they view the notion of plurality of religious interpretations? What is their stance on the idea of popular sovereignty? To what extent do they accept minority rights? Can women transcend traditional roles and if so to what extent? How will they manage competing views on the role of religion in politics? What is their understanding of elections? How do they define shariah? To what degree are they open to ideas that are not rooted in the Quran and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad? How far are they willing to evolve beyond medieval political constructs?

My main argument is that moderation occurs among Islamists when they face irrelevance and/or they see room for growth, they revise their current political stances through a reinterpretation of religious texts. This is very different from other radical ideological actors that have undergone similar shifts in recent history such as Marxists and Catholic actors in Europe and elsewhere where democratic consolidation and social secularization were a priori conditions. Islamist moderation takes place in multiple forms given the different types of Islamist radicalism. Thus, starting points matter as they determine the path, type and extent of ideological and behavioral change. Islamist moderation also does not take place without a corresponding moderation among the opposing secular or non-Islamist actors (both state and non-state actors). As a result, religious norms evolve when Islamists complement their religious ideas with extra-religious concepts.

The global community of scholars studying Islamist moderation is a small one and research on this issue only took-off in the wake the September 11, 2001 attacks. The volume of scholarly work on this issue is much smaller than the political usage of the term 'moderation' and how it has been employed in open source discussions. In order to make sense of moderation it is critical to examine

how the term has become deeply contested internationally and more specifically in the Muslim world. Therefore, it is important to understand how this term has been conceptualized in this broader space. Doing so will then set the stage for a scholarly discussion of the issue. Before embarking upon this survey of the use of the term 'moderation' it is important to define some key terms used in the discussion such as terrorism, Islamism and Jihadism.

When I use the word 'terrorism' I specifically mean the violent acts perpetrated by Islamists against civilian targets as a tactic to achieve their strategic objective of trying to establish their envisioned Islamic polity. In this regard, terrorism is different from militancy, which is a broader term and includes terrorism but also encompasses the targeting of on non-civilians. Terrorism is also different from insurgency in terms of tradecraft. The latter is the work of a smaller entity (composed of cells) that does not have paramilitary capabilities. Insurgency is an altogether different scale of violence – usually the handiwork of a larger organization with a number of sub-units led by different commanders. Insurgent groups usually target both combatants and non-combatants.

'Islamism' is a 20th century ideological construct representing a specific Muslim response to secular modernity. Its adherents (Islamists) feel that incumbent Muslim regimes are un-Islamic and they seek to replace them with 'Islamic' state(s). The polity that Islamists desire would implement shariah. Islamism is also a very diverse geopolitical landscape with actors differing on how an 'Islamic' state ought to be established (via elections, revolution or armed insurrection) and the structure and scope of the desired state (Islamic republics, emirates, caliphate). Here it is important to note that political Islam is not synonymous with Islamism. The former represents all forms of Muslim politics starting from the dawn of Islam whereas the

latter is a subset of political Islam that is currently a major trend (but not the only one) within the Muslim world. 'Jihadism' is a small subset of 'Islamism' – a sub-ideology of disparate Islamist groups who see armed insurrection as the only way to establish the 'Islamic' state. Jihadists have subverted the classical understanding of jihad (in the military sense and a state enterprise) to justify their violent approach to achieving their goal.

Competing Narratives on Moderation

We live in a time where Islamism and democratization constitute the twin parallel trends driving the geopolitics of Arab and Muslim countries.[1] The conventional wisdom is that if democracy is to take root in the Middle East and South Asia then – among other pre-requisites – Islamists of various types (at least a majority of them) will have to bring their ideas and conduct in conformity with democratic norms.[2] This involves change in political thought, religious norms, and by extension the overall behavior of a highly diverse array of actors we identify as Islamists.[3] However, religio-political transformation is not simply an issue related to Islamists.[4] Islamist evolution is a subset of the wider question of the politics of modern Islam and Muslims, which has gained a great deal of global attention beginning shortly after the 1979 revolution in Iran that ousted a pro-western secular monarchy and led to the establishment of the world's first Islamist state.[5] However, since al-Qaeda's attacks on the United States 15 years ago, the global debate on this subject has exponentially intensified, especially given the "search for moderate Muslims" (as opposed to simply Islamists).[6] Thus, moderation has become an increasingly contested concept.

In fact, there have been attempts from within the American policy community to set the criteria for Muslim/Islamist moderation.[7] Indeed there are a

great many Muslims (a majority of whom are not Islamists) who continue to view the prefix of "moderate" as part of a hostile American/western attempt to tamper with their religion and secularize it.[8] There are also quite a few American and western policy people who have criticized the moderate-radical conceptual dichotomy as superficial.[9] On the other hand, there is no shortage of those Muslims who acknowledge a dire need to deal with the extremism plaguing their societies.[10] While this camp does not agree with the western prognosis, it realizes that the trend that began in the 18th century towards social, political, and economic revival of Muslim societies has gone awry.[11] In particular, there is a sense that the interaction between Islamist opposition forces and the post-colonial secular authoritarian orders has given way to both violent and non-violent extremism that needs to be countered.[12] This internal realization from within the Muslim world began in the early 1980s, shortly after the assassination of former Egyptian president Anwar El-Sadat at the hands of a group of Islamist insurrectionists.[13] These early efforts did not progress much as the geopolitical context was one of growing polarization between secular autocracy and a radicalizing Islamism.

The first substantive practical effort to counter radicalism and militancy came when Egypt's Gamaah al-Islamiyah in 1997 decided to renounce violence and embarked upon a process to purge its ideology of extremist tendencies.[14] Four years later, the attacks of September 11, 2001 proved to be a watershed event in that the U.S.-led global "war on terror" brought to bear a great deal of pressure across the planet demanding moderation among Muslims. The western *demand* for moderation has been met with a Muslim *supply*, which has many shapes.[15] The growth of the discourse (both popular and scholarly) triggered Muslim academics and advocates alike to engage in a lively debate with each other and their non-Muslim counterparts

in an effort to intellectually grapple with the notion of "moderate Islam".[16] At the same time, given the rise of terrorism and militancy (the bulk of which is taking place in the Muslim world) there have also been calls from within the Muslim milieu for the forging of an anti-extremism ethos.[17] Even on the eve of the Arab spring, it appeared that moderation was not just a trait being sought among Islamists; rather in Muslims in general.[18] The discourse of moderation was appropriated by a host of Muslim actors who sought to position themselves as moderates.[19] These sundry Muslim actors had two goals in mind – one involved dealing with a threat while the other had to do with seizing an opportunity.

The former was about trying to counter the perception in the west that extremism was widespread in Muslim-majority countries. But the situation also presented an opportunity for political advancement to each of these groupings. Broadly speaking, four different types of Muslim actors remain involved in this practice. These are: Islamists pursuing goals through legal and democratic means, traditionalists, secularists and certain Muslim regimes.[20] Moderation thus became a topic of interest at all three levels of analysis (individuals, groups & states). Since 9/11, there have been a number of geopolitical developments involving the notion of moderation across the globe. For starters, seizing upon a historic opportunity to advance its sectarian and national interests, the Khatami administration in Iran (which came close to war with the Taliban regime in 1998) sought to present itself as a moderate Islamist force and even collaborated with the Bush administration in the move to effect regime-change in Kabul. The subsequent establishment of the Karzai regime was described by the United States and its western allies as having put Afghanistan on the path of moderation.

In 2002, Pakistan's former military ruler, Gen Pervez Musharraf, coined the phrase 'enlightened moderation' and called upon the Muslim world to shun religious extremism and radicalism and move towards the path of socio-economic development.[21] Similarly, Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak latched on to the discourse of religious moderation as a means of justifying his authoritarian rule.[22] Many Muslim majority countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Syria, which historically cultivated jihadist proxies as instruments to further their foreign policy objectives, are now are dealing with the blowback in terms of extremism and terrorism.[23] Other countries like Malaysia and Indonesia were cited as examples of moderate Muslim polities.[24] Perhaps the most celebrated model of a "moderate" Muslim state has been Turkey, which has gone through two separate iterations. For decades, Turkey, due to its status as a secular republic and a fellow NATO member state, was viewed in the west as a model for the rest of the Muslim countries to emulate.[25] With the rise of the Justice & Development Party to power in 2002, the Turkish model took on a whole new meaning as an ideal blend between Islam and democracy.[26] However, following the protests against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (then prime minister) in the Spring of 2013 and much more recently in the wake of the July 15, 2016 failed coup, the 'Turkish model' is all but gone[27]

Under pressure from the United States following the events of Sept 11 and particularly after the American toppling of the Baathist regime in Iraq, Saudi Arabia also engaged in a major initiative to moderate the ultraconservative Salafist discourse in the country. This effort gained additional momentum after the 2003-05 al-Qaeda insurgency, which further pushed the Saudis to accelerate their efforts towards Salafist moderation in the kingdom. A key element that Riyadh used in this endeavor was the use of its 'ulema establishment to counter radical and militant

impulses – at the behavioral as well as discursive levels.[28] Despite being an undemocratic polity whose ideology is steeped in Salafist thought Saudi Arabia has had remarkable success in ensuring that extremism is kept in check on the home front.[29] The Saudi successes, however, do not serve as a model for others to emulate given the kingdom's unique political economy.[30] There have been other limited cases of cultivating Islamist moderation as well. For instance, in Iraq in 2007, the United States was able to negotiate an agreement with Sunni nationalist insurgents who had for four years fought hand-in-glove with jihadists against U.S. troops as well as the forces of the Shia-dominated government. Many of these tribal militias were actually jihadists themselves but agreed to turn against al-Qaeda in Iraq and join the political process built by the United States.[31]

The political principals of the Iraqi Sunnis, the tribal shayukh joined the political process and their militiamen were in significant numbers integrated into the security system of the al-Maliki regime.[32] On the other side of Iraq's Shia spectrum is the case of Muqtada al-Sadr. The al-Sadrite movement was outside the Shia establishment that emerged following the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. Sadr's journey from using his militia in 2003 to create space for himself in the Shia-dominated political order in Baghdad represents a major case in moderation of a radical Islamist force – a process that extended over a period of six years.[33] During the mid-2000s, yet another prominent case of moderation was that of Hamas, which after nearly a decade of renouncing the framework of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian National Authority participated in the legislative elections.[34] The largest Palestinian Islamist movement represents an exceptional case in that it is both a non-state actor and at the same time, the ruling authority of a sub-national entity, i.e., Gaza Strip.[35] Thus, its armed forces that periodically battle Israel can be treated as

militants or soldiers of an unrecognized but de facto government. Making the situation more complicated is that Hamas emerged from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which for four decades (1949-89) remained a social movement.[36]

From the late 1980s onwards, and for a period of 15-years, Hamas was simultaneously engaged in three different enterprises, i.e., a social movement, the main political rival to Fatah and a militant group fighting Israeli occupation. After the 2004 decapitation of its apex founding leadership followed by the 2005 unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas decided to join the Palestinian political process in 2006. In 2007, the view that Hamas was engaged in armed struggle only against Israel and in the Palestinian national context sought power only through democratic means was shaken. Its forces forcibly seized control of Gaza and threw out officials and security personnel affiliated with Fatah amid fears of a western and Israeli-backed coup by the secular Palestinian movement after attempts at a power-sharing agreement broke down.[37] Following the Arab spring, especially as neighboring Egypt has been experiencing a series of upheavals, Hamas has largely exhibited a desire to maintain calm along the Israeli-Gaza border and sought to move further moderate its behavior, especially as Salafist-jihadist groups began to consolidate both in the Strip and the Sinai Peninsula.[38] All these moves towards pragmatism have led to internal rifts within the movement.[39] In the past few years it has made a serious effort towards reconciliation with Fatah – a process that remains stalled.[40] Thus, the group has been straddling between militancy and moderation – depending upon contexts.[41]

Elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, Somalia has also experienced relative moderation after fragmentation of jihadists into two broad camps of nationalist and transnational entities. By the late 2000s, there was a U.S-led effort to counter the rise

of the latter type led by the group known as al-Shabaab. This initiative led to the incorporation of nationalist Islamist militias into the transitional government led by secularists.[42] That effort paved the way for leader of the Supreme Islamic Courts Council, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed to become president of the country who in September 2016 is reportedly in the race for the top job once again.[43] Since then there have been examples of further moderation among Somalian jihadists with the decision of Hizb al-Islam led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys to part ways with al-Shabaab, and even splits within Al-Shabaab itself.[44] In a March 2013 meeting with religious leaders, Prime Minister, Abdiweli Shaykh Ahmad, announced the creation of a government office for ulema as part of the effort to counter the activities and ideology of the al-Shabaab jihadist organization.[45] The new office is intended to improve the relationship between the federal government and the ulema so as to have a more effective policy-making process and the shaping of public opinion in the Horn of Africa nation. The meeting, which was attended by deputy prime minister, Ridwan Hirsi (who also holds the portfolio of religious affairs), the minsters of justice/constitutional affairs, information as well as 16 religious scholars, was geared towards bringing the ulema community closer to the state so as to create a mechanism to achieve the task of wresting control of religious discourse away from the jihadists.

Similarly, on the western end of the continent, in Nigeria, the military as well as state governments have been pushing for efforts towards the spread of religious moderation. These efforts have gained momentum as the Boko Haram threat has magnified over the years. The matter has gained urgency with the so-called Islamic State aka Daesh gaining a foothold in the West African nation and the wider Lake Chad region after a significant faction of Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the

jihadist regime based in Syria and Iraq. Professor Zakariyau Useni, who heads the Arabic department at the University of IIorin, delivered a paper titled "Moderation as Religious Leaders' Effective Instrument for Sustainable Peace, Security, and Progress in Nigeria," at a conference organized by the Nigerian Army's Islamic Affairs directorate in Ibadan.[46] Prof Useni stressed that the ulema needed to be aware that moderation was a centerpiece of Islam as a pre-requisite for adherence to moderation in their teachings and conduct. While Useni argued that the various ulema should collaborate with one another and be mindful that not all interpretations that they come across are correct, the army's director of religious affairs, Brig-General. Muhammadu Abdussalam pointed out that Islam is not only moderate; it should also be practiced moderately. In the country's Kwara state, Governor Alhaji Abdulfatah Ahmed, advocated the need for the creation of an ulema body consisting of "reputable and knowledgeable scholars, who would propagate moderation. In this way they could help "insulate" the youth "from fundamentalist preaching" available on the Internet and via other mediums.[47]

Even though in the years since the outbreak of the Arab Spring radicalism has increased manifold the northern rim of the African continent, in the Maghreb region, witnessed efforts towards Islamist moderation. By the end of the 2000s, a five-year process of dialogue between the Libyan government and the North African state's main jihadist group culminated in renunciation of violence by the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.[48] The success of the ousted Qaddhafi regime is not without precedent as Libya's western neighbor Algeria had gone through its own experience of moderating Islamist insurgents who had waged a bloody insurgency during the 1990s. In Algeria, the military-led regime's efforts garnered mixed results with the military wing of the main Islamist movement, Front Islamique de Salut disarming as

well as factions from the more hardline groups.[49] Shortly after his first election, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika initiated an amnesty program to incentivize moderation of militants. While many Arab and Muslim states through a mix of coercion and encouragement have sought to get militants to give up armed struggle some have also established what have come to be known as rehabilitation centers. These facilities are designed to ideologically de-program and re-program militants who have been captured or have surrendered so as to prevent recidivism and more importantly re-integration in mainstream life.[50] Some of the more prominent ones where former militants are subjected to ideological, sociological and psychological treatment include Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.[51]

There are also cases of prominent Muslim individuals involved in charting a path of moderation in what appears to be an age marked by extremism. Most prominent among them is the Qatar-based Egyptian scholar, Sheikh Yusuf al Qaradawi under whose name the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies in 2008 established the Al-Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Renewal.[52] Another noteworthy name is that of Prof Khaled Abou El Fadel, an Egyptian academic who teaches Islamic law at the UCLA.[53] While on one end we have Muslim theologians, jurists, and academics, the post-9/11 decade also saw the emergence of activists from across the political spectrum, especially former radical Islamists who have taken the call of moderation.[54] Such individuals have been welcomed by western governments as well as by groups within Muslim countries who are anxious to advance the cause of religio-political moderation. In fact an entire discourse has been developed around the notion of countering violent extremism and radicalization.[55] Furthermore, a number of governmental, the private sector, and even academic institutions have been created to conduct studies on how to combat radicalization and promote

moderation.[56] Similarly, since September 11, countless conferences, symposiums, seminars have been organized in order to understand radicalization and identify ways and means of fostering moderation.[57]

In general, the pursuit of moderation is a global good given the scourge of violent extremism that has rapidly spread across the globe. This is especially as Daesh has eclipsed as al-Qaeda as the main jihadist threat. While entities like Daesh, al-Qaeda and others who subscribe to a transnational jihadist agenda of establishing caliphates and emirates are extremely unlikely to heed the call for moderation. However, nationalist jihadist groups such as the Taliban in the Afghanistan, Ahrar al-Sham in Syria and a host of others who do not seek to upend the international system have a chance of being brought into mainstream politics. For such efforts to succeed the wider geopolitical milieus must also experience a decline in the non-violent forms of extremism – most prominently in the form of Salafists many of whom are social movements and not necessarily political actors. Here is where the matter becomes extremely convoluted. Extremism overlaps organically with religious conservatism. It is almost impossible to distinguish between ideas and actions that are normally treated as religiously conservative and those that constitute extremism. It is for this reason that the global campaign to tackle the scourge of extremism has been given the moniker ‘countering violent extremism’.

Ever since President Barack Hussain Obama assumed the U.S. presidency in 2009, Washington and its NATO allies have sought to end the military mission in Afghanistan, which began with the toppling of the Taliban regime in October 2001. A key component of this effort to drawdown western forces from the southwest nation has been to reach a negotiated a settlement with the Taliban movement that has been waging a steadily growing insurgency. The idea has been that the Afghan

insurrectionist Islamist movement is a nationalist jihadist force and thus not irreconcilable as is the case with al-Qaeda.[58] Consequently it could potentially be nudged towards the Afghan national mainstream.[59] What this implied was that the Taliban can be moderated.[60] This search for moderate Taliban has been going on since shortly after the Taliban regime fell.[61] However, it is only in the last eight years that the Afghan Taliban leadership has shown signs that it is prepared to negotiate rather than pursue a zero-sum towards regaining power that the movement lost in late 2001.[62] Over the past five years this process has been affected by the logic of the battlespace, which has heavily undermined the effort at political reconciliation.

Both the insurgent movement and the Afghan state have moved in ways that have created conditions inconducive to steering the Taliban towards moderation. The movement itself has gone through internal problems. More importantly, the system that was supposed to absorb the Taliban into a power-sharing arrangement has become extremely incoherent. The result has been that the initial optimism that a negotiated settlement could be achieved has all but dissipated. Even if some progress towards reduction of violence had been achieved incorporating the movement into the democratic dispensation whose foundations were laid during the Bonn process in 2002 was at best going to be an extremely long-term process. Clearly this process remains highly fragile and has become increasingly complex with its direction unclear. Nonetheless, the example of the Afghan Taliban talks is as close as we have gotten to in terms of potentially bringing in a jihadist group into a western-style political system. It is for this reason why I have chosen it as one of my two case studies for this research.

Undoubtedly the event that has had the most impact on the issue of Islamist moderation is the Arab spring. Tunisia, the cradle of the popular uprising against

authoritarianism continues to lead the region in that the country's Islamist movement, Ennahda has emerged a model of Islamist moderation. This is due to its ability to hammer out disputes with its secular competitors since it won the first elections held in fall of 2011 after the uprising that toppled the country's long-serving dictator, Zine El-Abideen Ben-Ali. In sharp contrast, Egypt is hurtling towards the opposite direction given the Summer 2013 coup led by former military chief, Field Marshall Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi. The ouster of the country's first democratically elected government led by President Mohamed Morsi as well as the use of force by the regime to put down resistance from his Muslim Brotherhood movement, together have reinforced the perception among a large segment of the Islamist youth that moderation does not pay.[63] As a result, we are seeing youth elements of the Brotherhood becoming radicalized with some engaging in violent protests while others are being lured towards outright armed struggle and aligning with jihadist forces.[64] The various responses to the coup from different Egyptian Islamists have further convoluted the notion of moderation. At a time when the Brotherhood has taken to the path of public unrest, the country's largest Salafist party, al-Nour (the other case study that I will be examining) supported the putsch against Morsi.

Between these two positions was the stance of the erstwhile jihadist group, Gamaah al-Islamiyah (GaI). GaI opposed the coup but refrained from the path of confrontation and instead at the time called for the military regime to reconcile with the Brotherhood. Hizb al-Wasat, a party that was formed in the mid 1990s by former members of the Brotherhood has over the years gained a great deal of attention as a moderate group. Al-Wasat's moderation has been in fluctuation as is evident from the fact that it aligned itself with the Brotherhood though later on its leader, Abdel

‘Ala Maadi was released by the military authorities. There is also the case of the former MB leader, Abdel-Monem Abul Futouh, who since his decision to part ways with the Brotherhood and enter the 2012 presidential race has been described as a moderate.[65] Abul Futouh’s moderation is unique in that he is the founder of the Strong Egypt Party – a centrist movement that seeks to attract Egyptians of various ideological persuasions (Islamist, leftist, and liberal) in the struggle to establish a democratic polity. The group supported the public uprising against Morsi. But it opposed the coup that ousted the former president and has since rejected the political roadmap. That said, it has avoided any practical steps against the post-coup political process.

In neighboring Syria, where an extremely fragmented rebel landscape is fighting the Alawite-dominated regime of President Bashar al-Assad, moderation has rapidly become a relative phenomenon.[66] By late 2011 when civil agitation gave way to an armed uprising the secular nationalist Free Syrian Army (FSA) was touted as the moderate force. The FSA was seen in contrast with the various Islamist militias that quickly began to mushroom.[67] Within a year, however, multiple Islamist militias began dominating the armed opposition to the regime and rather quickly eclipsed the FSA. It wasn’t long before it also became clear that many (if not most) of these armed Islamist entities subscribed to one form of Salafist-jihadism or another.[68] The most prominent among them is Ahrar al-Sham, which regional and even western powers have increasingly been treating as a moderate force. This is because of its nationalist leanings and the fact that it is the single largest Syrian rebel movement and is backed by both Qatar and Turkey. Of course Ahrar al-Sham is seen as moderate in relation to al-Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusrah (JaN) and Daesh.

Complicating matters is the fact that JaN is a key ally of Ahrar al-Sham and was once an ally of Daesh. In 2012, when the Iraqi node of the al-Qaeda network known as the Islamic State of Iraq expanded into Syria it merged with JaN forming what became the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). JaN was not completely comfortable with the Iraqi transnational jihadists' attempts to render the Mesopotamian-Levantine landmass into a singular battlespace.[69] As a result, JaN aligned with ISIS but retained its separate organizational structure. When al-Qaeda's global leader Ayman al-Zawahiri intervened in the matter and sought to reverse the merger JaN was able to reconstitute itself as a distinct organization. ISIS' defiant rejection of al-Zawahiri's decision eventually led to al-Qaeda declaring in early 2014 that ISIS was not affiliated with it citing the latter's "extremism. By this time ISIS had declared the establishment of its self-styled caliphate after its resurgence in Iraq where it took over the country's largest city, Mosul. Al-Zawahiri issued guidelines that forbade: fighting "deviant" Muslim sects such as the Shia; killing non-Muslim groups such as Christians; targeting non-combatants women and children; harming Muslim life and property, and attacks in mosques, markets and other public places.[70]

Paradoxically, when compared to Daesh, al-Qaeda appears as a relative "moderate" force. If this was not enough to muddy the waters, JaN, encouraged by Qatar, moved to formally separate from al-Qaeda. On July 28, 2016 Jabhat al-Nusrah (JaN) announced its formal disassociation with al-Qaeda and renamed itself as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFaS). The move was informed by the need to assume a leading role within Syria's nationalist struggle against the Assad regime. This separation of sorts, however, took place with al-Zawahiri's blessings.[71] What this means is that the al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria now more than ever before straddles a grey area between the spaces of moderation and radicalism. This move is informed

by its imperative to distinguish itself from Daesh. In this way al-Qaeda not only hopes to assume leadership of the Syrian rebels but also to regain the global jihadist leadership from Daesh.

Al-Qaeda isn't the only one competing with Daesh. Saudi Arabia is in a much bigger struggle with jihadist regime.[72] After all Daesh is challenging Saudi kingdom over ideological "ownership" of their shared Salafist beliefs.[73] Furthermore, the Saudis know that the only way it could fight Iran and its Arab Shia allies is if the Syrian rebels could be distinguished from the likes of Daesh and al-Qaeda.[74] Riyadh did not want to empower transnational jihadists while in the process of using Salafist-jihadist militias to effectively fight against the Alawite regime and its Iranian and Shia supporters (primarily Hezbollah). Al-Qaeda and its rival Daesh could easily exploit sectarian motivations to advance themselves at a time when the region is in turmoil. In this way they are even threatening the Saudis on the home front where the monarchy is already trying to balance between the need for reforms and assuaging the conservatives.[75] Undermining the Saudi imperative to cultivate religious moderation within the kingdom is that it faces a jihadist threat on both its northern and southern flank. In addition to Daesh penetrating the kingdom from the north al-Qaeda and Daesh are expanding their tentacles in Yemen.

They are both exploiting the conditions created by the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen. The 18-month old campaign has failed to restore the pro-Saudi government ousted by the opposition led by the pro-Iranian Houthi movement. Saudi-backed forces loyal to the ousted government have taken the port city of Aden and many parts of the south. However, the Houthis control the capital along with roughly half of the country to the north along the border with Saudi Arabia. The resulting anarchy has increased ungoverned spaces in Yemen where al-Qaeda and

Daesh are both expanding operations. They both seek to use the chaos in Yemen as a launchpad to be able to strike inside the kingdom where they have their respective support networks. This represents a dilemma for the Saudis who are struggling to balance between their need to prevent the kingdom's ultraconservative identity from being subverted by these extremists forces. The kingdom is especially worried about setbacks to its rehab program that has been a signature program in its efforts towards promoting moderation on the domestic front.[76]

The Daesh regime in the center of the Middle East has increased the calls for Islamist moderation even if it is in relative terms. What is interesting is that in recent years, the concept of moderation has been employed by a number of Muslim leaders in different contexts. Key among these actors is Iranian president Hassan Rouhani who has referred to his government as one of "hope", "prudence" and above all, "moderation". Rouhani began using the concept of moderation during his election campaign in early 2013 in order to distinguish his political platform from the "radicalism" of his predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. After his election his pragmatic conservative administration has used the moderation v extremism/radicalism dichotomy in his struggle against hardline clerical and security establishments.[77] The moderation mantra of the Rouhani government has much more to do with the foreign policy front where Tehran is in the midst of historic negotiations with the United States geared towards the Islamic republic's rehabilitation in the international community. Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif, in an April 9 statement explained that his country began negotiations over the country's controversial nuclear program because of "its moderate spirit and tendency towards moderation and peacefulness." The Rouhani government's use of the moderation discourse has elicited strong reactions from his domestic opponents.

Rouhani has been criticized for what his opponents see as compromises on the country's strategic interests. The hardliners feel that the president's policies are undermining the revolutionary fabric of the republic. They see many of the reformists whom the hardliners have labeled as "seditionists" (for their role in the 2009 Green uprising) and who support Rouhani's government of moderation as engaged in efforts to secularize and westernize the country.[78] Towards the latter half of Rouhani's first term the Iranian president's opponents responded to his charge that they were by emphasizing the idea of "infiltration".[79] They accused his administration of having allowed the west an opportunity to undermine the republic from within its body politic. In this way they are hoping to derail his re-election bid on May 19, 2017. Thus, in the Iranian context, the current government and its opponents see moderation as a political tool. Both also consider it as an ideological position – though from the opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Next door in Afghanistan, on March 2, 2014 the government formed a Moderation Center in the capital, Kabul. Deputy Education Minister for Islamic Studies described it as a body tasked to combat religious and other forms (ethnic, tribal, racial, and linguistic) of excesses and extremism. Then President Hamid Karzai's adviser on religious affairs, Prof. Nematallah Shahrani, who was appointed as its director told the gathering at the inauguration ceremony that the group would organize activities aimed at dealing with both extremes. Shahrani explained that promotion of virtue and prevention of vice was a key motivating factor behind the center's establishment. It was this attempt to claim ownership over normative Islam that the Islamic law minister, Dr. Yusof Neyazi explained with his remark: "Moderation does not mean, God forbid, to decrease Islamic orders and values.

Never! It is not allowed at all. However, we should understand it well. Friends and foes should be identified."[80]

Thus in the Afghan case we have the state pursuing a moderation campaign that is seeking to marginalize the Taliban movement. Simultaneously, Kabul is fearful that the jihadists could exploit its effort. The Taliban are pushing the idea that the moderation center as an outfit seeking to dilute the country's religious norms. The statements of these two officials also betray their own fears that the effort to combat religious extremism could end up undermining the state's religious credentials. In this way the calls for moderation may lead to the strengthening of radicalism. In other countries such as Azerbaijan the religious leadership's promotion of moderation is informed by geosectarian impulses mainly Salafist intolerance for the Shia. Allahsukur Pasazada, the head of the Board of Muslims of the Caucuses, called for a struggle against the "Wahhabi sect". In a related development, the chairman for the State Committee for Work with Religious Structures, Elsad Isgandorov, said that measures such as training courses for ulema would be organized as part of its efforts to thwart the spread of radicalism.[81]

Bahrain represents the most noteworthy case from the perspective of geosectarianism – the geopolitical struggle between the Saudi-led Sunni camp and Iran-led Shia bloc.[82] In the Persian Gulf Arab island nation moderation is being viewed from a very different perspective. With the help of security forces from Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, Manama's monarchical regime dominated by the country' Sunni minority was able to put down a largely Shia uprising that emerged as part of the Arab spring phenomenon. A key reason for the success of the al-Khalifa regime was that the largest Shia movement, al-Wefaq, was of the participatory Islamist genre and did not seek the overthrow of the monarchy. It is for

this reason that the group has sought to engage with the regime in a national dialogue process but one that is not making much headway. The polarized geosectarian regional climate and fears of an ascendant Iran has led to the Bahrainis banning the mainstream Shia Islamist movement. An unintended consequence of this is that al-Wefaq's moderate approach towards political change is losing appeal. Insurrectionist groups have found ground among the Shia majority community and weakened the influence of al-Wefaq – a trend that is referred to as the disappearing of moderation within the Persian Gulf island nation.[83]

In Southwest Asia, in 2014 we had a major decision by the new Pakistani government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, which took office after the May 2013 elections, to negotiate with the Taliban rebels.[84] A number of factors informed this decision. These include the fact that Washington's negotiations with the Afghan Taliban have all but collapsed. The Afghan state is going through a risky transition towards a post-Karzai era with the anti-Taliban factions are feuding with one another. The NATO drawdown in 2014 has allowed the Taliban to surge their forces and overwhelm Afghan security forces.[85] While previous attempts by the secularist Musharraf and Zardari governments to talk to the jihadist insurgents have not succeeded, the current right of center government felt it was better positioned to pull some of the factions within the Pakistani Taliban alliance towards the political mainstream. Towards this end it used "moderate" Islamist interlocutors as the main mediators; however, the Taliban rebels, instead of moving towards moderation, actually began using the government's channels to enhance the support network for radicalism within both state and society. Ultimately, the government was forced to abandon talks and launch the long-awaited military offensive in North Waziristan called Operation Zarb-e-Azb.[86]

Yet another recent rendition attributes the lack of moderation to the "demise" of Islamic epistemic bodies. Hassan Hassan, an expert on Syria and Salafist-jihadism at the Tahrir Institute in Washington, DC, in a February 2013 article in the Abu Dhabi-based UAE daily, The National, argues that the proliferation of extremism in Muslim societies stems from the decline of Islamic religious institutions.[87] Focusing on the case of Egypt's al-Azhar University, which he refers to as "the last bastion of pan-Islamic rationalism," Hassan explains the decline of its centuries old traditional Asharite rationalist outlook. He contends that al-Azhar's weakening is due to a confluence of factors. These include the institution's official integration into the state after the Nasserite coup in 1952; the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as variant forms of Salafism. What is fascinating about this discourse of moderation is that it continues to be used by a growing number of extremely diverse actors.

The aforementioned many examples highlight how moderation within the highly globalized Muslim religious geopolitical space has become a convoluted concept. A basic step towards unpacking it entails being mindful of the three broad contexts, i.e., jihadist, Islamist and Muslim. Within each of these categories there is a great deal of internal gradation. The geopolitics involving the western and Muslim worlds but more importantly the intra-Muslim ideological and identity contentions has led to an over usage of the term 'moderation'. The end result is a situation where one must ask the basic question: What does it mean (anymore)? Since the September 11 attacks, there has been a notable surge in academic scholarship to try and make sense of this highly relativized notion

Scholars have referred to such type of transformation or expected change in different terminological and conceptual terms. At one level there are different names to discuss what is essentially a shift in ideas and behavior and the varying

nomenclature is nothing more than a set of synonyms used to talk about the same phenomenon. That said different scholars are looking at different aspects of the broader dynamic of moderation. In the next chapter, I will identify the four broad theoretical constructs that have gained traction among the scholarly community on the issue of moderation. But before I dive into a systematic deconstruction of the concept I feel it is critical to point out the linguistic issues associated with the adjective 'moderate," which have long sustained definitional predicaments. Noted political scientist and geopolitical forecaster George Friedman in a March 2016 thought piece examines who can be called a moderate.[88] Quoting one time Republican presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, Friedman starts off with the premise that moderation is a virtue and therefore moderates are highly sought after political actors and since extremism is a vice the extremists are despised. In order to understand who is a moderate he first grapples with the question of who is an extremist.

Friedman goes on to point out that another word for extremist is 'radical' because, as he seeks to define it, an extremist is someone who wants to radically alter the political status quo. And thus a moderate would be an actor who wants to preserve the incumbent system and by extension a political conservative in the classic sense. Moderates therefore will defend the existing political order opposing any major or sudden changes. Similarly, Jillian Schwedler points out the differences in the way the moderate-radical dichotomy is treated by various sub-fields within the political science discipline.[89] Schwedler reminds us that the literature on political transitions sees actors who support elite-driven changes as moderates and those who support public demands as radicals. She argues that this is contrast to how these two opposing types of actors are seen from the point of democratization. Accordingly,

radicals are the ones who seek change to an autocratic status quo and thus can be considered as radicals while “those who don’t the rock the boat” are deemed as the moderates.

What we thus have is a situation where there are significant differences over who is truly a moderate and who is a radical. But that’s not the only problem with both these terms. There is also the quandary of relativity, which causes a particular actor to be relatively moderate to another and relatively radical to others. This has led to a number of observers declaring this set of terminology useless and therefore its abandonment. As accurate as this assessment is we are still left with the problem of linguistic constraints, which prevent us from adopting an alternative taxonomy. Even if (and this is a huge assumption) the scholarly community was to somehow fashion a more accurate vocabulary and develop a consensus around it there is still the matter of popular usage of terms, which is unlikely to be done away with. Being part of society scholars themselves will continue to use them. There is a reason why they continue to be deployed in scholarly work seeking to critique them and focus on moderation as a process of change in ideas and behavior.

In an age of Islamist radicalism the world is heavily focused on studying the process of radicalization. The logic is that the better we understand how Muslim individuals radicalize the more we can make headway towards countering or preventing violent extremism.[90] In contrast, I strongly believe it is more important to study Islamist actors who have embarked upon the journey away from radicalism or extremism and towards moderation. This thesis thus contributes to the existing body of knowledge that seeks to make sense of the complexity of ideological and behavioral transformation. My research accomplishes this in two ways. First, it engages in a zero-based net assessment of the concept of moderation and offers a

newer theoretical model of how and why Islamist radicals and extremists undergo shifts in their political stances. Second, my work applies this model to explain the shifts in two different types of radical Islamist actors. The first one is a non-violent social movement, which has entered the political mainstream and the second is a violent Islamist group entering into negotiations geared towards political reconciliation but has not yet given up armed struggle.

A note on the structure of this research is in order here. Following this introduction (chapter 1) is a review of the literature (chapter 2), which will examine the various contributions to three broad categories of existing theories: Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis, Deradicalization & Post-Islamism. Based on my evaluation of these theories, I then lay out the methodology behind my research (chapter 3). Next, I then develop my alternative theoretical model (chapter 4). Using this framework I explicate how my first case study went from being a socio-religious organization that eschewed politics to becoming a political party heavily engaged in the politics of compromise (chapter 5). Likewise, I apply this same framework to show why a jihadist group, which has succeeded in achieving political power through armed struggle and is once again resurgent in the country's battlespace is also engaged in negotiations aimed at political reconciliation (chapter 6). Lastly, I conclude by pulling out of the leaves and the trees to a much higher altitude to examine the analytical forest – showing how these two case studies support my explanation of how radical Islamist actors undergo various forms of moderation - an increasingly contested concept (chapter 7).

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[1] Bokhari, Kamran, and Farid Senzai. 2013. *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[2] Robinson, Glen E. 1997. "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan". *The Middle East Journal*. 51(3) Summer: 373-87.
[3] Hoveyda. Fereydoun. 2001. "Moderate Islamists?" *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 23: 53-59.

[4] By no means is a transformation of Islamists the only pre-requisite for Muslim democratization. Indeed there is a need for non-Islamists to embrace democratic values, civilian supremacy over the military, economic development, and many other ingredients. However, given that my thesis focuses on trying to understand how the ideology and behavior of Salafists and jihadists have begun to change, I will limit the discussion to this ongoing transformation within Islamism.

[5] Scholarly renditions about the political evolution of Islam/Muslims go back to the 1960s, e.g., Hourani, Albert. 1962. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. Oxford: U.K.: Oxford University Press, but really gained momentum during the 1980s and more so in the 1990s with works such as Rahman, Fazlur. 1982. *Islam and Modernity*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; Enayat, Hamid 1982. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*; Binder, Leonard. 1988. Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; Al-Effendi, Abdelwahab. 1991. *Who Needs An Islamic State?* London, U.K.: Grey Seal; Mernissi, Fatima. 1992. *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*. London, UK: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company; Al-Azmeh, Aziz. 1993. *Islams and Modernities*. London: U.K.: Verso; Roy, Olivier. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris; Sayeed, Khalid Bin. 1995. *Western Dominance and Political Islam: Challenge & Response*. Albany, NY: State University of New York; Esposito, John L. and John O. Voll. 1996. *Islam and Democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Esposito, John L. (ed). 1997. *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner; Kurzman, Charles. 1998. *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Mousalli, Ahmed. 1999. *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State*. Gainesville, FL: The University of Florida Press. Hefner, Robert W. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; & Tamimi, Azzam. 2001. *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat Within Islamism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

[6] Muravchik, Joshua and Charles P. Szrom. 2008. "In Search of Moderate Muslims". *Commentary*. 2 (February): 26-34

[7] The RAND Corporation came out with a number of reports between 2003 and 2007, which included "Building Moderate Muslim Networks", "Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies", "Five Pillars of Democracy How the West Can Promote an Islamic Reformation" & "The Muslim World After 9/11".

[8] See: Jan, Abid Ullah. Though Muslims Exist, Islam Does Not" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007); Jan, Abid Ullah. "Moderate Islam: A Product of American Extremism" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007)

[9] Leiken, R.S. and Brooke, S. 2007. "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", *Foreign Affairs*, 86(2): 107-121; Crooke, Alistair. 2009. "Getting It Wrong: 'Extremism & 'Moderation' in Islam After Gaza". *The RUSI Journal*. February 154(1): 30-35; Malley, Robert and Peter Harling. 2010. "Beyond Moderates and Militants". *Foreign Affairs*. September/October 85(5): 18-29

[10] Khan, M.A. Muqtedar. "Islamic Democracy And Moderate Muslims: The Straight Path Runs Through the Middle" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007)

[11] In many ways the question of how to embrace western modernity while remaining faithful to Islamic traditions that 19th century Muslim thinkers such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi grappled with remain unsettled some 200 years later. A detailed elaboration of the intellectual challenges that Tahtawi, Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi and others faced can be found in Hourani, Albert. 1962. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. London, UK: Oxford University Press

[12] Khan, M.A. Muqtedar. " Moderate Muslims Are the Key to the Future of Islam and American-Muslim Relations" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007); Safi, Louay. Reflections on Ijtihad And Moderate Islam" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007); Afsaruddin, Asma. Accommodating Moderation: A Return to Authenticity or Recourse to Heresy?" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007)

[13] One of the earliest works on moderation from within the Muslim world was Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. 1987. *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism.* Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

[14] Ashour, Omar. 2009. *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. New York, NY: Routledge.
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[16] Mazrui, Ali. "Liberal Islam Versus Moderate Islam: Elusive Moderates and Siege Mentality" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007)
[17] Bokhari, Kamran. 2006. "Developing a Philosophy of Counterterrorism". *Muslim Public Affairs Journal*. (April): 11-19.
[18] In Sept 2010, the Wall Street Journal published a symposium titled "What is a Moderate Islam" in which six notable western and Muslim figures (Anwar Ibrahim, Bernard Lewis, Ed Husain, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Tawfik Hamid and Akbar Ahmed) participated.
[19] Bokhari, Kamran and Farid Senzai. "Defining a Moderate" in *Debating a Moderate Muslim: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, ed. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007).
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[21] Musharraf, Pervez, "A Plea for Enlightened Moderation," *Washington Post*, 1 June, 2004; Aziz, Sadaf. 2011. "Making a Sovereign State: Javed Ghamidi and 'Enlightened Moderation'". *Modern Asian Studies*. 45(3): 597-629
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[29] See "Saudi Arabia: A Shift in al-Qaeda's Thinking". *Stratfor*. 24 February, 2006. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/saudi-arabia-shift-al-qaedas-thinking (accessed March 15, 2014) and "Geopolitical Diary: Saudi Arabia's Resilience". *Stratfor*. 8 October, 2007. http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/geopolitical-diary-saudi-arabias-resilience (accessed March 15, 2014)
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http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iraq-will-al-sadr-be-moderated
http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iraq-muqtada-al-sadr-stays-politics
http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iran-al-sadrs-disbandment-context
http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iraq-mehdi-armys-transformation

http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iraq-al-sadrs-difficult-disbanding-proposition
http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/iraq-al-sadr-accepts-state-control
http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/geopolitical-diary-al-sadr-silences-his-guns
http://www.stratfor.com/sample/analysis/iraq-al-sadr-will-disarm-militia

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[36] "Hamas Looks to Revive the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood". *Stratfor*. 16 October, 2012. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/hamas-looks-revive-palestinian-muslim-brotherhood (accessed on March 12, 2014).

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[38] "Special Report: Hamas in Transition". *Stratfor*. 13 February, 2012. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/special-report-hamas-transition (accessed March 12, 2014).

[39] "Share Pragmatism Exacerbating Intra-Hamas Fault Lines". *Stratfor*. 26 May, 2011. www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/pragmatism-exacerbating-intra-hamas-fault-lines (accessed March 12, 2014).

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[41] "An Opening for Hamas in the West Bank". *Stratfor*. 13 December 2012. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/opening-hamas-west-bank (accessed March 12, 2014).

[42] "Somalia: Washington Pressures the SICC to Negotiate." *Stratfor*. 24 January, 2007. www.stratfor.com/analysis/somalia-washington-pressures-sicc-negotiate (accessed on March 13, 2104).

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[45] "Somali premier co-opts religious leaders to defeat al-Shabaab". *Mareeg news website*, 16 March 2014 (courtesy BBC Monitoring).

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Bryant, Christa Case. "For Saudi ex-jihadis: a stipend, a wife, and a new life". Christian Science Monitor. 25 May, 2012. http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0525/For-Saudi-ex-

jihadis-a-stipend-a-wife-and-a-new-life ; Knickmeyer, Ellen. "Saudi Center Aims for 'Life After Jihad'". *Wall Street Journal*. 24 April, 2013. http://blogs.wsj.com/middleeast/2013/04/24/saudi-rehab-center-aims-to-shape-life-after-jihad/

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[52] The research center devoted to promoting moderation and the revival of Islamic thought through scientific research was an initiative of Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and the wife of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. See http://www.qfis.edu.qa/al-qaradawi-center.

[53] Though he has written prolifically on the subject of moderation, his most acclaimed work is El-Fadel, Khaled M. Abou. 2005. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists.* SanFrancisco: Harper.

[54] Husain, Ed. 2007. *The Islamist: Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left*. London: Penguin & Nawaz, Maajid. 2013. *Radical: My Journey from Islamist Extremism to a Democratic Awakening.* London: WH Allen are two of the more prominent former radical Islamists who are now engaged in anti-extremism efforts.

[55] El-Said, Hamed and Jane Harrigan. 2012. *Deradicalising Violent Extremists: Counter-Radicalisation and Deradicalisation Programmes and their Impact in Muslim Majority States*. London: Routledge.

[56] The United States and the United Kingdom as well as many other western governments have created programs within various government departments to deal with the issue of extremism. These include the U.S. departments of State and Homeland Security as well as the UK Home Office. A number of think tanks and civil society groups have emerged as well, including International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, Quilliam Foundation, Radical Middle Way, Khudi Pakistan. Pre-existing think tanks in recent years have launched counter-extremism initiatives such the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. In the private sector, Google, Inc. created an intellectual arm called Google Ideas, which is billed as a think/do tank and organized a Summit Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) in June 2011 in Dublin, which I had the opportunity to attend. The summit led to the establishment of an Against Violent Extremism (AVE) network composed of former militants, academics, activists, policy analysts, and government officials from across the world.

[57] One such event was the Rethinking Jihad conference organized by the Center for the Advanced Study of the Arab World at the University of Edinburgh in September 2009, which brought together, academics, analysts, journalists, Islamists, and political, military, and intelligence officials from several western countries.

[58] Gerges, Fawaz. 2005. The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global. New York: Cambridge University Press offers the most comprehensive work on the distinctions between nationalist and transnational forms of jihadism.

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Chapter II – Literature Review

In the introduction, I chronicled the manner in which the concept of moderation has been employed by a variety of political actors – both in Muslim majority countries as well as in the western world. Undoubtedly this notion has become part of the global geopolitical lexicon. The more it is used as part of the popular parlance in diverse contexts the more it becomes contested. Therefore, the key question is how have different members of the knowledge community sought to grapple with this increasingly contested notion? In this second chapter, I go through the various scholarly renditions of moderation and in two parts. The first part surveys the literature on the moderation of religious and secular radical entities in Europe of the past, which largely employs the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. The second and more extensive section explores the scholarship on moderation within the Islamist context. In this latter section I unpack the pre-existing work on deradicalization and post-Islamism - in addition to the work on inclusion-moderation hypothesis.

Attempts at Theoretical Disambiguation

The bulk of academic research on Islamist moderation revolves around the moderation-inclusion principle. This is because much of this work was based on earlier research on non-Muslim contexts, which constitutes a rich body of literature on radical groups moderating their objectives and modus operandi to embrace democratic politics. Examining how Catholic and Marxist groups in the West underwent moderation is thus extremely instructive in terms of understanding how different types of radical Islamists moderate (or not). In fact, a good deal of the scholarship on Islamist moderation is built on the findings of those who studied radical European groups seeking revolutionary paths to power but eventually joined

institutional politics. Just as western experiences with respect to democratization offer important lessons for Muslim majority states how western nations absorbed radical forces into the political mainstream also provide insights on how Islamist extremists could be encouraged to abandon their radical agendas. While there are a great many differences between the two there are some non-trivial similarities. Well before, the bifurcation of Islamists into the broad categories of moderates and radicals this dichotomy was in vogue among scholars of modernization theory and democratic transition. In western contexts, the focus has been on the process by which two different types of post-revolutionary groups - Catholic and Marxist – subsumed into democratic political systems.

A. Catholic and Marxist Contexts

There is a vast corpus of scholarship that specifically looks at Catholic and Marxist groups that entered into party politics in the last century. This literature helped establish the concept that groups undergo behavioral change because of the constraints they have to operate in once after they embrace systemic competition. Among the most influential works on behavioral change in parties owing to constraints are those of Anthony Downs, Joseph LaPalombara & Myron Weiner, and Scott Mainwaring & Timothy Scully.[1] Others such as Frances Fox Piven and Richard A Cloward delve into how institutions place limits on the conduct of social movements.[2] These studies, however, refer to moderation as the adoption of "system-friendly behavior," which triggered the participation incentive. We also have the work of Adam Przeworski and John Sprague on socialists and Stathis Kalyvas on Catholics.[3] These scholars expounded upon how these actors joined the existing political systems in the hope that doing so would allow them to acquire

swift dividends. But as they became increasingly invested in the system they began to accept compromises.

In its simplest form the inclusion-moderation hypothesis asserts that when radical groups are included in the political system they tend to moderate their behavior. Scholars from diverse intellectual and methodological traditions have employed different variations of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. These range from liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill to social democrats such as Habermas.[4] Diverse discourses including those on rational choice, political parties, social movements, etc. have debated the variant aspects of the mechanics of how radical movements moderate and transform themselves into democratic parties. The roots of the concept of ideological and behavioral moderation can be traced back to the work of the German sociologist, Robert Michels (1876-1936); whose 1911 work Political Parties is a seminal work on the behavioral evolution of political elites.[5] Among the foremost students of Max Weber, Michels work on Germany's Social Democrat Party makes the case that bureaucratization of movements leads their leaders to deviate from the preferences of their followers who are still committed to the original mission.[6] Michels, who engaged in normative studies, abhorred the moderating effects of organization, which he saw as weakening "revolutionary currents" in society. Organizational structures and functions propel elites towards the needs of self-preservation, which result in concessions manifesting in policies and positions.

This happens not just within the group but more so at the level of the state. Leaders are forced to reassess values – a process that produces changes in the character of Socialism. In Michels' words, "a recognition of the demands of everyday life of the party diverts attention from immortal principles." May describes

this shift as stemming from an emphasis on “legalism and electioneering” which produces “a deviation from principle.” Michels asserts that many facets of the original socialist vision are rendered inexpedient. The underlying assumption here is that these socialists will partake in a multiple election cycles. The games of party politics designed to securing votes pushes the ideological aims on the back burner. Once parties partake in the electoral process “principles” are seen as obstacles to the aim of increasing membership. While Michels see this moderation of socialist parties as a negative development, his was nonetheless a pioneering work that shaped the theory of moderation.

Another classic work on this subject is Downs (1957) who viewed party leaders as either ‘vote/seat maximizers’ or ‘office-seekers’. The former tend to align their ideological positions with voter preferences while the latter prioritize winning elections over effecting political change.[7] Both are essentially different sub-pathways through which ideological positions become more tempered. But as Sanchez-Cuenca (2004) shows, in contrast to office-seekers we also have ‘message-seekers’ who display a great deal of ‘ideological rigidity’. The latter are engaged in a bottoms-up approach to effect their envisioned social changes, which in turn will aid the party to victory.[8] In other words, message-seekers, despite inclusion, are running in a direction opposite to the moderation path. Such forces could potentially un-moderate the systems in which they operate. Such actors could bring ‘radical’ policies on to the political center-stage when mainstream parties begin to include their causes into their policy agendas.

On the issue of left-wing radical groups in Europe evolving under systemic pressures, Adam Przeworski and John Sprague examine what happened to socialist movements, which sought power via electoral politics.[9] In their study of national

elections in seven European countries: Belgium (1894-1971), Denmark (1901-71), Finland (1908-72), France (1902-68), Germany (1874-1933), Norway (1908-72) & Sweden (1911-64), Przeworski and Sprague explain the mechanics behind the change. They argued that workers represented a minority in the party leadership. At the same time these leaders were forced to broaden their appeal to the middle classes. What that meant was that eventually it led to their inability to pursue their class-based ideological goals. This is the trade-off that they faced and had to make a decision one way or another. In their own words, "to recruit allies a [socialist] party generates ideological and organizational transformations which continue to weaken the salience of class identification among workers."[10] The value that they placed on broadening their support base meant that they had to compromise on their core base.

Nancy Bermeo calls for a reconsideration of the "moderation argument." Bermeo noted that if popular radical organizations do not moderate they constitute a threat to democratization. This is because their agendas are in direct conflict with the elites who have taken the decision to democratize.[11] She examines five different cases across Latin America, Europe & Asia. Her work takes a tactical look at the various stages between autocratic collapse and the completion of the first democratic election. Bermeo provides sufficient evidence that high levels of mass mobilization do not necessarily derail democratic transitions, which demonstrates that moderation of radical forces is not a pre-requisite for democratization. While the transitions literature looks at moderation as a critical attribute of elites or masses, more recent studies are centered on the debate whether radical actors become more moderate after being included in pluralist political systems and if so then what are the mechanics of such a transformation. Naturally, a key part of this scholarly debate began with how to define the terms moderate and radical.

Studies on transitions identify moderates as those who support the elite-driven democratic initiatives whereas radicals are those who support the revolutionary goals popular among the masses. Schwedler opines that moderates are "those who don't rock the boat". They are content with limited reforms that do not undermine the interests of the incumbent elite. In contrast, radicals are those who reject the status quo and demand systemic change. Based on this definition, Schwedler asserts that the real democrats are the radicals, which complicates the linkage of moderation with democratization. In other type of literature, moderate and radical highlight the difference between an actor's stances towards the incumbent regime. According to this definition, moderates are those who seek change while working within the confines of the system in place while radicals desire its overthrow. During the '60s and '70s progressive left-wing democratic movements seeking the overthrow of military or monarchical orders were deemed as radical.

One of the most important works on moderation among Christian theocrats is that of Stathis Kalyvas.[12] Kalyvas employs rational choice theory in his assessment of the emergence of Christian Democrat parties in Germany, Italy, Austria, The Netherlands, and Belgium between 1860 and 1920. He shows how these groups emerged from fundamentalist Catholic movements, which opposed liberalism and sought theocratic polities but over the decades these actors transformed themselves into full-fledged democratic movements. This shift, as Kalyvas explains, is the choice of the then nascent confessional parties to embrace the idea that voters were their ultimate support bases. He makes the case that these Christian parties made choices based on the limited menu of options during their developmental stage that played the key role in their transformation. Put differently, their evolution into democratic forces was not so much the outcome of ideational acceptance of

secularism or democracy as much as it was the adoption of democratic practices. In this way, the change was not because they became convinced of new ideas and concepts; rather it was because participation in the political system was the best choice. A change in behavior then led to ideational change.

The work of the late Samuel P Huntington on this notion that if groups moderate they can be allowed to participate in politics, is an early version of what anymore is widely called the inclusion-moderation hypothesis.[13] Huntington argued that openings in an authoritarian political state combined with constraints incentivize groups seeking regime-change to operate within the limits of the political system. In other words, the non-state actors in question should abandon the path of armed struggle and/or mass uprising and seek power and authority through electoral processes and institutional mechanisms. Huntington refers to this process as a "participation-moderation trade" as well as a 'democratic bargain'. For him, moderation entails radical actors bring their ideology and behavior in conformity with the "rules of the game" as laid out by the state. The incentive for groups who take advantage of political inclusion and engage in negotiated compromises is that they can achieve gains that they were unable to hitherto realize. But the pre-requisite is that they modify their objectives and moderate their approach. Huntington explains that this transformation generally entails the actors in question abandoning of violence and revolution as means of political change and instead pursue their aims via institutions, elections, and the parliamentary process.

More recently, Mainwaring and Scully filled a key lacuna in the literature with their comparative study of the evolution of a diverse set of Christian Democratic parties in Latin America over the past half a century. Their key theoretical contribution is that unlike their counterparts in Western Europe Christian Democrats

in Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala emerged under autocratic or nascent democratic circumstances. Mainwaring and Scully (who are among the world's leading experts on Latin American politics) highlight what they call the dual game that these parties had to play vis-à-vis the incumbent political system. On one hand, they were engaged in electoral game, i.e., competing in elections. At the same time, they partook a regime game, which entailed maneuvering to benefit from potential regime-change. These twin processes contributed to the Latin American Christian Democrat parties becoming less ideological. Perhaps the most significant takeaway of this work is that it shows how a majority of these religious parties declined due to the lack of adequate democratic environments. It is these very precise conditions that I have examined in my own work on religio-political forces on the path of moderation under either authoritarian conditions (Egypt) or extremely nascent democratic one (Afghanistan).

B. Islamist Contexts

The scholarly literature on Islamist moderation can be divided into three broad genres

(i) Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis is the theory that is most in vogue among scholars seeking to understand how radical Islamists moderate. There are a number of reasons for this. First, it has been an established part of the literature on democratization especially in western contexts with regards to how Catholic and Marxist parties shed their radicalism and embraced institutional politics. It was therefore only natural for scholars of contemporary political Islam to apply it to make sense of what appeared to be similar ideological and behavioral modifications within the Islamist landscape. Second, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis fits well

within the recent evolution of research on democratization and Islamism. The discussion has moved beyond normative debates on the compatibility between democracy and Islam to empirical studies about how Islamists tend to modify their ideas and actions when provided space by autocratic regimes engaging in limited liberalization. Third, democratization and Islamism are the two main trends in the Arab Middle East and the wider Muslim world and the inclusion-moderation principle seemingly has the potential to offer significant theoretical purchase. Fourth, there is an expectation that many of the Islamists who begin to operate in societal mainstreams will be tamed via their inclusion within constitutional structures and processes.

With regards to political Islam, the pioneering work has been that of Jillian Schwedler. In her 2006 book, Faith and Moderation, she applies the inclusion-moderation principle to understand the changes in two separate Muslim Brotherhood organizations. Her first case study is the Islamic Action Front (IAF), which the political arm of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The al-Islah Party, which is the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, is the other case she examines. Schwedler points out that while inclusive political institutions are necessary; they alone do not produce moderation. She acknowledges that many Islamists who are referred to as having moderated in many ways have always been moderate – a characteristic, which becomes apparent via processes of inclusion. In the case of such groups, Schwedler notes, the inclusion experience doesn't demonstrate that they have undergone ideological change. Nonetheless, she asserts that inclusion must be encouraged because it produces a general climate of moderation – regardless of whether groups become more moderate due to inclusion.

Schwedler explores a number of critical questions. These are: 1) What is political moderation? 2) How can moderation be identified and what are the conditions in which radical groups moderate? 3) When are Islamists groups genuinely moderating in terms of their embracement of democracy? 4) When are they pretending to be moderate in order to take advantage of systemic openings in order to advance a radical agenda? She explores these questions in her ethnographic field research in Jordan and Yemen in an effort to comparatively understand how the behavior of the IAF and al-Islah was impacted by participation in pluralist public spheres, especially with regards to their respective Weltanschauungs. Problematizing the terms 'moderate' and 'radical' is the most salient point Schwedler makes. She highlights how these two categories are extremely superficial and in fact misleading.

Though Schwedler suggests alternative terms such as accommodationists and non-accommodationists or legalists and contextualists; she does not develop these. Instead she rather disappointingly continues to use the moderate versus radical lexis. That said, Schwedler does offer a very balanced and value-neutral description of moderation, which she defines as the "movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives". Perhaps the most critical aspect of her study is her argument that three conceptual lenses are necessary to truly understand moderation (or the lack there of) in her two case studies. She identifies these as: i) State-controlled liberalization, ii) internal structure of the subject groups, and iii) ideational dimensions of public political space. She examines how the shifts in the first two dimensions inform a "justifiable" reconceptualization of long-held beliefs and attitudes. Her conclusion is that the IAF become more moderate while al-Islah because of the differences on each of these

three factors. Though both states engaged in liberalization, Jordan's was rooted in a long history of parliamentary practices while Yemen lacked such a culture.

The IAF, as Schwedler shows, was a much more coherent organization with significantly democratized internal structures and processes. On the other hand, al-Islah was more an umbrella for at least three different types of actors and thus remains an incoherent entity. Put differently, the two parties were operating in almost polar opposite contexts. It is for this reason Schwedler makes the case that the IAF was able to make the leap towards moderation. In a matter of a few years it went from justifying participation in elections to aligning with leftist parties. In contrast, al-Islah was unable to engage in internal debates over the democratic process. Therefore, the Yemeni Islamist party could not expand beyond its narrow boundaries of religiously justifiable behavior. Through these two cases she demonstrates how inclusion does not necessarily lead to moderation.

Building upon the works on Catholic and Marxist groups, Mona El-Ghobashy examines the evolution of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement.[14] El-Ghobashy finds that the Brotherhood's experience with ideational and organization change is very much in keeping with any other group. As is the case with many other groups, the Brotherhood also went through "splits along generational lines. It also experienced intense internal debates about strategy. The shift in its ideological plank from politics as a sacred mission to politics as the public contest between rival interests." She makes a compelling case for how the Brotherhood has enthusiastically jumped into the electoral game because of its interactions with the masses, political rivals, and the regime. El-Ghobashy demonstrates how even groups exceedingly committed to their ideational objectives and their organizations are

subject to transformation through participation in institutional politics. She makes the case that "Islamists are no exception" to this rule.

Two years before Schwedler published Faith and Moderation another American scholar of Islamism, Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, illustrated how moderation is a function of 'political learning'.[15] Wickham looked at Egypt's Hizb al-Wasat arguing that this offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood is a case of moderation in the absence of democratization or even inclusion. She argues that even highly circumscribed openings in the political system could be enough to trigger interest among some actors propelling them towards moderation. According to Wickham, even limited liberalization creates the prospects for political learning or changes in the core concepts of individual leaders based on experience. She explains the defection of a number of Muslim Brotherhood members from the movement to found Hizb al-Wasat as the result of three factors. These are: 1) Ideological moderation (in addition to strategic calculations) stemmed from political learning, i.e., changes in the core values and beliefs of the leadership; 2) These attitudinal shifts were enabled by interaction with secular ideological rivals in pursuit of the common goal of seeking democratic reforms; & 3) A combination of regime accommodation and repression of Islamist groups created institutional opportunities and encouragements towards this type of interaction.

These factors, she posits, are behind Hizb al-Wasat's journey towards centrist politics. Wickham explains centrism as the act of gravitating towards a midpoint between a rigid demand for the implementation of shariah and total rejection of Islamic tradition in favor of western political thought. It was this tendency that led to the founding of Hizb al-Wasat as more moderate version than the Muslim Brotherhood. She acknowledges that al-Wasat, though very different from the

Brotherhood, also had noteworthy limits in terms of how far it would be able to travel along the path of moderation. She attributes this limitation to the lack of "ideological flexibility on issues around which there is a strong consensus within the movement." One can sense a disappointment in her tone. This is to be expected for she defines moderation as adoption of western liberal democratic values. While Schwedler shows that Islamist cooperation with Leftists is the result of moderation, Wickham's assessment reverses the causal arrows when she says cooperation led to moderation.

Janine Astrid Clark takes issue with the model of moderation that advances the notion that ideological moderation is the logical outcome of behavioral moderation.[16] In her 2005 study of Jordan's Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCNOP) platform, Clark illustrates how cooperation with ideological competitors does not necessarily lead to Islamist moderation. HCCNOP in the mid-1990s through the late 2000s was an umbrella group of 13 mostly secular, leftist, and liberal parties along with the Islamic Action Front (IAF). She showed that though the IAF engaged in negotiations with the other 12 groups (which included the Baath and Communist parties) under the HCCNOP umbrella the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Hashemite kingdom maintained firm "redlines" that it was not going to breach regardless of the allure of incentives. She notes that a significant number of Islamists are of the view that "issues that are fully addressed by shari'a are not open for discussion with other parties". Clark admits some form of moderation on the part of Islamists via cooperation with the ideological 'others', however, she questions the extent to which cooperation leads to moderation. She focuses on three issues of potential cooperation, which included a seat quota for women in parliament, the honor-crimes

law and the demand to grant women the right to divorce. Through her case study of the IAF in the framework of the HCCNOP where the Islamist party only agreed on the issue of quota for women in the legislature she makes the case that such moderation is both limited and selective.

While Clark questions the degree to which cross-ideological cooperation leads to moderation Michaelle Browers argues that even limited Islamist-secularist cooperation over time tends to pull both sides away from their respective extremes and towards the political center.[17] Browers examined cooperation among Islamists, socialists, and liberals in Egypt in the form of the Kefayah (Enough) movement and in Yemen under the umbrella of the Joint Meetings Party. In both her case studies Islamist and secular actors arrive at accommodation on the shared goal of curbing authoritarianism, however, they fall short on other more value-laden issues. Her definition of moderation does not involve a departure from radicalism or making progress towards adoption of liberal/democratic values. Instead, she defines moderation as the manner in which individuals locate themselves "both as a member of a community and as an intermediate between existing positions deemed extreme" in some shape or form. As far as Browers is concerned moderation does not involve the adoption of values such as rights, inclusivity, pluralism, or tolerance. For her, moderation revolves around the notion of wasatiyya: "an intellectual trend characterized or claiming characterization as centrist or moderate (wasti), or said to occupy the middle (wasat) between extremist alternatives." Browers view of moderation is developed on the basis of three distinct dynamics: cross-ideological cooperation; centripetal pull on the part of both sides of the ideological divided away from their respective poles; and finally, accommodation between the two rival ideologues on some basic issues.

It is also important to note that Browers privileges the individual as opposed to the group. She reorients the discussion of moderation toward "intellectual and ideological contexts, and from parties to individuals and networks of individuals that cross or work outside party lines." Browers' argument is that moderation necessitates the presence of moderates at the beginning of the process of transformation. For her internal debates and the emergence of new justifications does not constitute evidence of emerging moderation. Rather she sees these developments as an indication of pre-existing moderation. She argues that the focus on the groups over individuals fails to provide an adequate understanding of how and why Islamist groups are changing. Instead she calls for an emphasis on ideological content and on individuals and the ways in which they are in dialogue with each other. Thus, Browers has sought to move beyond the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which focuses on groups entering into formal political engagement towards a much broader arena of social interactions.

Wickham, Clark & Browers do not examine moderation as a function of inclusion into state-controlled constitutional processes. Rather each has tried to explain ideological and/or behavioral transformation as the result of Islamist interactions with the ideological other and largely independent of state structures. All three of them examine different forms of interactions. In each of their models there is a key (but variant) role for the dynamic of the political center. Likewise, they have different takes on the effectiveness of cooperation between the two ideological rivals. These three have thus attempted to look at the same dynamics from different angles. That said, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis has been the focus of a great many studies since Schwedler published her path-breaking work. Actually, there has

been a proliferation of scholarly research trying to revisit the principle – both in theoretical terms and its application in different contexts.

One such work is that of Eva Wegner and Miquel Pellicer who in their 2009 research on Morocco's Party of Justice & Development examine a case of moderation without democratization.[18] Drawing upon the work of Bermeo who makes the case that moderation is not necessary for democratization, Wegner and Pellicer argue that it is not even sufficient. Their research examines the evolution of the PJD's relationship with its parent organization, the Movement for Unity and Reform. It focuses on a singular channel of moderation, i.e., the interactions between an Islamist party and the social movement it emerged from. Over time the party subjected to institutional politics tends to break orbit from the agenda of its parent organization and moderates its behavior. However, Wegner and Pellicer maintain that this distancing is inversely correlates with the party's dependency on the founding movement. The article covers the PJD-MUR relationship between 1992 and 2007 during which time the PJD became increasingly independent. A key finding of this study is that the moderation of the PJD actually caused the monarchy to partially reverse course with regards to the process of liberalization because it is not the ideological rigidity of an Islamist party that threatens ruling elites in the Middle East and North Africa; rather its political strength.

In his 2010 study of moderation in Turkey and Iran, Gunes Murat Tezcur, argues that political openings alone do not lead to ideological moderation and that other factors are at work.[19] His comparative work examines the Reform Front in Iran (which won the 2000 parliamentary elections three years after the election of reformist President Mohammad Khatami) and the current Turkish ruling Justice & Development Party. Among his important findings is that behavioral moderation

does not necessarily lead to ideological moderation. Rather the two forms of moderation can be taking place in parallel. His most critical theoretical contribution is what he calls the *paradox of moderation* whereby even when Islamist non-state actors moderate this does not necessarily lead to a democratization of the state. In this regard, he refers to moderation as a "double-edged sword" because in some cases the newly moderated party has been tamed to the point where it no longer has the capacity to reform the authoritarian polity. Simply put, moderation happened in accordance with the aims of the state, which was to defang forces that posed a challenge to the regime. In addition to demonstrating that moderation can take place in a variety of sequences, Tezcur draws examines moderation at both individual and group level.

Dirk Tomsa, in a 2012 article, engages in a rare study of moderation of a Southeast Asian Islamist party.[20] Tomsa looks at why, how, and to what extent Indonesia's Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) evolved into a more moderate group via its participation in democratic processes. Relying considerably on the work of Schwedler he shows how the PKS went from being a staunchly anti-system Islamist group to a mainstream (albeit quite conservative) democratic party. This transformation, Tomas argues, was the outcome of the efforts of its leadership to push the boundaries of justifiable action. His work shows that the party has indeed made progress towards greater moderation. But in the process serious challenges have emerged to the party's integrity. These challenges include internal divisions, damage to its credibility among its core supporters and failure to attract new voters. According to Tomsa, moderation is neither a linear process nor a positive for the cause of democratization.

Karakaya and Yidirim offer a comparative study of moderation between Islamist and communist parties.[21] Their case studies are the Italian Communist Party and the Moroccan PJD. Drawing upon the inferences of scholarly work on the moderation of communist parties in order to explain the differences in moderation of Islamist parties. The scholarly pair develops a two-level framework, involving tactical and ideological moderation. They define tactical moderation as the type that occurs when radical parties decide "to accept electoral democracy as a means to achieve ideological goals without compromising their platforms." This type of shift, they argue, happens in response to structural factors such as political liberalization, international factors and state repression. Ideological moderation on the other hand is defined as "shifts in a platform from a radical niche to more moderate lines. In this second form of moderation the actors in question seek to increase their social support base in the wake of societal changes such as economic liberalization, economic growth, electoral loss and changing voter preferences.

While most of the works on Islamist moderation are based on one rendition or another of the moderation resulting from inclusion paradigm. Carvatorta and Merone in their study of the evolution of Ennahda make the case for moderation via *exclusion*.[22] The authors answer the question why the Tunisian Islamist movement moderated from the 1970s onwards despite the lack of opportunities for inclusion into the political process by highlighting its exclusion. And here they do not mean exclusion in the sense of state suppression. Rather one of social rejection, which forced the party to overhaul its ideology. The goal was to make it appealing to the masses, who unlike Ennahda's original vision, held a highly favorable view of the French-style secular nationalism of the country's founder Habib Bourguiba. The radical Islamism of Ennahda's early years increasingly gave way to a more liberal

Islamist program because of the pressure from society. By the time of the Arab spring, Ennahda's under the leadership of its principal theoretician, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, had profoundly moderated its views.

(ii) Deradicalization

Dealing with a completely different type of radical Islamist actors is the notion of *deradicalization*. Like the moderation-inclusion hypothesis deradicalization also has its roots in studies of how Christian and Communist radicals de-radicalized.[23] But it is not as extensive as the literature on inclusion-moderation hypothesis. However, after the tragic events of Sept 11 there has been a growth in the deradicalization literature, but the real spike came in the wake of concerns about radicalization within western Muslim communities, especially in Europe and the fear of violent extremism.[24] In fact, before the recent adoption of countering violent extremism as the preferred phrase to denote the global efforts to combat Islamist radicalism, deradicalization was the term in vogue. In many ways it is still very much in usage. The subject is the focus of an entire peer-reviewed online journal called the Journal of Deradicalization, which began publishing academic articles seeking to understand the process of radicalization and the theory and practice of deradicalization on a quarterly basis in late 2014. For nearly a decade deradicalization has been manifesting itself as programs initiated by governments both in western as well as Muslim-majority countries.[25]

There is an entire constellation of different types of organizations around the world devoted to the study of how both radicalization and deradicalization take place.[26] Despite this massive global interest in the concept of deradicalization there is very little agreement on what it entails as a process; save that it is context-dependent.[27] Given the immediate sense of policy relevance deradicalization has

generated a great deal of debate over the years.[28] As the threat of violent extremism has increased given the rise of ISIS there are increasing calls to rethink the notion of deradicalization.[29] At the same time though there have been efforts to emphasize terminological nuance where scholars have stressed the distinction between deradicalization, counter-radicalization and anti-radicalization – not just in theoretical terms but more importantly from the perspective of the practitioner – engaged in programmatic efforts.[30] Given the need for practical programs there has been considerable work done from within the discipline of psychology.[31] A key distinction that has been made by a number of scholars is the one where disengagement and deradicalization are seen as two separate processes.[32] Horgan argues that the former involves leaving the path of violence while the latter refers to giving up radical ideological objectives.

Omar Ashour's 2009 work 'The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements' is by far the most critical piece of research on this topic. Most other studies have examined the conceptual mess that exists within the discourse on deradicalization and/or examine the performance of practical deradicalization initiatives. Ashour's research represents the rare case of a scholar showing how deradicalization actually takes place. In this groundbreaking scholarship Ashour examines a diverse range of Egyptian, Algerian, Libyan, and Tajikistani jihadist entities that went down the path of deradicalization. He explains the conditions in which some of these insurrectionist Islamist movements give up jihadism as a means towards establishing their envisioned 'Islamic' states.

Ashour has also referred to de-radicalization of jihadist groups largely in North African context as Post-Jihadism.[33] He examines the renunciation of armed struggle in late 1990s and the 2000s by groups such as Gamaah al-Islamiyah (GaI),

Armée Islamique du Salut (AIS), Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), and Tandheem al-Jihad (TaJ). Ashour argues that deradicalization can occur on three planes: ideological, behavioral, and organizational and that the various combinations of these three types produces distinct paths towards deradicalization. He highlights three types of deradicalization processes. The most advanced type is *comprehensive* deradicalization, which involves successful processes on all three levels and he cites the Egyptians cases of GaI (1997-2002) and the various militias of the Muslim Brotherhood (1969-73). The second type of deradicalization is what he calls *substantive* in which there is success on the ideological and behavioral levels but on the organizational level the process fails leading to fragmentation of the group in question. For Ashour, factions of the TaJ, GaI and those from Indonesia's Jemaah al-Islamiyah who parted ways with the core group and partnered with al-Qaeda movement. The third type of deradicalization, according to Ashour, is *pragmatic, which entails behavioral and organizational* deradicalization but ideologically the groups did not ideologically de-legitimate the use of fore to realize political objectives. For Ashour, the AIS as well as Tajikistan's Islamic Renaissance Party are representative of this type of deradicalization.

In his pioneering work on the subject, which was an in-depth study of GaI, Ashour identified a combination of four factors that could trigger deradicalization among jihadist groups.[34] These include: state repression, charismatic leadership in the organization, interactions with the 'other' as well as with the self (different layers of the group), and selective inducements. He identifies a pattern involving an interplay of these four elements that begins with the arrest of the top leadership of the movement leading to interaction with competing Islamist and non-Islamist ideas that affects the ideas and actions of the leadership of the armed group. Such

interaction initiates three endogenous processes: strategic calculations based on a cost-benefit analysis, political learning, modification of the worldview stemming from crises, frustration, and changes to the operating environment. These developments push the leadership to initiate a deradicalization process encouraged by the state through limited incentives as well as through interaction with mid-ranking leaders and the rank and file. A successful de-legitimization of violence by ex-jihadists, Ashour contends, has led to the birth of the new trend of post-jihadism, which is essentially former jihadists ideologically de-constructing jihadism, with a focus on *fiqh al-unf* (jurisprudence justifying violence). Essentially, post-jihadism is about the creation of a new literature based on principles of jurisprudence established by traditional fuquha, peaceful Islamists, and apolitical Salafists that seeks to dismantle the arguments upon which the jihadist ideology was constructed. Ashour goes into considerable detail about the jurisprudential and theological counter-arguments put forth by the leaders of groups such as GaI and TaJ.[35]

He acknowledges that post-jihadists largely limit themselves to the goal of abandoning armed struggle as a means of effecting political change. Most post-jihadists do not offer an alternative peaceful means of pursuing the objective of an "Islamic' state. In fact, Ashour says that while post-jihadism in theory is a step towards moderation of radical and militant Islamists to where they can embrace democracy in some shape or form, there is little in the way of evidence that shows that post-jihadists are on the path towards democratization. There are few exceptions (as he calls them) and cites the example of former GaI and TaJ leader 'Abboud al-Zumur publishing a book called The Third Alternative: Between Authoritarianism and Surrender. In this work, the former military intelligence official calls for participation in electoral processes and forging coalitions with non-Islamist forces.[36]

Most post-jihadists may have made the journey away from violence but accepting democracy is a bridge too far. As Ashour correctly points out post-jihadists have found the religious justification to renounce what they used to consider as jihad but their underlying ideas about sovereignty prevent them from accepting democratic politics. In addition, he also notes that the question of political participation is a moot one given that they continue to operate in largely authoritarian contexts, especially after the July 3, 2013 coup that ousted the country's first elected president and a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Morsi.

(iii) Post-Islamism

Post-Islamism represents an ideational evolution whereby Islamists abandon their signature narrative of the need for an "Islamic" state. Post-Islamists feel that a democratic state offers the best possible means of establishing an observant Muslim society. Bayat, examines the evolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran beginning in the 1990s to demonstrate how yesterday's Islamists have begun to emphasize rights as opposed to duties; plurality of ijtihad as opposed to singular interpretations. Post-Islamism is in essence a reinterpretation of religious principles as well as secularism.[37] Post-Islamists are thus somewhere between Islamism and secularism. This is a very similar to the notion of post-communism.

Coined by Bayat to explain the transformation of post-Khomeini Iran during the Rafsanjani presidency, post-Islamism has been understood differently by others.[38] Kepel used the term to note the rise of the reformist presidency of Mohammad Khatami in Iran.[39] Roy sees the term as confirming his *Failure of Political Islam* thesis that that the Islamists' ideology could not solve the problems of Muslim societies.[40] Lauzire used the concept to try and interpret the political thought of Abd al-Salam Yasin, Morocco's prominent Islamist thinker and founder

of its more conservative Islamist movement.[41] Boubekeur examined the notion in cultural terms and as it applies to sociopolitical mobilization.[42] Mahdavi identified the phenomenon in the Islamic republic's trajectory since its founding.[43] Husnul Amin has analyzed the issue with respect to certain significant post-Islamist religio-political currents within Pakistan.[44]

Although the term "post-Islamism" has been used for nearly two decades, there is still little agreement on its meaning. Bayat offers the clearest definition: Post-Islamism "represents both a condition and a project, which may be embodied in a master movement. It refers to political and social conditions where, following a phase of experimentation, a rethink about the Islamist project takes place, leading to emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality instead of singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scripture, and the future instead of the past."

Yilmaz has done the most to apply this idea to Turkey by examining the AKP's evolution from the Milli Gorus (National Vision) movement that spawned the Islamist political parties that preceded the current ruling party. In addition, he looks at the role of the Turkish-led international socio-religious Gulen Movement and its impact in influencing the rise of the AKP. Yilmaz draws an interesting distinction between post-Islamism and what he calls *non-Islamism*: The former is a combination of Islamism and democracy, whereas the latter is a discarding of Islamist values in order to more firmly embrace democratic ones. In Yilmaz's view, Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party), which succeeded the Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) in December 1998, is an example of a post-Islamist group, whereas the AKP that succeeded Fazilet is a case of a non-Islamist party.

Yilmaz considers post-Islamism as a stage in which the actors can either move forward and leave Islamism altogether or revert back to Islamism. He argues

that the AKP was created as a break with Necemettin Erbakan, the founder of the modern Turkish Islamist movement. While Erdogan and his allies founded the AKP, Erbakan reverted back to Islamism by founding of the Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party). Yilmaz points out that Fazilet's discourse is no longer Islamist, in practice Fazilet was never anything more than a slightly milder version of Refah, for it constituted both the reformist elements led by Erdogan and Gul and the old guard led by Erbakan, who never really left Islamism. Therefore, there was no reverting back, as Yilmaz claims. The group still included Erbakan and was actually led by his long-time associate Recai Kutan. That Erdogan and his faction parted ways with their ideological leader only after Fazilet was outlawed further shows that Fazilet was a somewhat modified version of Refah. In other words, it was not really post-Islamist, which brings us back to the issue how to define this particular term.

For Bayat though post-Islamism is a secularizing process, as opposed to a mid-point between Islamism and secularism. In fact, it is a rejection of Islamism because it does not call for the establishment of an Islamic state. To use Yilmaz's preferred terminology, post-Islamism *is* non-Islamism, which in a general sense can also be referred to as secularism. But certain Islamists can renounce Islamism, but they are unlikely to cease being observant Muslims. Bayat, in his examination of Iran, shows how the post-Islamists are those who have realized through experience that there is a need to go beyond religious texts in order to address the social, political, and economic problems facing modern societies.[45] He does, however, distinguish between secularization and secularism; the former is the process of acknowledging the need for extra-religious ideas, whereas the latter is the marginalization of religion.[46]

Therefore, post-Islamism is an exiting from Islamism and a possible heading toward a secularism that is not based on rejecting religion's role in public affairs. Instead post-Islamists, as Bayat points out, have recognized the inadequacies inherent in their ideological formulations and hence the need to adopt secular modalities. Post-Islamists have therefore reinterpreted both Islamic religious principles as well as revised their older view of secularism as being anti-religion. For them, secularism is not something un-Islamic, and embracing it does not necessarily mean that they have to compromise on their religious principles. Post-Islamists can thus be defined as former Islamists who have relinquished their rigid ideological positions on enforcing Islamic principles through the state and now seek to realize their religious ideals through democratic politics and a secular state.

Before I highlight the shortcomings in this extensive body of work in terms of how it is unable to account for the transformations exhibited by my case studies and thus offer my alternative theoretical framework, I will now turn to the methodology of my research in the next chapter.

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[8] Sanchez-Cuenca Ignacio. 2004. "Party Moderation and Politicians' Ideological Rigidity". *Party Politics.* 10(3). pp.325–42.

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[11] Bermeo, Nancy. 1997. "Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict During Democratic Transitions". *Comparative Politics*. 29(4): 305-322.

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[14] El-Ghobashy, Mona. 2005."The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (august): 373–95
[15] Wickham, Carrie R. 2004. "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January): 205–28.
[16] Clark, Janine Astrid. 2006. "The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, No. 4 (November): 539–60
[17] Browers, Michaelle L. 2009. *Political Ideology in the Arab World: Accommodation and Transformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press
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[19] Tezcur, Gunes M. 2010. *The Paradox of Moderation: Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
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[21] Karakaya, Suveyda and A. Kadir Yildirim (2013) "Islamist Moderation in Perspective: Comparative Analysis of the Moderation of Islamist and Western Communist Parties". *Democratization*, 20:7, 1322-1349,
[22] Cavatorta, Francesco and Fabio Merone. 2013. "Moderation Through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda From Fundamentalist to Conservative Party". *Democratization.* Vol. 20, Issue 5: pp. 857-75
[23] Some of the earliest works include: Tucker, Robert C. 1967. "The Deradicalization of Marxist Movements." American Political Science Review 61. (June) no. 2: pp. 343-358; Kim, Hong N. 1976. "Deradicalization of the Japanese Communist Party Under Kenji Miyamoto," *World Politics* 28. (Jan) no. 2: 273-299; & Charlton, Sue Ellen M. 1979. "Deradicalization and the French Communist Party" *The Review of Politics* 41 (January) no. 1: 38-60.
[24] There is extensive discourse on the related topic of counter-radicalization, which is preventative and pre-emptive in nature. Counter-radicalization focuses on ways and means of thwarting potential subjects from becoming radicalized. This is well beyond the scope of my research, which focuses on actors that are already radical and are on a trajectory away from radicalism.
[25] Slightly dated but the most comprehensive study of these programs is Rabas, Angel et al. 2010. Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
[26] The START (National Consortium for the Study of and Responses to Terrorism) Program at the University of Maryland at College Park has been designated as a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence and is the recipient of millions of dollars of grant money. I myself am affiliated as a Fellow with the Program on Extremism at George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security and the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security & Society. A prominent European entity is the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King's college in London. Entire institutes have been named after the two companion terms of radicalization and deradicalization such as the German Institute for Radicalization & Deradicalization Studies. Likewise prominent think tanks have switched gears since the Sept 11 attacks and dedicated resources to the study of this phenomenon. There is an emerging slew of civil society organizations focused on deradicalization and now more recently countering violent extremism. Faith-based organizations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council in the United States and the European Network of Deradicalization are deeply involved in partnering with other non-governmental organizations and governmental departments and agencies.
[27] Ashour, Omar. "Deradicalization Revisited". *Washington Post Monkey Cage Blog*. 18 February 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/18/deradicalization-revisited/
[28] Porges, Marisa L. and Jessica Stern. 2010. "Getting Deradicalization Right" *Foreign Affairs* 89 (May/June) no. 3.
[29] Garaham, Matthew. "Rethink Deradicalization Programs." *Forbes*. 1st July 2016. http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/07/01/rethink-deradicalization-programs/print/
[30] See Clutterbuck, Lindsay. 2015. "Deradicalization Programs and Counterterrorism: A Perspective on the Challenges and Benefits." *Middle East Institute*. 10 June 2015. http://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/Clutterbuck.pdf. Another extremely useful research paper is

Schmid, Alex P. 2013. "Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." *ICCT*.

[31] Kruglanski, Arie W. et al. 2014. "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quests Impacts Violent Extremism." *Advances in Political Psychology*. 35 (1): 69-93.

[32] Horgan, John. 2009. *Walking Away From Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement From Radical and Extremist Movements*. New York, NY: Routledge & Horgan, John. 2008. "De-radicalization or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation" *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2 (February) no.4: pp.3-8

[33] Ashour, Omar. 2012. "Post-Jihadism and the Ideological Revisions of Armed Islamists" in *Contextualizing Jihadi Thought* eds. Deol, Jeeva and Zaheer Kazmi. London: Hurst & Company and op cit 41.

[34] Ashour. Omar. 2007. "Lions Tamed: An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalization of Armed Islamist Movements: The Case of the Egyptian Islamic Group". *The Middle East Journal*. Autumn 61(4): 596-625.

[35] Op Cit 50, pp. 129-141.

[36] Op Cit, pp. 141-142.

[37] Bokhari, Kamran. "From Islamism to Post-Islamism". *Stratfor*. 18 April, 2005. http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/islamism-post-islamism

[38] Asef Bayat, "The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society," *Critique* (fall 1996): 43–52.

[39] Gilles Kepel, "Islamism Reconsidered," *Harvard International Review* 22, no. 2 (summer 2000): 22–27.

[40] Olivier Roy, "Le post-islamisme," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* (1998): 85–86, 11–30. Also see Olivier Roy, "The Transformation of the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (July 2012): 5–18.

[41] Henri Lauzire, "Post-Islamism and the Religious Discourse of Abd al-Salam Yasin," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 2 (2005): 241–61.

[42] Amel Boubekeur, "Post-Islamist Culture: A New Form of Mobilization?" *History of Religions* 47, no. 1 (2007): 75–94.

[43] Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Post-Islamist Trends in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia*, *Africa, and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 94.

[44] Husnul Amin, *From Islamism to Post-Islamism: A Study of a New Intellectual Discourse on Islam and Modernity in Pakistan,* 2010.

[45] Bayat, "Post-Islamist Society," 44–46.

[46] Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 95.

Chapter III – Methodology

Summary of the Lacuna

My review of the academic work on the various theories on Islamist moderation (inclusion-moderation hypothesis, deradicalization and post-Islamism) in the preceding chapter (2) reveals that the literature suffers from two main shortcomings. I address these deficiencies in greater detail in the next chapter (4) where I lay out my critique and offer my alternative theoretical framework. But for the purposes of explaining the methodology of my research I will briefly state here the main gaps in the existing scholarship. *First*, on a theoretical level there is little clarity on what is moderation or its antithesis radicalism, which also raises the a priori questions of who are moderates and radicals as well as how does Islamist moderation take place. *Second*, on an empirical level, the existing theories are incapable of explaining the ideological and behavioral changes among Salafists & Jihadists. The *inclusion-moderation hypothesis* applies to groups that have moderated after participation in the limited space offered by largely authoritarian political systems. *Deradicalization* pertains to armed Islamist actors that have been forced to demilitarize after suffering losses. Though *Post-Islamism* offers considerable theoretical purchase on how ideas and actions of Islamists evolve over time but it details the shifts in actors who have abandoned the objective of establishing an "Islamic" state.

There is hardly any research that can offer insights into the mechanics of how certain peaceful Salafists (who hitherto considered democracy to be an un-Islamic concept and in fact shunned the political realm) became politicized and began to participate in the democratic process though continue to pursue the goal of an Islamic political order. The bulk of the current literature largely deals with Muslim

Brotherhood type groups, which have been relatively moderate to begin with. As participatory type Islamist movements the Brotherhood entities have long sought to pursue their goals within constitutional means – despite the autocratic nature of the systems in their respective countries.[1] Any ideological and/or behavioral shifts in these groups, therefore, are unlikely to be significant – especially when we are talking about quite controlled liberalization on the part of the regimes. There is very little research that does focus on forces, which reject and/or confront incumbent polities. To the extent that scholars - mostly notably Ashour (2009) in his seminal work on deradicalization – have dealt with forces pursuing radical changes and via extreme means views the shift in political thought and behavior as a function of abandoning armed struggle. Moderation on the other hand is a much more broader phenomenon, which pertains to actors that are not just willing to give up violence as a means of achieving their political aims but also prepared to modify at least some of the very objectives that they have long been pursuing. Thus, conceptually, deradicalization is very different from moderation. More importantly, the actors in question are undergoing moderation well before their embrace of the political mainstream (let alone their inclusion within it).

This seriously calls into question the core of the 'inclusion leads to moderation' hypothesis, which posits change in ideas and behavior as the outcome of participation. Another issue is that moderation among Islamists is implicitly understood (if not at least assumed) as a move towards accepting at least some western secular liberal democratic norms. While Islamists on the path of moderation do exhibit this trait this is only a small piece of the puzzle. Of course different cultures throughout history have adopted the best practices and ideas from others,

[1] For a full treatment of participatory form of Islamism please refer to my 2013 book *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization* (Palgrave) co-authored with Senzai, Farid.

even their rivals. The chances of that happening during an age of civilizational polarization are slim though. Radical Islamists are thus less likely to borrow from the west. What is most critical here is that to the extent that Islamists do appropriate foreign ideas it will be a function of how they justify their adoption as being in conformity with Islamic religious texts. What has not received enough attention is this dynamic according to which radical Islamists – when faced with geopolitical threats and/or opportunities – engage in a reinterpretation of their own religious and ideological positions.[2]

Put differently, how the actors in question adjust their long held interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah vis-à-vis government and politics has not been sufficiently unpacked. Here it is important to concentrate on the organic connection between ideological/behavioral transformation and the re-reading of Islamic texts. This change cannot be understood without linking their ideological positions to their specific modus operandi towards establishing their desired religio-political order. In many ways, *how* they go about seeking their envisioned 'Islamic' state is far more critical than the specifics of the end goal. Generally speaking the goal is unlikely to change, i.e., establishing an Islamic political order but how they go about pursuing this objective is where there is far more room to maneuver. An understanding of this critical evolution in radical Islamist political thought is truly lacking. The scholarly literature is short on how radical Islamists gradually come to accept that religious political principles can be operationalized using western political structures and processes. Therefore, there is a dire need to recognize that

[2] 'Hizballah and the logic of political participation', in Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts, M. Heiberg, B. O'Leary & J. Tirman (eds.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 156-186 & 'Peace with Hamas? The transforming potential of political participation', International Affairs 80(2), 2004: 233-255 represent the very few studies on this issue.

moderation is not the abandonment of medieval religious conceptions in favor of modern secular ideas.

Instead, it is a hermeneutical change where space and time considerations are forcing some of these groups to revise their erstwhile exegeses. A great deal of the existing research on Islamist moderation was conducted prior to the process of autocratic meltdown in 2011. In many countries in the pre-Arab Spring era it was not possible to truly study moderation because the mainstream was either a closed arena or an extremely restricted domain. The scope of democratic competition allowed by autocratic regimes was extremely limited. On the one hand the regimes only allowed so much opening of their political systems. Whereas on the other side there were very few truly radical groups who sought to participate in mainstream politics. It is only in the past five years that we have seen examples of genuinely radical groups moving towards constitutional and electoral politics. This change cannot be understood solely by examining moderation among these Islamist groups.

Developing an Alternative Understanding

Not only have many Islamists come to accept a certain limited degree of secular ideas the reverse is also true. Secularists have also realized that Islamists are a reality and some of them will have to be engaged. The historical suppression from the autocratic state has only exacerbated the problem. From the point of view of the secularists and unrelated to Islamism they also have to contend with the wider phenomenon of growing religiousity in society. Somehow, they have to deal with a situation where between Islamism and religious conservatism they cannot impose their preferred secular vision on the country. Secularists also realize that in order to counter the most extreme and often violent forms of Islamist radicalisms they need to work with relatively moderate Islamists forces. While Islamist moderation entails

accepting to a certain degree the notion of the civil state secularist moderation involves acknowledging a role for religion in public affairs. Thus, what we have are complementary moderations among secularists who are. It is this moderation on the "other side" that facilitates moderation among radical Islamists – as is evident in the case of Tunisia.

Islamist moderation thus takes place alongside secularist moderation and vice-versa. A symbiotic relationship of sorts exists between the two dynamics. Clearly, secularist moderation is a stand alone dynamic in of itself. How do secularists alter their ideas and behavior such that they allow for Islamists to participate in the political system is beyond the scope of my research. That said, I discuss it to the extent that it is a key factor that can serve as an enabler in the process of Islamist moderation. Any change in Islamist attitudes is the result of the interaction between Islamists and secularists. These cross-ideological dealings inform the rethink among Islamists who are already grappling with the question of alternative readings of religious texts. A bi-directional Islamist-secularist accommodation can catalyze the progression of Islamist rethink of their erstwhile ideological stances.

These are the issues I grapple with in my effort to explain why al-Dawah al-Salafiyah in Egypt in the wake of the Arab spring shed its apolitical nature and formed a political party called Hizb al-Nour, which seeks to play a key role on the national political scene. Deconstructing these dynamics also helps me explain why the jihadist movement in Afghanistan – in the lead up to the western military drawdown – decided to engage in international negotiations as opposed to simply fighting its way back to power. More often than not there is of course the argument that such shifts are merely pragmatism on the part of the relevant actors. Even if one

is to accept this line of thinking it neither explains why it happened and at the time it did. Pragmatism itself is the result of travel along a path that needs to be analyzed. But there is much more to this shift in behavior, which has to do with the change in ideas that by extension leads to behavioral shifts. Neither of these two specific movements has been studied from the perspective of moderation – certainly not in a systematic academic manner. In fact, there has hardly been an attempt to analyze Islamist groups, which have historically shunned mainstream politics but more recently have turned towards it.

There is a growing trend towards understanding how Islamist groups have sought to renounce violence. Much of this is triggered by the global countering violent extremism (CVE) campaign. Giving up armed struggle, however, does not mean that the group in question necessarily has opted to partake in mainstream politics – much less has abandoned its radical agenda. Instead, disarming is a very nascent stage in the overall process of moderation. Even after a group has made the strategic decision to demilitarize there are several other subsequent phases such as demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement, which are required for successful disarmament. A major concern regarding those radical Islamists who have left the path of armed struggle is recidivism. Such trepidations are an acknowledgement that we are dealing with complex pathways leading in and out of (and in many cases back into) radicalism. Moderation is thus a much more complicated and multigenerational phenomenon that we have just only begun to make sense of.

I now turn to the roadmap of how I will go about plugging these lacunae, which I have identified in the scholarly work that examines ideological and behavioral transformation of both forms of extremist Islamist actors. I lay out below

the methodology (and details its various steps) by means of which I examine this dynamic. In addition, I put forth the philosophical rationale behind my preferred approach underscoring why I chose it to the exclusion of other means of studying this topic. Next, I detail my research design, which will enable me to realize the two afore-mentioned objectives of my thesis. This is followed by a discussion of how I collected my data. I then address the issue of validity and reliability of the information I gathered. How I plan to go about analyzing the data forms the subsequent section. I also go into brief discussion of my own role as the researcher and its implications for this research project. Finally, I discuss the limitations I came across during the course of the research and I how I have tried to navigate around them, especially given the massive constraints placed upon me by the university's research ethics committee.

Paradigm

Political ideas and actions are contingent upon their specific contexts: cultural, historical, societal, etc. Moreover, different observers will perceive political actors (individuals, groups or states) based on their respective frames of references. Understanding how my two case studies modified their ideology and behavior is thus an exercise in relativity. This much is obvious from my literature review, which reveals competing explanations of how Islamists undergo transformation. Epistemologically such a narrative cannot be constructed except through qualitative research. I am starting from specific cases and will then try to offer generalizations as opposed to necessarily assessing a potential causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. Much of this research tries to tease out the general manner in which intellectual evolution takes place among Islamists, which

then in turn allows for them to undertake actions that they hitherto deemed un-Islamic. My research is thus inductive its approach.

While a sizeable chunk of this research involves a theoretical conceptualization of the process of moderation of radical actors, specifically Islamists, this study will not engage in testing of a particular hypothesis per se. My research is thus not a positivist inquiry; rather it employs a interpretivist approach. It is a qualitative study that seeks to critique existing theories and advance a more nuanced understanding of how radical Islamists in general (and Salafists and Jihadists in particular) over time transform their ideas and actions. In addition, it chronicles the emergence of the Salafist party Hizb al-Nour from its parent organization that seemingly denounced democracy as un-Islamic and politics as a forbidden practice to one that has embraced both. In addition, I demonstrate how the movement has exhibited a great deal of flexibility in dealing with the ideological 'other' – both at the level of the state and society. Similarly, I offer a narrative of how Afghanistan's Taliban movement went from solely relying on armed insurrection to establishing its desired Islamic polity to negotiating with both the Afghan regime as well as a host of states actors – in particular the United States. My theoretical framework will also account for why the Taliban focus shifted to military activities as opposed to the talks in the past two years and how this relates to my understanding of moderation. The contrast between these two different types of actors underscores my critical assertion that we are really dealing with are moderations (in the plural).

Based on my two main research aims, I have employed qualitative research methods. As far as the first objective is concerned, the specific research method would be discursive analysis. In contrast, the second one necessitates gathering

empirical data via interviews with the actors in question or individuals who have insights on them and analyzing secondary source material. This inductive method allows me to proceed from my two specific cases towards theorization. Determining what led both of my cases to alter their behavior necessitates a qualitative methodological approach. Such a method entails an examination of both the ideological literature of the sundry actors involved as well as their actual behavior. This will be critical to gauge the different degrees of moderation among different types of Islamists. In terms of the level/unit of analysis, I am looking at both groups and individuals because the topic deals with non-state actors seeking to govern states. That said these are ideological non-state actors where the views of certain prominent leaders who serve as theoreticians for the movement heavily shape the ideology of the organization. This is all the more critical when there is a need for adjusting course either through intellectual evolution or due to the emergence of a new ground reality. Therefore, a mixed focus on both the group as a whole and key individual ideologues will prove immensely useful in shedding light on the factors that facilitate moderation and those which inhibit the process.

Case Selection

Most of the scholarly work on moderation examines Muslim Brotherhood type groups, which to varying degrees are relatively moderate to begin with. The majority of the literature thus did not really deal with groups that were truly radical. Therefore, the type of moderation it addresses was not really a departure from radicalism; rather it deals with the next steps in a pre-existing journey of moderation. The formation of Hizb al-Nour and the Afghan Taliban's decision to negotiate its path towards recognition as a legitimate actor provide for the opportunity to truly study groups that only recently moved away from their rejection of mainstream

politics. In fact, they are the only two significant groups representing the Salafist and jihadist type Islamist organizations that have exhibited a tendency towards ideological and behavioral moderation. Therefore, there wasn't any choice behind my case selection. Moreover, the two represent quite diverse ideological, political, and geographical contexts and thus accord my framework broad theoretical purchase beyond these two specific cases. This aspect helps my endeavor to formulating a general theory of moderation of radical Islamist actors.

Research Design

The theoretical as well as a decent portion of the empirical aspects of this research involved desk analysis. The literature review revealed the reasons why the existing academic work could not explain why al-Dawah al-Salafiyah chose to move from being simply a socio-religious movement to forming a political party, which participated in democratic processes. The scholarly work is equally unable to account for why a jihadist movement not facing defeat would adjust its signature approach to power, i.e., via jihad in the sense of armed struggle and sought to negotiate its way into the national and international mainstream. It became abundantly clear that I needed to offer a far more rigorous explanation of the evolution of radical Islamists at both the level of ideas and behavior. In the light of my critique I then came up with a new working model on how radical Islamist groups moderate. The next step involved examining the two movements very closely to try and understand the changes that both were in the process of undergoing in the light of this working model. Based on my findings I then have refined my working model into an alternative theoretical model on how radical Islamists undergo moderations of various forms.

Understanding how my two case studies went through such change required tracing their recent history based on secondary source material, interviews with either the subjects themselves and/or with those who are in close analytical proximity to both sets of actors. I have tried to assess the ways in which they perceive the changes they have undergone and the intended aims behind the modification of their worldview. In this regard, I pay particular attention to their attitudes towards the ideological "others". How did these attitudinal transformations result from their calculus on perceived threats and opportunities in their operating environment is an aspect I have tried to tease out from my interactions. While the Egyptian Salafist movement has formed a political wing - administratively linked to the parent body the Afghan Taliban movement has not made much progress in this direction. Nevertheless, it will be critical to examine how their respective reorganizations has allowed these groups to cooperate and/or compete with the state as well as non-state actors. Such interactions, in turn, alter the structural environment in which both groups face constraints. But a key pre-requisite to understanding the evolution in how my two case studies behaved with the ideological other entailed understanding the shifts within the 'self'.

Towards this end I examined a number of issues. How did new ideas form and were subsequently advanced within the organization? What kind of resistance was there from within to the shift in ideas and behavior? What was the outcome of the competition between variant narratives (which is almost never a linear process)? To what extent did this dynamic result in what the scholars refer to as the "expansion of the boundaries of justifiable action"? To the extent that it has happened how did the evolution come about in terms of the preconceived notions regarding Islam, democracy, secularism, pluralism, tolerance? How did intra-group debates affect its

decision-making process? The most important element within this ideational shift was to pick apart the process in which the normative stances on shariah evolve within both movements.

In other words, there is a multi-dimensional and highly dynamic model of change. I have tried to analyze this complex transformation in order to precisely ascertain the mechanics by which moderation was produced in both cases. The empirical side of the research reveals the comparative extent of ideological and behavioral changes within both groups. I have sought to detail what exactly happened that led them to embark upon their specific paths towards moderation. What were the internal dynamics (structures and decision-making processes) and debates within each? What were their experiences with the state, domestic rivals from both sides of the ideological divide and international actors? Why did they accept certain limitations that in turn led to the multifaceted changes? My findings will hopefully allow me to piece together the story of the changes that both groups underwent at the ideational and actionable levels.

This study traces the unique experiences of two particular groups and then from those narratives distills a general theoretical framework. My model offers a means of understanding how types of similar actors in other places can be expected to moderate. I have chosen one Salafist and another Jihadist case because both are unique forms of radical Islamist actors – the former non-violent while the latter is an insurgent group. My primary period of study for al-Nour is from the eruption of the Arab spring in January 2011 till the parliamentary elections that were held in October 2015. In the case of the Taliban I focus on the period from 2009 when the Obama administration embarked upon a concerted endeavor to negotiate with Afghan insurrectionist group till the announcement in July 2015 when it was

revealed that the Taliban founder, Mullah Mohammed Omar had died in 2013. Indeed, my model is based on the unique experiences of my two case studies. However, I try to make the case that the model is capable of explaining other future cases of moderations amongst Salafists and Jihadists. My model is constructed on answers to a number of theoretical questions.

What is Islamist moderation? How do radical Islamist groups moderate and what all factors drive them towards moderation? What are the geopolitical precursors that steer Islamists towards moderation? Is there a link between the contested attitudes of variant Islamist groups towards democracy and the degree to which they will moderate? How do structural changes within a political system lead to ideological moderation? How much of moderation stems from result of ideational evolution and how much of it is shaped by interests? To what extent material interests have forced this change? What is the degree to which the shifts are the result of genuine ideational evolution?

On the empirical side of my study I have considered an additional set of questions. How do my case studies view the relationship between Islam and democracy? To what extent are they be prepared to cooperate with secularist forces? Why did they previously reject democracy and how did the change in their view come about? What is their position on the idea of plurality of ijtihad? How do they perceive the notion of popular sovereignty? What is their stand on minority rights? To what extent can women transcend traditional roles? How do they intend to deal with competing views of religion and politics? What is their view of the category of mubah (permissible) actions in Islamic jurisprudence in the sense that Islam offers general principles on the basis of which a political system can be developed? What is their understanding of elections? How do they perceive the concept of shariah? How

far are they willing to accept extra-religious notions? The answers to these questions have been highly instructive in understanding the scope of moderation that both groups have experienced. My findings have allowed me to not just explain the two case studies but also help me make a substantive theoretical contribution to the literature in terms of the mechanics of moderation.

Before I move on to the next section I would like to note a few ethical questions I came across during my research. As a researcher, I was concerned that my queries did not place the people whom I interviewed into any trouble. Given the sensitive nature of their activities they are at risk from a variety of directions. Not only do they live under authoritarian states but also chaotic social and political conditions. Consequently, they face potential vulnerabilities from within their own groups, the various government organs in their respective home countries and other non-state actors, especially violent ones. Therefore, I made sure that the individuals I did speak to were comfortable speaking to me. This factor then determined the group of people I was able to speak to. I was fortunate that almost all of my interviewees were conversant in English.

Those whom I was able to interview were selected based on my ability to access them through my network of contacts in the west and in the region. As I elaborate in the limitations section below I faced a number of barriers (both travel and logistical in nature), which really circumscribed the interview process. A second critical issue with regards to the interview process was the veracity of the information being relayed. Here is where my training as an intelligence analyst proved very useful in assessing the information being relayed to me. I took into consideration the motivations of the interviewees in providing me with the information they relayed. I have tried to be as mindful of the various types of biases as is possible. In the case of

Hizb al-Nour I spoke with a key leader of the group who obviously had a public relations imperative in speaking with me. Others included observers, those who had dealings with the party and even its rivals, which involved dealing with negative bias of varying degrees that required filtering.

In the case of the Afghan Taliban, as I could not interface with members of the group, my information is second-hand from observers of the insurgent movement. Here again I was dealing with individuals across a wide gamut. The spectrum ranged from the observers range from individuals sympathetic to the group to those who oppose it. One key issue with being dependent upon the research of the others is that they are not necessarily studying the group from the same angle and therefore the information is more analysis than intelligence on the case studies. In this way the information gleaned from these local/regional epistemic communities tends to be the understanding of the subjects being examined rather than their actual state observed first hand. This is why questionnaires developed beforehand are not the best approach. Here is where semi-structured interviews are more apt where one can steer the conversation so as to ascertain precisely what the researcher is looking for. What really worked for me was that a good chunk of the empirical data that I was looking for had already been gathered by others scholars though they were not looking at these two groups from the perspective of moderation.

Issues Being Examined

1) Unpacking the Notion of Moderation

As my literature review clearly shows moderation is in dire need of theoretical refinement. I accomplish this by building upon the shortcomings I outline in my critique of the existing literature. I engage in this process through a deconstruction of the assumptions upon which the various scholarly renditions have

approached the subject. First and foremost I try to offer definitions of the terms 'moderate' and 'radical' that do not contain cultural biases and instead are more value-neutral. I will argue that the phenomenon of moderation is context-dependent and that different types of Islamists undergo moderation based on what I identify as *starting points* in their evolution. I then show how different starting points for different types of radical actors will determine the extent to which they will moderate. By focusing on starting points, I uncover multiple pathways towards moderation. My work on moderation thus begins with the notion of radicalism by highlighting the many types of moderations that stem from a reality where there are many different forms of radicalisms – not just among Islamists but also among secularists.[1] By highlighting the different forms of radicalisms that exist within Islamism, I demonstrate how moderation assumes various forms because it is contingent upon the regime-type as well as social conditions that vary from country to country.

Highlighting the environments in which Islamist groups operate entails examining the role of the secular state as well as non-Islamist and other competing Islamist non-state actors. I will argue that the degree to which moderation takes place among Islamists depends upon the extent to which secularists (both the state and non-state actors) moderate their positions as well. I make the case that moderation is also a function of the parallel process of democratization. Unlike Catholic and Marxist movements in Europe, Islamists operate in largely autocratic environments. After establishing that what we are really dealing with at the tactical level are moderations (in the plural sense) of various forms, I also advance a new definition of moderation in the general sense of the phenomenon that is able to

account for ideological and behavioral change in terms of magnitude and direction. My working definition is as follows:

Islamist moderation is the process by which different types of radical actors undergo behavioral change due to an evolution in their existing reading of the religious texts triggered by constraints and latitudes that force a reinterpretation of what constitutes shariah.

As per this definition I've been able to study change from both directions, i.e., ideas and interests and how both shape one another. I also problematize the independent variable of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis by showing that moderation takes place pre-inclusion and even totally devoid of inclusion.[2] This allows me to show that Islamists can moderate even without incentives. On the contrary, I argue that constraints as opposed to incentives are what lead to shifts in ideas and actions. Another matter that I pay attention to is that in many instances it is not just the state that excludes Islamists. Salafists and Jihadists actually exclude themselves from the incumbent political system because they reject it. I also examine closely the notion of exclusion. Indeed, the regimes do not allow for direct participation in politics. However, that does not mean that as a social movement during the Mubarak era Hizb al-Nour's parent organization, al-Dawah al-Salafiyah were completely immune from politics. I delve into how for purposes of its own survival and regime's interests the social movement did engage in indirect political dealings with the security services.

Therefore, I argue how the notions of inclusion and exclusion need to be revisited in order to understand the pre-participation politics have in nudging the group in question towards formal political involvement. Most importantly, however, I shed light on how objective geopolitical constraints force both my Salafist and Jihadist case studies to revise their subjective ideological preferences. As a result, they are pushed back to the drawing board where they assume stances that they

hitherto considered un-Islamic. In this regard, I explore how radical Islamists approach extra-religious ideas by taking into consideration their view of the expansion of the juristic sphere of *mubah* (permissible) actions, and their acceptance of the concept of plurality of *ijtihad* (interpretation). I will go into considerable detail to highlight the contested nature of the twin terms of *radical* and *moderate* and how they are excruciatingly relative. Despite this major drawback there is a dearth of a viable alternative vocabulary. For this reason, I have no choice but to employ these terms in this work. However, when and where I do use them I have tried to be careful to situate them in their relevant contexts.

In my examination of the existing theories I point out how at one level they are competing explanations of the process of moderation in the generic sense. But I also make the case that on a different level these various theories address different processes associated with the overall phenomenon of moderation. In this latter sense, the scholarship on Islamist moderation is – taxonomically, conceptually and applicability wise – highly scattered. Each of these theories tackles different pieces of the moderation puzzle. Even in the sense that they seek to explain different types of moderation they focus on different aspects of variant types of Islamist actors. As a result, the literature in the process of being illuminative convolutes the concept of moderation. I attempt to resolve this conundrum by taking a higher altitude view of the processes outlined in the existing theories. By doing so I advance a general model that I believe can offer greater theoretical purchase and can encompass the maximum number of cases of Islamist moderation.

I go on to explaining three different stages of moderation. The first stage entails a change in the means by which a group is willing to pursue its political goals. In this initial stage groups rejecting the incumbent system – be they violent or

non-violent – are only prepared to forsake the means but not the ends. Once a group has successfully accepted to play by the rules of the game the next stage involves adjusting its agenda. Even though the group may still believe in implementing a radical policy such as mandating women to wear the hijab it is prepared to defer that objective to a unknown future date when it is able to institute it without much risk of backlash. The final stage in this process is when the actor(s) are willing to accept alternate views on which they had very rigid positions. For example that secularism does not connote irreligiousity; rather religious neutrality. Very few groups such as the ones that the literature refers to as post-Islamist are able to make it to this level and this is why I emphasize the notion of starting points that determine the distance a particular actor will travel once on the moderation path.

2) Empirical Work On the Shifts in Radical and Militant Islamist Movements

For the empirical part of my research I have travelled to various countries in the Middle East & South Asia to conduct field research on these two movements. The fieldwork on Hizb al-Nour involved meeting with the leaders and members of the party and its parent organization, al-Dawah al-Salafiyah required a trip to Egypt. In contrast, doing primary source research on the Taliban has been very challenging as the University Research Ethics Committee did not allow me to travel to Afghanistan for reasons that I detail below. Instead I have visited Istanbul, Dubai, Doha and Islamabad to try and meet with the handful of members of the movement's political bureau that reside in these cities. This has been not easy given the status of these officials in third countries and their relative unwillingness to openly speak to researchers. Thus, in both cases, in addition to interviewing primary sources, i.e., individuals affiliated with both groups, I have also held conversations with members of the local/national/regional epistemic community who follow the actors in question

from much more closer vantage points. These include journalists, analysts and academics. Furthermore, I have been meeting with government officials, businessmen and other civil society actors (political activists) who have had a first hand experience in interacting with the Salafist and jihadist actors. In an effort to makeup for my inability to meet many of the actors first hand I have tried to gain insights from these various observers and from a variety of media reports.

For my first case study, Hizb al-Nour and its parent group al-Dawah al-Salafiyah, I begin by situating the movement in the context of Salafism in its original form. I then move to explaining the fragmentation of Salafism its drift towards Islamism. Coming to the present, I explain how Salafists are subject to an intense tri-directional centrifugal pull in which my case study al-Nour represents the first substantive manifestation of (what I have coined as) *Electoral* Salafism. I discuss Electoral Salafists by locating them in the context of the original *Quietist* and *Jihadist* forms of Salafism. Despite the fact that Jihadist Salafists were the first to reject the apolitical nature of Quietist Salafism and they remain a much bigger phenomenon I demonstrate how Electoral Salafists nonetheless represent a significant trend of Salafism towards Islamism. Even though it has embraced electoral politics, al-Nour continues to harbor deep reservations towards many democratic norms, which is why I place them within a schema I developed on Islamist attitudes towards democracy. I then go through the history that led to the evolution of Hizb al-Nour to show how its parent organization shed its decades long apolitical nature and began to partake in electoral politics during the past five years. In this way, using my theoretical framework I offer an explanation of how the first-ever substantive case of a Salafist moderating its ideas and actions and how that

process continues to unfold even though its trajectory remains unknown to even the group itself.

Moving on to my second case study of the Afghan Taliban movement, I use the same model to explain a very different form of moderation. In this case, the process of moderation is unfolding at a much slower velocity and moving towards a completely different direction. I began with a discussion of the modern political history of Afghanistan covering the eras of the monarchy, autocratic republicanism and Marxist stratocracy. This historical context allows me to show how the unique geopolitical conditions, which paved the way for the rise of jihadism as the country's dominant political ideology in the early 1990s. Next, I provide an analysis of the conditions during the 1990s that gave rise to the Taliban's jihadist regime, which highlights how the movement exhibited potential for relative moderation during its five-year rule. The bulk of the chapter, however, focuses on the efforts to negotiate with the insurgent movement since at least 2003. I then use my framework to show how and why the jihadist group has been trying to distinguish itself from transnational jihadist would seek to become part of the political mainstream. The framework also allows me to explain why the Taliban represent a case of arrested moderation. I show how the underlying geopolitics limited the extent to which the Taliban were able to engage in a rethink of their ideological positions.

Limitations

My research ran into a number of hurdles due to proximity issues as direct contact with many of the actors in question has not been possible. This is especially the case with the Afghan Taliban where I did not get permission from the research ethics committee to travel to Afghanistan. As a result, I have relied on individuals who are so many degrees removed from the Taliban movement. Ascertaining the

thinking within the strategic and tactical leadership as regards the negotiations process thus becomes challenging. I have compensated for this shortcoming by speaking with a wide range of individuals who have closer view of the movement (both with respect to time and space) than myself. These individuals represent a wide spectrum of perspectives that have provided me insights on the thoughts and practice of the Taliban movers and shakers. I have had to factor in the fact that the insurgent movement has undergone considerable fragmentation since the fall of its regime in 2001. These fissures intensified as the group made the decision to pursue the path of negotiations and much more recently with the rise of Daesh and the official confirmation that Mullah Omar has been dead for over two years.

Therefore it has been difficult to gauge the extent to which the movement's leaders and rank and file are resistant to the changes being pursued by the apex leaders. Finding the locus of opinion-makers was itself a key difficulty. This has largely stemmed from travel restrictions and finite resources. I have tried to work around the problem of limited physical contact. This has mostly been in the form of reaching out to many of my contacts through electronic means. These include email, phone calls, Skype, Facebook, Twitter and What'sApp. I realize though that these digital means of communication however are no substitute for direct interface. This would explain the dearth in the studies on the Taliban movement but in many ways my difficulties were unique to my situation.

Having had to work full-time while also pursuing my doctorate full-time has been extremely challenging. At the same time though this rigorous regimen has proven incredibly useful. I have been fortunate that there is a tremendous amount of overlap between the topic of my doctoral research and the issues I work on in my professional capacity as an analyst. In addition, during the first 13 months of my

PhD program I managed to write an academic book on Islamism called Political Islam in the Age of Democratization, which was published by Palgrave in December 2013. My research was progressing well until I lost my position with Stratfor in May 2015. This has heavily impacted my research. I had to focus on securing alternative employment and take-up consulting projects to support my family. The situation became dire and we were forced to sell our home.

Earlier this year we had to relocate from Canada to the United States after I was able to secure a position with a start-up research firm. This bitter experience in the final year and half of my PhD program slowed down the process of writing up my thesis. Another critical factor that affected my research is the unusually long time it took me to secure approval for my research project from the university's ethics committee. My need to travel to both Egypt and in particular Afghanistan to conduct fieldwork was the issue. Initially my Application to Register was about to be approved in June 2013 – after I had submitted a revised ethics application to the ethics committee of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities & Languages (SSHL), which only required that I submit a a participant information sheet and consent form. But then for some unexplained reason the university's ethics committee took charge of my application and demanded that I provide further information regarding the risks of doing research given the security conditions in both countries. There was considerable deliberations during that summer and the fall involving the SSHL and University ethics committee with Research Policy and Governance Officer, Dr. Robert Odle acting as liaison. The matter I was informed also drew in the Vice-Chancellor – in addition to my department head and the director of the graduate school.

I then submitted a second revision to the ethics application in November of that year, which once again was deemed unsatisfactory. I was then asked to provide a risk assessment analysis, which involved a number of meetings with the Safety and Wellness Office. I then submitted a third revision to the ethics application, which contained the risk analysis in May 2014, which was approved in August. Thus my fieldwork was held up for almost a year and a half. Even when it was approved I was not able to secure permission to travel to Afghanistan, which has forced me to rely on secondary sources for the Taliban case study. In the case of Egypt, I did manage to travel there in the Spring of 2015 and interview individuals familiar with the Nour Party but I was unable to meet with party officials who were busy with parliamentary elections. I had hoped to travel back but then the security situation there deteriorated between terrorist attacks and the government crackdown, especially on foreigners. This has forced me to improvise by reaching out to individuals electronically and rely more on secondary sources.

I came across many obstacles during the four years of my doctorate program, which have and had an encumbering effect on my research efforts. Undoubtedly the financial and by extension familial struggles I encountered in the final 16 months have been terribly distracting. However, the extraordinarily lengthy process I had to go through in order to secure approval from the ethics committee for my research project unfortunately consumed a good portion of my first two years of the PhD program. It delayed my research and reduced the amount of time I had for fieldwork. I am fortunate that I was able to compensate for this loss with my professional work as a geopolitical analyst that allowed me an alternative means of research. But the most useful experience that really boosted my doctoral studies is the opportunity to be the lead author of a major academic work on contemporary political Islam, which

I worked on during the initial 13 months of the program. It has received considerable praise given that the nearly century old Foreign Policy Association based in New York listed it among the ten most significant books of the 2013. The London School of Economics, Democratization Journal gave it very positive reviews. Writing this book allowed me to make good use of the time period during which my PhD research was held up due to my struggles to secure ethics approval. But most importantly, the book allowed me to develop a very deep understanding of the broader theoretical and empirical context in which Islamist moderation takes place.

These various problems that I ran into while this project have forced me to modify the scope of my PhD project. Early on in the process I had much more ambitious expectations of what I sought to accomplish – particularly in terms of field research. I had really hoped to be able to have interactions with both thought leaders and the rank and file of both the Nour Party and the Afghan Taliban. That said, I knew it was going to be difficult – at least in the case of the Taliban given its status as an active insurgent movement. Nonetheless, I still thought I would be able to meet many of the "formers" from the movement. However, the ethics committee restrictions prevented me from traveling to Afghanistan and therefore I could not access these individuals – many of whom I had met in the past in my professional capacity as an intelligence analyst. Though disheartened I sought to circumvent this problem by trying to get in touch with political leaders of the Taliban based in Pakistan, Qatar, UAE & Turkey. Between their own imperatives to maintain radio silence due to security concerns and pressures from their host governments as well as the risks to my own wellbeing I was unable to meet figures representing the movement.

I have relied on the insights of individuals a few degrees removed from the actual Taliban officials. These were mainly journalists, analysts and academics studying the movement and are based in the region. They are as close as I have been able to get to the movement and thus the thinking of its leaders. I have also followed the communiqués issued by the group. But I have had to rely most heavily on media reports and other think tank analyses. This has made it harder to tease out the specific information that I require for the purposes of my inquiry. It is because of these various impediments that I have had to engage in course corrections with regards to the methodology of my research. The initial plan was to capture a highly granular view of the changes within the movement but I have had to make do with a higher altitude examination.

Role of the Researcher

I have long been fascinated with the issue of Islamist attitudes towards democracy and the related potential for moderation. Nearly two decades of research on contemporary political Islam has played a tremendous role in shaping my doctoral thesis. My ongoing professional experience, prior academic work as well as my experience as a student activist have allowed me to develop a strong understanding of the different forms of Islamisms. I initially began studying variant forms of radicalisms among different types of Islamists while as an undergraduate student and wrote my baccalaureate dissertation on radical Islamist view of the incompatibility between democracy and Islam. For my masters dissertation, 'Islam & Democracy in the Context of the Contemporary Islamic Political Resurgence', I explored moderate Islamist attitudes towards democracy and those prevalent among the wider global Muslim context . During my nearly six years of pre-doctoral graduate studies I immersed myself in trying to understand the phenomenon of

moderations among radical Islamists and ultraconservative Muslims. Complimenting this foundational knowledge is my professional experience involving in field research, analysis and forecasting. For the past 13 years, in the capacity of an intelligence analyst, I have studied radical Islamist groups of various types – placing them within the context of the geopolitics of the Middle East and South Asia. Writing on Islamism and the wider geopolitics of the Muslim world for a living has helped me cultivate a strong level of situational awareness of the actors in question. Unlike the traditional graduate student who embarks upon his/her first major overseas research journey for their thesis I have traveled quite a bit across the Middle East & South Asia in connection with my professional responsibilities. Working in private sector research analyzing and forecasting political, security, and economic situations around the globe served as an impetus for me to pursue academic research. My intellectual curiosity for this part of the world and Islamism in particular as well as the fascination with the evolution of ideas over time steered me towards this question of the variant forms moderations among Salafists and Jihadists. My work with Stratfor (2003-15) and now Geopolitical Futures (2015-present) has allowed me to maintain situational awareness of the evolution of my cases studies.

Importance of the Research

This research is important given its cutting edge nature and hence has both theoretical and policy value. Islamists of various shades emerging as the beneficiaries of the autocratic meltdown raises the question about the fate of democratization in the Arab/Muslim world. A significant cross-section of ultra-conservative Salafists in Egypt have moved away from being staunchly opposed to democracy to embracing electoral politics and even supporting the secular military

establishment and its coup, which toppled the government of its rival Islamist movement. Similarly, the Taliban insurgency has gained significant momentum but the Afghan jihadist insurgents realize that the battlefield gains will need to be translated into international acceptance as a legitimate national movement and thus remain open to negotiations. Thus the key question among experts and the laity is how these Islamists who despite showing signs of moderation are still quite radical in their agendas (and even their modus operandi as is the case with the Taliban) can be further nudged towards moderation. Considering the autocratic meltdown underway in Arab countries, escalating geosectarianism in the Middle East, the rise of Daesh and growing jihadist terrorism around the word (in particular in Europe and North America) this research directly addresses the core of the global efforts towards countering violent extremism. The insights it provides can go a long way in helping the process to try and end the war in Syria where a future post-Assad power-sharing settlement will to a great extent depend on moderations among the Syrian rebels – most of whom are Salafist-jihadists.

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[1] I have developed my understanding of multiple radicalisms and moderations based on Al-Azmeh, Aziz. 1993. *Islams and Modernities*. New York; Verso in which the author demonstrates that "There are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it." Applying al-Azmeh's logic to the radicalism-moderation binary, I am trying to make the case that there are multiple forms of moderations stemming from their corresponding radicalisms. For this reason, I emphasize the notion of starting points where each point corresponds to a specific form of radicalism. Each starting point then shapes both the path towards potential moderation and the degree to which a radical actor can be expected to change.

[2] Cavatorta, Francesco, and Fabio Meron. 2013. Moderation Through Exclusion?: The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda From Fundamentalist to Conservative Party" *Democratization*. 20 (5): 857-875 underscores a unique case of an Islamist group moderating even under conditions of exclusion. In contrast I am making an argument that moderation can also take place even before the existing of any possibility of inclusion and where the actor(s) in question have self-excluded themselves.

Chapter IV – Theoretical Framework

Having laid out the methodology behind this research in the previous chapter I now return to assessing the literature on Islamist moderation that I surveyed in Chapter II. This chapter starts off with a comparative assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the various theories. I spend a great deal of time on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis for it constitutes the bulk of the current scholarship. At the same time though I pay particular attention to deradicalization as it offers unique insights into groups hostile to the status quo. A portion of this chapter deals with the various problems associated with the different theories and the issues that they overlook. Having identified the many gaps in the academic research on the subject I will then advance a new definition of Islamist moderation. Based on my definition I offer a innovative model of how Islamist moderation takes place. I make the case that it has broad explanatory power to where it can account for different forms of Islamist moderation that emerge from the many shades of radicalisms.

Making Sense of Moderation Paradigms

A significant amount of the literature on Islamist moderation has emerged in the last decade or so. With the growth of violent extremism there has been a corresponding increase (albeit at different paces) in the demand for and supply of moderation. Yet we are nowhere near any clarity on the subject. Contributing to this obfuscating situation is that the reverse process known as radicalization has gained greater attention given the global efforts towards countering violent extremism. An increasing number of cases of western Muslims being drawn to radical Islamist impulses have led to a spike in scholarly and/or practitioner studies on radicalization. The operating assumption is that if we understood how individuals became radicalized then it would help us more effectively confront the threat of violent

extremism. Since there seems to be far more radicalization than moderation taking place this focus is only natural. In any case, the net effect has been that the process of moderation is not receiving enough serious attention – in great part due to the over-emphasis on the reverse process of radicalization.

Undoubtedly, there is great value in studying radicalization as it allows us to identify the enabling social, political and economic conditions as well as the processes that lead individuals to engage in political violence. As Kruglanski et al note that understanding the antecedents of radicalization can help us with deradicalization given that the two are opposite processes and thus knowing what causes radicalization can lead us to distil the obverse.[1] But as Bjorgo and Horgan aptly show that in most cases of deradicalization what is really happening is disengagement where the actors have only given up violent means of pursuing their objectives, which in some cases is a temporary shift.[2] But let us assume that an actor genuinely abandons violence as a means of achieving their ideological goal. That is not the same as saying they have forsaken their ideological positions. In other words they have not de-radicalized and instead merely disengaged from the use of violence. Therefore, understanding radicalization provides at best only a partial understanding of how radical actors can potentially moderate. For this reason, I find understanding the obverse process (out of radicalism and towards moderation) as offering far greater insights in how to combat one of the greatest global scourges of our time.

Knowing the mechanics of how radicalized individuals could potentially moderate is a far more effective way of countering violent extremism. This requires mapping the pathways through which actors pass as they make their way through what is a long and uncertain journey towards the political mainstream. It is true that we don't have enough cases of moderation, which again is due to the fact that in the

here and now the global trend is towards radicalization. However, understanding radicalization is an indirect way of trying to confront the problem and thus not a substitute for ascertaining how moderation takes place. Therefore, it is essential to leap at the few opportunities for research that do emerge such as the two case studies I have selected for this project. In addition to the complications arising from the greater focus on radicalization the study of moderation has its problems. My literature review shows how moderation as a term is exceedingly contentious. A great deal of the confusion has to do with terminological chaos, which in turn further compounds the task of conceptual clarity.

For example, deradicalization is a subset within the broader process of moderation. It refers to the process by which armed groups give up violence as a means towards political ends. It is somewhat of a misnomer in that the groups, which have de-radicalized, have merely given up armed struggle. They remain committed to their original radical aims but are exploring less costly means to realize them. The net change in such actors is that they have disengaged from violent action. Therefore, what we are really dealing with here is demilitarization and not deradicalization. The latter is a longer-term transformation, which a demilitarized group may or may not undergo. Complicating this situation even further is the fact that in many cases there is not much in the way of peaceful political avenues.

The one key point on which there is a consensus among scholars is that for democratization to succeed moderation is essential. Efforts towards democratization are taking place simultaneously with the rise of the Islamism and jihadism in that they are parallel dynamics. It is natural that the bulk of the moderation literature should focus on these religio-political actors – considering that these forces, to varying degrees, are anti-democratic. However, they are not the only ones

threatening nascent democratic experiments. The post-colonial states, it can be argued, are a greater obstacle blocking democratization. At the same time though secular non-state actors have also demonstrated a distinct autocratic streak. In the post-Arab Spring period Egypt's trajectory clearly highlights that both sides of the ideological divide have behaved undemocratically – albeit in different ways.[3] At the heart of this shared undemocratic attitude is a strong illiberal attitude.[4]

Such intolerance for the ideological 'other' not only has a bearing on democratization but before that it greatly affects moderation. The discourses on moderation tend to focus on moderation of Islamists as the dependent variable and inclusion within secular political systems as the independent variable. What has not been given enough attention is how secularists are also radical in that they have been largely unwilling to share-power with Islamists. Here it is important to stress that this secularist attitude is informed by Islamist radicalism and the genuine fear that Islamists are using mainstream politics as a way to monopolize power. That certainly is a potential outcome of inclusion as Bermeo (1997) points out how radical organizations do not necessarily moderate as a result of inclusion.[5] However, before we get to the inclusion side of this correlation we have to address the moderation side where secularist radicalism also has played a role in limiting Islamist moderation. What is more is that radicalism on both sides is mutually reinforcing. Therefore, moderation both Islamists and secularists to come to the political center as Browers emphasizes in her work on accommodation.[6]

In other words, Islamist moderation requires that secularists moderate their views and accommodate their ideological rivals. Schwedler mentions this when she talks about the need to get "political inclusion right" especially in a situation where "pluralist institutions and practices are not yet well established". Schwedler is

referring to the lack of democracy in the Arab/Muslim world, which severely limits the utility of the moderation-inclusion hypothesis. It is a critical factor that really underscores the difference between Islamists in contemporary Arab/Muslim countries and Christian and Marxist movements in post-World War II European states. In the case of the latter there was a strong tradition of democracy, which was significantly institutionalized to where they possessed the capability to absorb their radical opponents. In contrast, the Middle East and the wider Islamic world largely lack democratic systems in which radical Islamists can be subsumed; hence my earlier point on how democratization and moderation are processes taking place in parallel. Therefore, we have a problem yet another problem with the independent variable of inclusion and cannot even begin to meaningfully discuss the dependent variable of moderation.

That said, let us turn to the question of what do we mean by moderation, which is something that scholars continue to grapple with. Schwedler offers a rather strong and sufficiently broad enough definition, which she states as the "movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives." The problem with this definition is that it applies to groups that were willing to participate in mainstream politics long before the states moved towards inclusion as is evident from her two case studies. It does not shed light on the ideational and behavioral change in groups that either passively rejected the state or worse engaged in armed struggle against it. Intrinsic to this shortcoming is the way in how moderates and radicals are defined. Defining moderates as those who support liberal democratic reforms and radicals as those who oppose such efforts highlights a western bias in the way moderation should unfold – something Schwedler and others acknowledge. This is not to say that ideas and actions of

Islamists do not change, as is evident from how Bayat describes the phenomenon of post-Islamism. Islamists undergo ideological and behavioral change and the question is to what degree and in what ways.

Though Schwedler admits that many of the moderate groups are moderate prior to inclusion but then she does not explore this idea. Instead she focuses on inclusion rendering the group additionally moderate.[7] She cites Hizb al-Wasat of Egypt as an example of such a group. Her view is that the establishment of the group was the result of distanciation of its founders from the Brotherhood and not because of ideational moderation. Turning to her own case studies, Jordan's Islamic Action Front and Yemen' al-Islah, she says these groups prior to electoral participation were neither radical nor even opponents of the regime. She stresses that the moderate behavior of such groups should not be seen as mechanically stemming from inclusion. Instead the moderation takes place via engagement in more moderate, pluralistic and inclusive practices. Fundamentally, her argument rests on the transformation of groups whose agendas were in flux and refrained from extra-constitutional approaches to power.

Highlighting the Gaps

In the inclusion-moderation hypothesis there is talk of both opportunities and constraints but how does each shape the behavior of radical actors to become more moderate is under-explored. How do previously excluded groups go from entering the system to abiding by the constraints? With regards to moderation as modification in ideology and behavior, what happens to ideology such that it affects behavior or vice-versa? Furthermore, political inclusion does not necessarily provide incentives for groups to negotiate and compromise. There are other intervening variables such as faith in the stability of the system, political ideology and level and state of

political development. What if states don't exclude and it is the actors who exclude themselves? Salafists and jihadists are not excluded per se; rather they reject the system. And when they enter they do not encounter incentives.

The path of moderation for Islamists will obviously be different from the Catholic and Marxist groups. But it is very important to understand why this is the case. It has significant implications for the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. The latter were already operating in a well-established secular environment going back to the pre-Enlightenment era. In other words, these radical European groups had already been acclimated to the prevailing socio-political context. It was obviously much easier for the Marxists as they did not contest secularism than it was for the Catholic groups. However, even in the case of the Catholics, the Protestantization of Christianity had allowed for the emergence of an alternative religious discourse with a large following. What this did is provide a theological justification for Catholic groups to join the political mainstream. In sharp contrast, we have not seen anything akin to a Protestant version of Islam.

On the contrary, the trend in the Muslim majority countries has been in the opposite direction. Secularism has been in retreat in the wake of the proliferation of Islamist groups. This is because the resurgence of religion began almost at the same time as European thought began making its way into the Muslim world.[8] Secularism never really took root given that it was always seen as a foreign import into the Muslim body politic. It was an elite driven top-down effort by post-colonial regimes that never really penetrated the masses where conservative Muslim forces held on to different classical readings of religion and Islamists tried to cut and paste medieval rulings on to a modern template. Turkey represented the lone case where secularism permeated the society but even there in recent decades we have seen religious

revivalism. Instead of triggering the development of a new interpretation of Islam, western-style secularism elicited a reactionary response whereby Muslim societies went deeper into medieval religio-political discourse. Islamist moderation, thus, is taking place in a completely different civilizational atmosphere than that in which Catholic and Marxist groups moderated, which speaks volumes about the serious limits of inclusion-moderation hypothesis as an explanatory model.

Some scholars have challenged the basic assumption of the inclusion-moderation principle making the case that moderation could happen even without inclusion. According to this argument external pressures on radical Islamist groups alone could lead to internal changes. Ashour (2009) demonstrates this in the case of Gamaah al-Islamiyah.[9] Cavatorta and Merone (2013) underscore the same in the case of Ennahda, which moderated even under conditions of exclusion.[10] Herein lies another key distinction when it comes to moderation without inclusion. Ashour (2009) shows that moderation can happen without an expectation or even desire of inclusion on the part of the radical Islamist entity. My case studies also represent a case of moderation sans inclusion. The work of Cavatorta and Merone, however, shows moderation *pre-inclusion* as Ennahda sought to participate in Tunisia's political process even though it knew that that was unlikely under the Ben-Ali regime.

There is also a disagreement regarding sequencing – in terms of how moderation unfolds. Does ideological transformation come first? Or do radical actors first alter their behavior, which then leads to change in their normative positions? Some of the scholars surveyed in this review suggest that the shift in behavior come first followed by ideological change. Ashour shows that Gamaah al-Islamiyah first renounced violence and then engaged in developing an extremely elaborate doctrinal

position against the jihadist doctrine. Others argue the reverse, i.e., radical actors accept a new ideological position, which in turn leads to a corresponding modification in their behavior. In the next two chapters, I highlight actors who resist behavioral change until they are convinced of its ideological legitimacy from the perspective of their understanding of the Islamic religious texts. Both sequences of change are thus possible – based on the unique geopolitical circumstances that a particular actor faces at any given point in time.

The literature also reveals that moderation exists at a minimum of three distinct progressive levels of moderation. The initial level involves radical actors abandoning their approach to achieving their desired goal. In the case of armed groups, it involves a renunciation of violence and for non-violent actors it could entail giving up their long-held anathema to mainstream politics. Once the actors in question have become comfortable with their new approach to establishing an Islamic state they are now ready to potentially consider limited modifications to their agenda itself. A common example of this is to accept alternative interpretations of the religious texts, especially in terms of how they can be operationalized. A highly advanced third stage would be where the end goal itself is subject to change where the actor no longer feels the need to establish an Islamic state and is content that a civil state will do just nicely. Most actors that have undergone moderation remain at the second stage because they can accept changes in the way they conceptualize the Islamic state project due to ideological barriers to acceptance but will not forsake the project as a whole.

Viewed from the perspective of scope, moderation among Islamists can be understood as one of two things. By scope here I mean the scale of moderation. Some groups undertake major revisions to their long-held positions. Others are

taking the next incremental step in a journey that they have been on for a long time. The former takes place at a *macro* level where a genuinely radical actor engages in substantive alteration of its political program. In contrast, a more established Islamist party undergoes moderation at the *micro* level where moderation takes the form of the adoption of additional measures in line with a process that has long been ongoing. Both my case studies represent a fundamental break with their positions. The various Muslim Brotherhood style movements that have taken advantage of openings in the political systems signify the next milestone on a road that they have long been traveling on.

Essentially what we are dealing with are different types of Islamist actors following different paths of moderation, which the scholarly literature has tried to uncover. While we see three different paradigms being employed there is a disproportionately heavy reliance on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Undoubtedly these various theoretical renderings offer invaluable insights into disparate pieces of the broad phenomenon dubbed as moderation. They are less competing theories offering varying explanations of the same process than they are descriptions of different forms of moderation. Even when it comes to the latter they are really focused on different aspects that shape a single form of moderation. Additionally, while we may be dealing with the same broad phenomenon of moderation it manifests differently in different Islamist actors. Simply put, the literature is all over the place – in terms of nomenclature, conceptualization, and application – of the highly complex process of moderation.

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis applies to groups that initially had been excluded from the political process. However, it focuses on groups that were already moderate to begin with in the sense that they sought to participate in inclusive

political structures/processes. It is most relevant to the study of moderation among Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood genre, which seek change via constitutional means. On the other hand, the discourse on de-radicalization looks at armed groups and sees moderation as a function of their abandonment of violence. Deradicalization offers tremendous insights on how Islamists who seek to violently overthrowing the incumbent order, reach the point where they renounce armed struggle. In comparison with the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, post-Islamism has even less consensus on what it means. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution to the debate on how Islamists moderate to the point where they ceased to be Islamists in that they no longer seek to impose what they deem as shariah and instead seek a pious society through a democratic state. In my own earlier work, I have argued that post-Islamism represents a departure from the Islamist space and thus the first organic attempt towards the formulation of a Muslim secular narrative derived from within the traditions of Islam. Nonetheless, post-Islamism is limited to explaining groups, which have long been committed to electoral politics, transform to the point where they given up the desire to establish an "Islamic" polity. The accommodation discourse, explains how Islamists, which have long been active in civil society and have participated in institutional politics, gradually move to the political center through limited interaction with their ideological rivals.

The notion of political learning has been used to understand Islamist moderation but is not very well developed in explaining how changes in norms among Islamists occur or how they create new norms. The paths they trek on towards compromises remains largely uncharted. A comparative study of these various theories shows that we are essentially talking about multiple *radicalisms* and hence *moderations*. What is significant is that the plurality of radicalisms and

moderations has been under-appreciated by the scholarly community. The tendency has been to lump these different forms Consequently, moderation has become an over-used and abused term or what Sartori referred to as 'conceptual stretching'.[11] By using the same term to denote different forms of changes in the ideas and actions of Islamists the term has been almost gutted of meaning. Hence, the scholarly contention on what do we really mean by moderation. Before I offer my own take on the process of Islamist moderation I need to address the a priori issue of how to understand moderates and radicals.

Radicals Versus Moderates

While Schwedler and Wickham both accept that the terms radical and moderate are highly problematic there is still the tendency to rely on them.[12] Radicals can be of different types – both those who engage in violence (jihadists) and those pursue radical agendas but do not adopt armed struggle (Hizb al-Tahrir). Likewise, we have the issue of relative moderates as is clear if one were to take into consideration the Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Tunisia's Ennahda, Morocco's Party of Justice and Development, etc. One of the main problems shaping the confusion surrounding the terms *radical* and *moderate* is the tendency to mix the rhetoric of a group with its actual behavior. There is only so much value in studying rhetoric as it offers little utility in the need to distinguish between different types of actors that are part a broad ideological space. This is especially the case with Islamism, which has gone through a massive amount of fragmentation resulting in the rise of different types of groups. As a result, there are so many groups that can be referred to as moderates and so many that are radical. Such is the level of intra-Islamist flux that certain observers will deem a group radical while others will consider it moderate.

Arguably a group could be moderate on a certain issue and simultaneously radical on another. For this reason, in my book on contemporary political Islam I argue that it in order to make sense of the moderate-radical problem one needs to focus on the actions of these actors. Because can have us going around in circles.[13] Furthermore, there is much ideological overlap between very different types of groups. Concentrating on how different Islamists pursue their objective of establishing an Islamic political order allows us to work mitigate the problems of the radical-moderate binary. Their respective behaviors towards the incumbent system provides for a useful typology. I considered the system as being composed of two parts, i.e., state and society. Based on this benchmark I made the case that Islamists could be one of three types: *Acceptors, Propagandists & Insurrectionists*.

Acceptor type Islamists accept both the state and society as legitimate arenas and engage with them. They accept the nation-state and in fact are willing to work within legal limits to pursue their goal of Islamic state via democratization. The Muslim Brotherhood organizations are the most prominent example of acceptor Islamism. *Propagandist* Islamists reject the nation-state as illegitimate and oppose democracy, however, they are actively engaged in society trying to peacefully shape public opinion against the status quo. They hope to foment mass revolution leading to a military coup ousting the incumbent order. Hizb al-Tahrir is a key insurrectionist type organization. *Insurrectionist* Islamists discard both state and society as un-Islamic. Their path towards establishing their envisioned Islamic polity – usually transnational in nature – involves armed struggle (jihad). There are many insurrectionist Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban, Boko Haram, etc.

The afore-mentioned schema allows us to capture different types of moderations and radicalisms. Because they politically navigate through the

mainstream acceptors can be considered moderates. At the same time though, because they pursue radical agendas such as the imposition of sharia laws through majoritarian democracy they are radicals as well. The propagandists – because they engage in peaceful campaigning in society are moderates when compared to those employ violence. That said, their rejection of democracy and aim of re-establishing the caliphate clearly makes them radicals. Insurrectionists are even more radical than the propagandists in that they pursue these same goals and by means of armed struggle. What we have here is that the insurrectionists are the only type who cannot be considered moderate in any sense of the word. Whereas the other two categories in their respective ways can be considered moderate as well as radical.

In that same book, I also examined Islamists in terms of their attitudes democracy. Based on this yardstick I was able to design another 3-tiered typology – according to which Islamists can be of three types: *Participators*, *Conditionalists* & *Rejectors*. The first category signifies Islamists who feel that Islam is fully compatible with democracy and hence their unqualified participation in democratic politics. Conditionalists are those who see democracy as being acceptable with certain reservations and thus are willing to enter parliament but would oppose the legislation of laws that they deem as violating what they consider as divine sovereignty. Lastly are those who completely reject democracy as an un-Islamic political system. Here again we see moderations of two types – in the form of the participators and the conditionalists. In the same way, radicalism comes in two forms, i.e., the rejecters and the conditionalists. Having established that Islamist radicalisms comes in numerous forms I will now turn to showing how different forms of moderations could emerge.

Revisiting Moderation

My original contribution to this subject is two-fold. *First*, I advance the theoretical debate on the matter by a strategic examination of all the various theories – a 70,000-foot view – something, which has not received adequate attention.[14] In the preceding section I have pointed out their value and shortcomings. I will now turn to offering my alternative theory of Islamist moderation, which begins with the first step of making sense of radicalism, which like moderation manifests in different forms. I argue that since there are multiple radicalisms there are bound to be multiple moderations as opposed to moderation being viewed as a broad general phenomenon. The type, path and extent of moderations depend on *starting points.* Each group has a unique starting point, i.e., its specific form of radicalism. The various starting points explain why a certain group moderated the way it did. It also allows us to account for how different types of radical Islamists begin to moderate proceed along different trajectories and arrive at different the different forms of moderations.

Second, I examine two unique cases of Islamist moderation, which are not explainable by the existing corpus of scholarship. In turn these two very different empirical cases of Salafists and Jihadists allows me to advance an alternative theory of Islamist moderation. In the next chapter I explain how Egypt's al-Dawah al-Salafiyah movement in the aftermath of the Arab spring shed its apolitical status and embraced democratic politics by forming a political party called Hizb al-Nour. When it supported the coup against the Morsi government in July 2013 its moderation took on a whole new meaning. Since then it has been supportive of former military chief, Field Marshal, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's presidency, which it has gone to great lengths to justify. In the subsequent one I explain why the Taliban movement in Afghanistan in the context of the western military drawdown has been negotiating with the

United States a post-NATO power-sharing arrangement. Why have these two movements experienced shifts in their ideology and behavior? What do these changes tell us about Islamist moderation? More importantly, the existing literature on moderation does not explain the changes in either of these groups.

Until very recently very few Islamists that rejected democracy decided to partake in elections. Thus, for the longest time there was no need to look beyond the inclusion-moderation framework. In the aftermath of the Arab spring that is not the case anymore with Hizb al-Nour being the most prominent case of such a transformed entity. The existing literature thus fails to explain why the recently established Egyptian Salafist party, Hizb al-Nour, was established when its parent organization not only bid farewell to its decades old apolitical path but also gave up its long-held view that democracy was un-Islamic and decided to participate in elections. Similarly, the de-radicalization literature falls short in explaining why the Afghan jihadist group (which officially refers to itself as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and is more popularly) known as the Taliban movement decided to negotiate with the United States as well as the Afghan state. Both represent two very different forms of moderation.

The behavior of these two movements in recent years underscores two very different forms of moderation. In the Egyptian case, we have a group giving up the idea that politics should be avoided as well as the belief that democracy is un-Islamic. Inclusion-moderation principle does not explain the formation of al-Nour. Egypt's largest Salafist movement rejected politics – let alone democracy and therefore it did not change its behavior after being included in a political process. There was no process after the ouster of Mubarak other than a military-led effort to limit democratic concessions. Furthermore, it is extremely unlikely that the opening

of the authoritarian system in the wake of the Arab spring all of a sudden forced the Salafist movement to abandon its decades old policy of shunning politics. Clearly, there was a great deal of internal change taking place well before the toppling of Mubarak that informed the movement shift from opposing protests against Mubarak to joining them. In this case, we are looking at moderation independent of inclusion, which is a function of the shift in the religious ideas of these Egyptian Salafists. Likewise, the other three theories do not offer an explanation of what led the apolitical Salafist movement to engage in politics and exhibit a great degree of political pragmatism. That said, al-Nour has not abandoned its rather ultra-conservative socio-political agenda and thus has not moderated on that level.

With regards to the Afghan Taliban, we have a movement that has moved away from the idea that it can revive the emirate it lost in the aftermath of the Sept 11 attacks via a jihadist approach. The movement's decision to enter into negotiations with the United States and (indirectly) with the Afghan state over a power-sharing agreement is a unique form of moderation. Intuitively, one would think that this ideological and behavioral shift away from the goal of recreating its former regime through armed struggle is a classic case of Ashour's deradicalization thesis. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that deradicalization explains the moderation of armed Islamist groups who have been militarily defeated by the state and its leadership is incarcerated, which is not the case with the Taliban. Indeed, there are limits to the firepower of its insurgents but the state is far from inflicting defeat upon the largely Pashtun insurgent movement. Furthermore, the vast majority of its leaders remain at large. And instead of being lured by inducements the Taliban responded to peace feelers from the United States given the latter's conclusion that the former cannot be militarily defeated. If anything, Washington is

relying on the fact that the Taliban's nationalist jihadist doctrine conflicts with the transnational worldview of al-Qaeda. Most important of all is that the Taliban are not showing any signs that they are willing to give up its guns and it is not clear to what extent the movement has given up on its ultraconservative agenda.[15] Hence, in the case of the Taliban we also have to examine other factors that have caused it to want to be a recognized as an internationally recognized legitimate political entity.

Linguistic limitations do not allow us to advance a nomenclature that can unambiguously identify moderation. There is also the additional issue that the measure of any dynamic is relative. Like so many other human traits moderation exists in various forms that are separated by one another by *n* number of degrees. For these reasons, there is not much that can be done terminologically. However, that does not mean we cannot gain greater conceptual clarity. Before I unveil my own theory of moderation as a process I need to offer a definition of moderation as a condition. Let us begin though by examining the one offered by Schwedler (2006). She views moderation "as movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives."[16]

I agree with this in the sense that it provides a baseline understanding of ideational and behavioral change occurs. However, it is too broad and generic of an explanation. It is unable to address how the actual changes in the ideas and behavior of the groups in question take place. As I have argued up above Islamist moderation occurs very differently from how it came about among Europe's Christian and secular radicals. Shadi Hamid in his 2016 work 'Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World' contends that Islam is very different from the Judeo-Christian tradition in that it has resisted the notion of separation of state and church.[17] Hamid argues that Islam is unique in the sense that religion has a

role to play in politics – a point that I make in my book. However, I do not agree with Hamid that Muslims cannot develop their own form of secularism. Rather my view is that the path to Muslim democratization does not run through the Renaissance-Reformation-Enlightenment trajectory; instead Muslim majority countries will chart their own unique course to a unique form of modernity.

The same logic applies to Islamist moderation, which is a unique process requiring a specific definition of its own. A key lacuna in the existing body of knowledge on Islamist moderation that I seek to plug is that at one level the literature does not fully explain how exactly Islamists undergo change while at another the various pieces of research offer narrow views limited to their respective case studies. The generality is evident in the definition offered by Schwedler which tells describes moderation as the acceptance of a multiplicity of viewpoints. But it does not identify the process through which radical Islamists come to embrace pluralism in political thought. Together, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, deradicalization and post-Islamism can only explain change within the specific cases they examine. The precise process of Islamist moderation requires a deeper inspection of the manner in which Islamists change their ideas and behavior. But before that process can be understood there is a need to zoom-out of the proverbial trees and leaves and see the forest as a whole. Put differently, from a higher altitude, one can discern a basic pattern of Islamist moderation common across different types of radical Islamists.

The concept of an expansion in the boundaries of justifiable action helps us understand this basic pattern of ideational and behavioral change among different types of radical Islamists. Schwedler discusses how change in the scope of religiously sanctioned activities takes place as Islamists moderate their views and

actions. The process by which this occurs usually begins with a dilemma facing a radical Islamist movement. This dilemma can be in the form of either a threat or an opportunity or even a combination of both. Usually these are geopolitical developments imposing constraints on the actor or offering latitude. Here it is important to note that geopolitics refers to the political, economic and military relations between states and groups based on the confluence of geography, demography and resources. In either case, the actor's existing reading of the religious texts is incapable of offering guidance and in fact limits its ability to respond to the new situation. Such a situation then forces the radical Islamist group in question towards a rethink of its prevailing view on the issue. The actor re-examines the religious texts in the light of the new development that leads to a new interpretation that then allows it to entertain ideas and behavior that until that lay well beyond of what Schwedler explains as the boundaries of justifiable conduct.

In the light of this procedure I define Islamist moderation as: *the intellectual and behavioral change of a group resulting from a reinterpretation of what constitutes shariah, which in turn has been prompted by geopolitical constraints and latitudes.* In other words, moderation is the result of process of *ijtihad*, which is essentially the process by which a fresh interpretation is developed on issues that have not been directly addressed by the Quran and the Sunnah.[18] Islamist groups rely on the scholars within their movement to arrive at these new rulings. Ashour refers to this process through his notion of charismatic leadership that commands the respect and authority among the group's rank and file to where it can steer the group towards a new path. Charismatic leadership is indeed a necessary condition but it does not explain the process of ideological evolution. Ashour put forth a very compelling theory of how deradicalization takes place. However, as I argued up

above he is really talking about demilitarization or what scholars like Horgan refer to as disengagement. Deradicalization is much more than simply jettisoning violence as a political approach.

Islamist deradicalization involves leaving behind radical prescriptions on the role of religion in politics. At the very least the give up the goal of imposing their view of shariah law on society even if they had intended to do so through non-violent means. In this way, deradicalization can be considered an initial step in a much more broader process of moderation. Ashour's theory is limited to armed movements and those that have suffered military defeat at the hands of governments. The definition I am advancing can explain the mechanics of ideological and behavioral change among a wide range of radical groups – both non-violent and violent groups. In the case of the latter my theory explains the behavior of jihadists who despite having the upper hand on the battlefield have nonetheless opted for negotiations. I highlight this in chapter VI on the Afghan Taliban desire to become a mainstream actor. At the core of this shift is the actor's acceptance of a strategy that it previously did not consider as Islamically legitimate.

Islamist radicals will not adopt a new approach or embrace a new idea unless they are convinced that it is not in violation of their view of normative Islam. It is highly unlikely that Islamists will adopt ideas coming from other cultures simply because they represent best practices. For this to happen the new idea or practice has to go through a filtration process. They have to be assured that the foreign concept/practice does not contradict the shariah (again their view of shariah). Under normal circumstances there is very little appetite for such cross-civilizational borrowing of ideas and practices. This is especially the case in the current climate where the narrative of an "American/Western war on Islam and Muslims" is

pervasive among Muslims. Islamists, especially the more radical types, subscribe to this view even more and thus are unlikely to be open to ideas on governance originating from the west. Informing this dynamic is the tendency to limit the use of reason to approach revelation and the associated practice of privileging medieval jurists.

Since we are dealing with non-state actors seeking to erect their envisioned Islamic political orders how they go about doing so becomes extremely more significant than the objective itself. It is in this journey that moderation can potentially take place. There is a certain logic here shaping their respective radicalisms. In the pre-modern age the existence of a plurality of Muslim religio-political sovereigns (numerous competing caliphates, sultanates and emirates) meant that there was hardly a need to "establish an Islamic state". Indeed, this is a modern concept, demand and movement, which only came about towards the end of the imperial age and the implosion of the Ottoman Empire. It emerged in a geopolitical context of the western-dominated secular nation-state based international system. Under such conditions the notion of an Islamic state, by default, meant a radical political project. Though the end state of this project remains deeply contested and opaque even to those who are spearheading the movement, the key question has been the manner in which this goal can be realized.

Islamists seek to re-establish Islamic dominions based on a reading of religious texts and historical precedent. But how to go about resurrecting the Islamic state is something on which the religious texts are silent. There isn't much in the way precedent either as classical jurists don't offer many clues on how to go about setting up an Islamic polity. They never encountered a reality in which Muslim world was marked by acute geopolitical chaos and divisions and thus could not offer rulings on

what was a hypothetical scenario for them. Normally the standard operating procedure for a religiously mandated action is to follow the practice of the Prophet and his companions. The Prophet's example also doesn't offer much guidance, which explains the complex trajectory of Muslim political history and why in contemporary times different Islamists – based on their specific ideological positions – formulated different approaches to realizing their aim of an Islamic state. Hence the first typology dealing with the three different types of Islamists (acceptors, propagandists and insurrectionists) based on their approach to an Islamic state, which I laid out earlier in the chapter. This taxonomy not only showed how there are many different forms of moderates and radicals within the Islamist spectrum it is also highly instructive in terms of the basis upon which moderation can occur.

Some Islamists have transformed to the extent that they no longer seek an Islamic state, as Bayat argues. Most of them though continue to pursue their goal of realizing an Islamic state. However, given the great degree of intra-Islamist contention on how to establish such a polity there is considerable room for ideological and behavioral change vis-à-vis the approach. The opportunity for moderation thus lies in the way in which Islamic religio-political principles can be operationalized. As the significant body of research on the Muslim Brotherhood organizations shows a great number of Islamists have long accepted that an Islamic state can be established by participation in western-style political structures and processes. Here it is important to understand that this form of moderation cannot be mistaken for Islamists accepting liberal secular western ideas per se. The nearly 90-year history of the Muslim Brotherhood and its ideological roots in Islamic Modernism going back to the early 19th century underscores how the movement accepted European thought and amalgamated it with Islamic traditional views.[19] The

Brotherhood thus represents a unique case of moderation very early on in its historical development based on its specific starting point.

Of course, there are a great many Islamists who vehemently disagree with the Brotherhood approach and instead seek change through societal dawah (preaching) or via military jihad. For them embracing western concepts is akin to secularism defined as irreligiousity. However, this does not mean that they remain totally immune to the process. Instead since their radicalism is different their moderation will take place along a different trajectory leading to different form of moderation. The Brotherhood emerged from an ideological milieu where it was receptive to western political thought and has thus reached a point where it is eager to participate in democratic processes and engage in the politics of compromise. In contrast, the more radical Islamists adopt newer ideas because they realize their own poverty of thought and the fact that in order to operationalize their medieval ideals in the form of a state in the here and now. That said, they are extremely cautious in accepting newer ideas beyond the renunciation of violence. Giving up armed struggle is relatively more easy to accept, due to the huge costs associated with continuing on the path of violence. Even in the case of abandoning violence there is a realization that the political violence they are engaged in is not in keeping with the classical understandings of jihad.

Classical Islamic jurists agreed that human actions can be one of five types: obligatory (fardh), prohibited (haram); recommended (mandoub), disliked (makrouh) and permissible (mubah).[20] There is some degree of consensus among the ulema on the actions that are mandatory (e.g., five daily prayers, fasting, etc.) and verboten (sex out of wedlock, pork, etc) as per the religious texts and they are few in number. There is much less consensus on the second pair of actions and they are somewhat

more numerous. The fifth type of action is the most significant because the domain of permissible acts continuously grows alongside human social evolution. This realm of acts is critical to understanding the process of Islamist moderation based on reinterpretation of religious texts. Issues not clearly outlined in the Quran and Sunnah are immediately subject to interpretation. Let us take the case of participation in democratic politics. As far as rejector Islamists are concerned this is a forbidden act and the core objection is that it amounts to popular sovereignty supplanting divine sovereignty.

For the acceptors participation in democratic processes is permissible because they don't have a literal view of the texts to where extra-religious ideas are automatically null and void.[21] Rather these Islamists view democracy as an efficient system of governance and consistent with their understanding of Islamic ethos. The case of conditionalists type Islamists who accept democracy but under certain conditions underscores the process of moderation. Conditionalists Islamists are in reality former rejecter Islamists in that for a significant amount of time they opposed democracy as un-Islamic and have relatively recently reconsidered their position. Though they have abandoned their erstwhile uncompromising position but they remain uncomfortable with some aspects of democracy – particularly the idea that laws that conflict with shariah can be passed by a legislative majority. As I show in the next chapter Hizb al-Nour is a key example of conditionalists Islamists. Conditionalists have moderated away from their prior staunch opposition to democracy by a shift in how they begin to see the expansion of the space of mubah actions. Thee act of participation in democratic politics is thus no longer interpreted as necessarily forbidden.

In this way, the group undergoes moderation through an evolution in religious norms. It is this through change in the interpretation of religious texts that a group engages in what Schwedler refers to as an *expansion in the boundaries of justifiable action* and what Wickham aptly describes as *political learning*. While I have simplified it here for the purposes of explanation the process is excruciatingly lengthy and onerous. It is in essence the creation of new religious norm where Islamist groups begin to accept the notion of plurality of ijtihad. Essentially it is the acknowledgment that there can be competing interpretations on an issue that they for the longest time considered black and white. This process is triggered by a shift in the geopolitical environment in which the group has long been operating. The shift can be in the form of threats and/or potential opportunities, which sparks the process of a re-evaluation on the part of the group's leadership. This re-assessment of ground realities leads to a breakdown in the general state of harmony among the leaders.

The leadership is usually divided into two main factions: those arguing for change and those resisting it. Some in the leadership are undecided and would rather hedge their bets and sit on the fence until it becomes clear which side has the upper hand. Here is where the concept of charismatic leadership – a critical ingredient in the deradicalization theory enunciated by Ashour – plays a critical role in ensuring that the organization does not fracture. Usually, the personality of one of the core leaders is able to carry the group towards consensus. The leadership's charisma, however, is but one of many factors shaping organizational integrity and with it the likelihood of a successful transformation, however, incremental it maybe. Maturity of the structure of the group and its internal deliberative mechanisms are equally necessary to ensure that the bulk of the movement is in lockstep with the move to embracing change in ideas and behavior. The decision to join the political

mainstream is much easier for groups that have a prior societal network than for those that are clandestine armed groups that have not had sufficient institutional differentiation between the political and military leaderships. In either case the religious scholars (ulema) within the movement are the ones with the most weight.

Groups in which the political and/or military leaders are also the ideological theoreticians the process of buy-in is much easier. But for those group where the ulema and/or ideologues constitute a distinct shura (consultative) council selling a new norm can be extraordinarily difficult or even impossible. Groups that can successfully adopt a moderate stance on a given issue must have a substantial number of moderates within its ranks to begin with. It is these pre-moderation moderates who play an instrumental role in steering the group as a whole to compromise on a long held hardline position. This vanguard calling for a revision in the ideological positions of the group risks being accused of having been affected by the secularism of the movement's opponents. While dealing with intra-group dynamics those advocating change also have to be mindful of inter-group relations. The moderate vanguard must balance between the need to uphold the unique position of the group as having the "correct Islamic position" while at the same time preparing it for compromises with forces that follow "incorrect" ideas. It becomes really difficult to push the idea of plurality of ijtihad to where secular Muslim partners can be considered as following a different perspective on the role of religion in politics.

What exacerbates these intra-group disagreements and frustrates the process of moderation is when faced with immoderate attitudes on the part of secular forces. Successful Islamist moderation requires moderation on the side of its secularist opponents such that they both accommodate one another at the political center, as

Browers points out. For Islamists to accept a certain measure of secular ideas the secularists must moderate to where they are willing to allow for religion to have a role in civil society. The process of secular moderation is well beyond the scope of this study, however, it is a key enabling factor that serves as a catalyst – facilitating the process of Islamist moderation. There are limits to how far there will be an accommodation of Islamists on the part of secularists, which are themselves divided between states and non-state actors. The weak states are caught between the need to contain the rise of Islamists and to ensure that the more radical forces are kept at bay through the cooptation of certain others. From the point of view of secular political groups, they need to cater to religious conservatism (distinct from the Islamist trend) as a way of being able to compete with the Islamists. However, they are uncomfortable with Islamists entering the political system and developing relations with the establishment, which limits the potential for cross-ideological accommodation and thus adversely impacts the process Islamist moderation.

A Geopolitical Ijtihadic[22] Theory of Moderation

Ideological and behavioral transformation is part of the human DNA and thus inevitable. The question is how and when does it take place. In this study, I am examining a specific type of change in ideas and actions, i.e., moderation exhibited by Salafist and Jihadist groups. Before I dive into my two case studies it is important to summarize my theoretical arguments, which are as follows:

1. Islamist moderation is a unique process – very different from how Christian and leftist radicals in Europe moderated – and for two main reasons: a) Catholic and Marxist groups were integrated into mainstream politics because of the existence of robust democratic systems in post-World War II Europe while Islamist radicals cannot be mainstreamed because of the

absence of democracy in most Arab/Muslim countries; b) Marxist groups are by definition secular entities and even in the case of the Catholic groups there existed a well established alternative religious discourse in the form of Protestantism.

2. There is no singular process called Islamist moderation. This is because we are dealing with a plurality of radicalisms. Consequently, there are bound to be a multiplicity of moderations. The *starting points* determine the paths that different radical Islamist forces could take towards moderation as well as the type and extent of moderation.
3. Ideological and behavioral transformation among Islamists takes place due to an evolution in their existing readings of religious texts. Geopolitical constraints and/or potential latitudes trigger this reinterpretation of what qualifies as religiously sanctioned concepts and activities. When faced with new circumstances where their old radical positions are no longer sustainable Islamists are forced into a rethink
4. Moderation is the result of process of ijtihad – the practice of developing fresh interpretations on issues that have not been addressed directly in the Quran and Sunnah. Radical Islamists will only moderate if they are convinced that a new idea is not in conflict with shariah.
5. The core area on which Islamists moderate is the means by which they seek to establish an Islamic state. This is because there is no template from medieval jurisprudence on this matter. In other words, moderation occurs when Islamists seek to operationalize their religio-political principles in the face of conditions of geopolitical adversity.

6. Moderation is directly linked to Islamist acceptance of an expansion in the category of actions deemed mubah (permissible) according to classical Islamic jurisprudence. Islamist moderation is thus an evolution in religious norms through the adoption of extra-religious ideas and borrowing of concepts from the discourses of other civilizations.
7. Islamist moderation is also contingent upon the strength of institutional mechanisms of the organization. Similarly, it depends upon the maturity of the deliberative processes among the leaders and membership. The ability of those advocating a new stance to navigate intra and inter-group dynamics also plays a key role in the success or failure of the moderation process.
8. Islamist moderation requires their secular rivals to moderate their positions as well. Cross-ideological accommodation serves as an enabling factor for transformation of Islamist ideas and actions.
9. This model is geopolitical because it looks at ideological and behavioral change in response to structural threats and opportunities that derive from the geopolitics of the nation-states in which these Islamist actors are operating in. The constraints and latitudes they encounter are hardwired into the social, political, economic and military realities on the ground. These ground realities are what either force their hand or act as enablers to move towards a reinterpretation of their religious texts, which leads them to modify their ideology and behavior.

In the next two chapters I will apply this theoretical framework to explain the transformations that have taken place in my two case studies. Chapter V will show how Egypt's largest Salafist socio-religious movement made the decision to enter the political arena. Chapter VI will use the same framework to show how the Afghan

Taliban has exhibited indications of moderation in behavior but has not progressed too far on its path of moderation.

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[1] Kruglanski, Arie W. et al. 2014. "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quests Impacts Violent Extremism." *Advances in Political Psychology*. 35 (1): 69-93.
[2] Bjørgo, T., & Horgan, J. (Eds.). (2009). Leaving terrorism behind. Individual and collective disengagement. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
[3] Please see: "Islamists, Secularists and Egypt's Crisis of Governance," Geopolitical Diary. *Stratfor*. 30 January 2013. https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/islamists-secularists-and-egypts-crisis-governance; "Egypt's Fragmenting Islamist and Secular Camps," Stratfor. 6 December 2014. https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/egypts-fragmenting-islamist-and-secular-camps
[4] For a fuller discussion of this shared anti-democratic ethos among Islamists and secularists please see Hamid, Shadi. 2014. Temptations of Power: Islamists & Illiberal Demcoracy in a New Middle East. New Yor, NY: Oxford.
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[8] Hourani, Albert. 1983. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
[9] Ashour, Omar. 2009. *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movem*ents. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
[10] Cavatorta, Francesco and Fabio Merone. 2013. "Moderation Through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda From Fundamentalist to Conservative Party". *Democratization.* Vol. 20, Issue 5: pp. 857-75.
[11] Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics". *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), pp. 1033-1053.
[12] Wickham, Carrie R. 2004. "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January): 205–28.
[13] Bokhari, Kamran, and Farid Senzai. 2013. *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization*. New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.
[14] Schwedler, Jillian. 2011. "Can Islamists Become Moderates?: Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis". *World Politics*. Volume 63, Number 2, April 2011, pp. 347-376 is a recent attempt at looking at the various theories but it privileges the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis and sees the rest of the theories from its vantage point. In contrast, what I will being doing in this thesis is to stand at an equidistant point from all the theories and examine them in terms of what forms of moderation do they really address.
[15] Yadav. Vikash. 2010. "The Myth of Moderate Taliban". *Asian Affairs: An American Review*. 37: 133-145.
[16] Schwedler, Jillian. 2006. *Faith in Moderation*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p.3
[17] Hamid, Shadi. 2016. *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
[18] For a comprehensive treatment of this topic please see Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. 2003. *The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society.
[19] See Mitchell, Richard P. 1993. *The Society of Muslim Brothers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press & Moaddel, Mansoor. 2005. *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
[20] Op Cit, 18
[21] The notion of extra-religious ideas vis-à-vis contemporary Muslim political thought has been developed by noted Iranian philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush. See Sadri, Mahmoud and Ahmad Sadri (eds). 2000. *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
[22] The term 'ijtihadic' has been used by Wael Hallaq, a noted professor of Islamic law. See his works on the evolution of the practice of ijtihad through both medieval and modern ages. Hallaq, Wael. 2009. *Sharia: Theory, Practice & Transformations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press;

Hallaq, Wael. 2009. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Hallaq, Wael. 2005. *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Hallaq, Wael. 1999. *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Hallaq, Wael. 2005. *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press;

Chapter V – Salafist Case Study: Hizb al-Nour

Having laid out my theoretical framework, I now turn to applying it to my first case study, Egypt's main Salafist party, Hizb al-Nour (Party of Light and here on referred to as al-Nour). I will show how the 2011 decision of its parent body, al-Dawah al-Salafiyah (The Salafist Call, which I will here onwards refer to as al-Dawah), to form a political wing represents a new form of Islamist moderation. Al-Dawah has moderated ideologically and behaviorally by giving up its decades long aversion to political action and revising its view of democracy as being un-Islamic. The ouster of former President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 catalyzed and accelerated an ongoing but slow paced evolution in the quietist nature of Egypt's Salafists.[1] I will use the concept of *starting points* to explain how and why al-Nour has advanced rather quickly on the path of moderation. The fact that the group did not turn against the system even after the democratization process was derailed shows an ability to adapt to rapidly emerging developments while still in the transformative process. Therefore, the July 2013 ouster of the country's first popularly elected government led by its rival Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, is further evidence of a significant shift in the nature of al-Dawah. That it supported the coup mounted by the secular military-led establishment and has accepted to work within the confines of the post-coup political system underscores the argument from my theoretical framework that constraints (in addition to latitudes) lead to a reinterpretation of religious texts (ijtihad).

Al-Nour is the physical manifestation of the moderation that al-Dawah is undergoing. After its long and stiff denunciation of democracy as Islamically forbidden (haram) the Salafist group now considers it a religiously permissible (mubah) practice – at least in a limited parliamentary sense. Al-Dawah's evolution,

which will be ongoing for many years to come, underscores how Islamist moderation in general and specifically Salafist moderation takes place. The transformative process entails the actor in question expanding its imagination vis-à-vis the space of mubah as new geopolitical realities emerge that cannot be addressed via its prevailing ideological stance. In this way, I demonstrate that the change in the ideas and actions of the Salafist movement is in keeping with my Geopolitical Ijtihadic Theory of Moderation, which I developed in the previous chapter. From a structural point of view, this chapter begins with situating al-Nour within the context of the wider Salafist universe. A number of scholars have provided different typologies to bring to light the internal diversity within the global Salafist tendency.[2] Indeed there are many ways of classification – depending upon the particular line of inquiry adopted by the researcher. In my view though three different types of Salafist actors are currently serving as centrifugal forces – pulling Salafism into three different directions.

After decades of the proliferation of *Quietist* and *Jihadist* forms of Salafism, al-Nour represents a new third form, which I have coined as *Electoral* Salafism. I trace the emergence of this new type of Salafism by starting with a discussion of how Quietist Salafists very early on began involving themselves in politics. I then discuss how jihadist Salafism heralded the entry of Salafists into the expanse of Islamism. Next, I demonstrate how al-Dawah was not strictly apolitical – even though it did not directly participate in politics until after the January 25, 2011 uprising against former President Hosni Mubarak. I then locate al-Dawah within the highly complicated Salafist milieu in Egypt. Beginning with its unique *starting point*, I trace the contours of al-Dawah's journey from being a religious movement to a political party. In this way I underscore the changes that occurred overtime in its

understanding of the Islamic religious texts. These revisions to its understanding of shariah led to the emergence of electoral Salafism as a new form of Islamist moderation.

How electoral Salafism came about requires an unpacking of the multiple forms in which Salafists have engaged in politics thus far. Salafism has largely been an apolitical ideology – at least the bulk of the scholarship describes it as such. I am not challenging this observation as the bulk of Salafists do restrict themselves to religious activities. However, I do think that this description has been conceptualized in an exceedingly absolutist sense. The dominant understanding states that with a few minor exceptions there is a firewall of sorts between Salafists and politics. Quietism is a passive attitude towards politics, which is not the same as total isolation from political matters. Salafism in the classical sense does not abdicate the political sphere; instead it merely postpones political action until society has been undergone sufficient theological preparation. Consequently, Salafists do not reject political Islam even though they have been averse to Islamism.[3]

Quietist Salafism and Political Islam

In this section, I locate the *starting point* of al-Dawah by placing the group within the lengthy and complex political experiences of the wider global dynamic of quietist Salafism. How other quietist Salafists before al-Dawah have approached the subject of political Islam played a key role in steering Egypt's most prominent Salafist organization to assume a formal political role after decades of abstinence. But before I examine prior quietist Salafist experiences in politics it is important to define the three types of Salafisms, I will be referring to as I make my case.[4] *Quietist* Salafism consists of social movements built around religious scholars, students, activists and their followers – seeking to promote ultraconservative interpretations of

Islam.[5] Their highly austere understanding of Islam flows from a literalist approach to the thought and practice of the generation of Prophet Muhammad and the two subsequent ones, which together are consider al-Salaf al-Saliheen (the pious predecessors).[6] *Jihadist* Salafism emerged out of a crisis within the classical quietist tradition whereby the later did not offer a way to address the "un-Islamic" nature of the regimes they lived under – in particular that of the Saudi monarchy, which unlike most of the other secular states was established as an Islamic state. The path of armed struggle of Jihadist Salafists towards the establishment of a genuine Islamic polity is thus a repudiation of the original Quietist form.[7] *Electoral* Salafism is a term I have coined to identify Salafists who have not simply chosen to indulge in politics; rather they have moved much further to the point of directly participating in democratic processes.[8]

I argue that the concept of electoral Salafism far better explains Salafist participation in institutional politics than what the literature refers to as *Political* Salafism.[9] Referring to the rise of Salafist political parties as 'Political Salafism' (or politicization of Salafism or politicized Salafism) in my view represents a flawed assessment. It is based on an erroneous assumption that prior to forming political parties Salafists did not indulge in politics, which as I will show below is terribly incorrect. Those who employ this term in its various forms also define politics in a very narrow way to mean participation in democratic processes. Doing so assumes that quietist Salafists were purely apolitical when in fact the history of its evolution shows otherwise. Indeed, quietists Salafists got involved in political Islam and the rise of Jihadism shows that Salafists also embraced Islamism. Therefore it is important that the phenomenon of Salafist political parties not be labeled as 'Political Salafism', which clearly has existed since the earliest days of the

ideological tendency. Thus, electoral Salafism specifies this latest form of Salafists engaging in politics and allows us to distinguish it from the other various forms of political activity that Salafists have participated in.

This significant evolution in Salafist thought has not received the attention it deserves given the overwhelming but understandable emphasis on understanding jihadist Salafism. In the 15 years since the Sept 11 attacks an increasing amount of academic work has appeared on Salafism with the emphasis on its violent jihadist strain. For a decade or so the focus was on al-Qaeda and its various affiliates and allies around the world. At the same time though there were attempts to understand the connections between Jihadist Salafism and its wider 'apolitical' form - epicentered in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[10] A number of different typologies were put forth classifying Salafists into three or four different categories. The differences between these various categorizations had to do with how different experts have understood non-violent Salafists, which were either seen in the context of religious scholarship and/or proselytization networks.[11] Political Salafism was rarely used in the literature until the advent of the Arab Spring.[12] It was only when al-Nour and other Salafist political parties emerged in Egypt between the 2011-13 period that the concept gained greater attention.[13]

In the wake of the July 2013 coup in Egypt and the 2014 rise of the so-called Islamic State (aka Daesh) and its self-styled caliphate the focus has largely shifted away from political Salafism and back to Jihadist Salafism.[14] As a result, there has been very little research that can reconcile between two parallel and seemingly contradictory characteristics of Salafism. *First*, the ideology, in its classical form, has not been as apolitical as many have argued. *Second*, political Salafism has existed long before the formation of Salafist political parties in the post-Arab Spring

period. In a 2015 paper for the Project on U.S. Relations With the Islamic World at the Brookings Institution, Jacob Olidort focuses on the career of Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d.1999) – a Syria-based highly renowned Salafist religious scholar to underscore how being quietist cannot be taken to mean apolitical.[15] Olidort's work shows that more recent literature on Salafism has tried to make sense of the growing complexity arising in this increasingly fragmentary ideological landscape. However, clarity is still wanting in the sense that the current scholarship does not distinguish between Salafists *indirectly engaging in political Islam* and the emergence of *full-fledged Salafist Islamism*. Until the rise of jihadist Salafism, more or less, Salafists remained outside the fold of Islamism in that they did not seek to establish an Islamic state.

But as Olidort (2015) notes this does not mean that they were completely apolitical.[16] In order to better understand this critical distinction it is essential that *Islamism* and *political Islam* not be treated as synonyms – an argument I have made in a great deal of detail elsewhere.[17] Though related, the two are very distinct ideological phenomena. Islamism is a 20th century ideology of movements whose raison d'être is the establishment of an Islamic state. From the point of view of Islamists an Islamic State is a polity, which ought to implement shariah (Islamic law). The various types of Islamists discussed in the previous chapter have variant views on the political system of they state they seek and most of them have not developed too many details regarding the architecture of their desired regime. What they all do agree upon, however, is that an Islamic state is a specific type of polity – very different from the incumbent regimes in the Arab/Muslim world. Political Islam, on the other hand, is as old as Islam itself and includes an extremely wide range of actors – many of whom do not see such a state as the paramount or even

necessary goal.[18] For them there is no specific polity called an Islamic state. Instead, they feel that the political principles of Islam can be operationalized in any number of ways.

This distinction between political Islam and Islamism allows us to move beyond the weak and vague binary conceptual lens of *apolitical* versus *political* Salafism.[19] Recognizing the difference between Salafists indulging in political Islam and those who have outright crossed over into Islamism is very helpful in trying to understand the evolution of Salafism, especially when trying to make sense of the dynamic of moderation. It allows us to navigate through the historical context and highlight the antecedent politicization that led al-Dawah towards electoral Salafism. Many quietist Salafists can thus be part of the political Islam space even though they are not Islamists. However, the poverty of political thought among quietist Salafists combined with the general Salafist opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda led to the rise of jihadist Salafism. While Salafists sought to avoid Islamism via the Brotherhood's model they could not prevent the rise of jihadists from within their own midst. Jihadism this represented the first foray of Salafists into the Islamist project of trying to establish an Islamic state. That said, Salafists of various stripes have been straddling between the matters of religion and politics for over two centuries and thus venturing into political Islam without crossing over into Islamism.

This has been the case since the rise of the Salafism led by Muhammad bin Abdulwahhab (the founder of what has come to be known as Wahhabism) in 18th century Arabian Peninsula. The 1744 pact between ibn Abdulwahhab and the patriarch of the Saudi ruling family, Muhammad bin Saud, which led to the founding of the First Saudi State underscores how long before they adopted a quietist approach, Salafists were heavily involved in politics. In fact, this unique power-

sharing arrangement shows that Salafism has been political since inception. The bargain whereby the founder of Wahhabism and his progeny were in charge of religious matters while the al-Saud clan would be in charge of political affairs shows that their merger was a unique form of political Islam – at least a century and a half before Islamism began taking shape. The fact that the First (1744-1818) and Second (1824-1891) Saudi States along with the modern kingdom (1902- present) were all founded via armed conquests means that these earliest Salafists were also jihadists.[20] In other words, quietist Salafism in Saudi Arabia (which in due course spread in Egypt starting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) emerged only after an Islamic regime had been established. Quietist Salafism is a byproduct of politics. In the context of the Arabian Peninsula, it emerged after Salafists had seen political success. Even though the continuity of the Salafist political order had been upended twice the eventual consolidation of the Saudi polity created the conditions in which Salafists could afford to adopt a quietist approach.

The establishment of an Islamic state in the form of the Saudi monarchy meant that the natural course of Salafism would be towards religious learning, societal preaching and shaping the societal norm of obedience to the rulers. Olidort (2015) makes a compelling case that even though quietists eschew political activities they are deeply involved in shaping political discourse when he states that: "their political actions are quiet but their political voice is loud."[21] He states that quietist Salafists can be located on a spectrum that runs from "absolute quietism and peaceful political engagement".[22] I will argue that nowhere is this more pronounced than in the Saudi kingdom where the Salafist establishment is deeply involved in the affairs of the state and actively engaged in shaping the politics of the monarchy. The Council of Senior Ulema, as the kingdom's highest religious authority, is heavily

involved in advising the monarch on matters of state. Similarly, the kingdom's religious law enforcement agency called the Commission for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue is yet another example of Salafist involvement in politics. That the Salafist religious establishment is the institutional guarantor of the legitimacy of the Saudi regime is another manner in how Quietist Salafists engage in politics. It does this by promoting the idea of obedience to the ruler asserting that any form of opposition risks creating a situation of fitnah (chaos).

As a result, the Salafist religious establishment plays a key role in shaping the political norms of Saudi society, which gave rise to quietist Salafism – even though originally the Salafists were of a Jihadist bent. As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned quietist Salafism is thus politically constructed. Since the kingdom was founded as an Islamic state there was no need for movements that called for its establishment. Salafists assumed the role of the guardians of the Saudi Leviathan. It was therefore only natural that Salafism in the kingdom adopt a seemingly quietist stance towards politics. There was a deliberate attempt by al-Saud in league with the Salafist ulema class to promote an apolitical culture in the form of Quietist Salafism. Since the interests of the ulema class were tied to the monarchy there was no need for a political movement. Instead Salafism was about theological as opposed to political matters. Even though the top religious scholars were intimately involved in political matters the bulk of the religious establishment beneath them was busy promoting the idea that the masses should concentrate on perfecting themselves religiously. While quietist Salafism was firmly established it was frequently challenged.

These challenges arose because of the dual posture of the al-Saud regime. Domestically it upheld a strict Salafist ethos, however, the logic of geopolitics forced

its hand on the foreign policy front where it had to engage in policies that were in conflict with the state's Salafist ideology. These contradictions exploded during the formative stages of the modern kingdom. The tribal-religious militia known as the Ikhwan (not to be confused with the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen or Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt) rebelled in the late 1920s against the founder of the kingdom, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrehman al-Saud, even before he had consolidated power. Abdulaziz was caught between the elite militia, which had played a lead role in his efforts to conquer much of the Arabian Peninsula and his foreign allies, the British. The Ikhwan wanted to continue the jihad beyond the Peninsula, especially into southern Iraq, which they sought to cleanse of the Shia. An ally of the British who were occupying Iraq at the time, Abdulaziz was caught between his relations with London and a force that helped him gain many of the territories he controlled. In the end he was forced to obliterate the militia by rallying the bulk of the ulema and tribes to his side. Given that the Saudi polity was based on a Salafist jihadist agenda it was inevitable that there would be those who carried on that vision beyond the intent of the founders.

The quietist form of Salafism was incapable of dealing with the geopolitical evolution of the kingdom. In the 1960s King Feisal faced resistance from the kingdom's religious class when he sought to undertake modernization on a limited scale. He had to suppress popular backlash against the introduction of a television channel. These tensions a decade later would become the basis for his own assassination in 1975. Four years later the Grand Mosque in Mecca was taken over by militant Salafists rebelling against the monarchy accusing it of betraying Islam.[23] In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, the kingdom not only faced Jihadist Salafism in the form of al-Qaeda.[24] Many within the junior and mid ranks of the Salafist

establishment assumed a more critical stance towards Riyadh was this latter dynamic, which showed that Quietist Salafism was not working even though it enjoyed a political role in the form of the apex ulema. By the mid-1990s, the Saudis were able to once again suppress this dissent from within the clergy.[25] Taken together these various developments only further highlight that quietist Salafists were not insulated from politics.

In stark contrast with their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, Egypt's quietist Salafism assumed a very different shape. The massive differences in the nature of the political systems had a lot to do with the differences between quietists in the two countries. By the time the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928, Egypt already had two separate Quietist Salafist movements. These were al-Jamiyah al-Shariah and Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah, established in 1912 and 1926, respectively.[26] Both these organizations, first under the monarchy and then under post-1952 coup republican regime, remained largely quietist. The former was more concerned about the spread of Sufism in the country while the latter's charter stated that governance in the country ought to be in keeping with the shariah, arguing that this was the only way to address the crisis in the Muslim world.[27] In addition, Salafists lacked any official role in matters of religion – much less politics. Al-Azhar represented the religious establishment and was dominated by clerics who subscribe to the Ashari creed and steeped in Sufism and thus seen by the Salafists as a hostile entity.[28]

Even though Salafists in Egypt were much more quietist than their counterparts in Saudi Arabia they were not immune to the ravages of politics. While in Saudi Arabia quietist Salafists took part in politics via the state, Egyptian quietist Salafists were impacted by the state's struggles with Islamist non-state actors such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Gamaah al-Islamiyah, Tandheem al-Jihad and other

smaller factions. Quietist Salafists obviously needed to respond to the actions of these groups, which were competitors of the quietists in terms of religious discourse. Furthermore, they advanced religious-based political ideologies that the quietists could not ignore. Complicating this reality was that the quietists proved extremely useful for the regime, which made use of their stances against political activism as levers against these Islamist entities. To this end the Egyptian security establishment both facilitated the discourse of the quietists as well as used coercive means to get them to align with the regime against the Islamists. That said, it was also in the interest of the quietists to see the Islamists weakened by the regime and hence they indulged themselves in politics. I will discuss the politics of Egyptian quietists in greater detail in the section on how al-Dawah became al-Nour but before that it is important to take stock of the few cases where Salafists embraced Islamism years before al-Dawah decided to enter this space.

Salafists Becoming Islamists Not New

The involvement of quietist Salafists in matters of political Islam helped shape al-Dawah's trajectory towards formalized mainstream politics.[29] In the same way the founding of a number of Salafist political parties in the 1990s and post-9/11 also paved the way for al-Nour's emergence in 2011. In the previous section, I explained the problems associated with framing the emergence of Salafist political parties in post-2011 Egypt as the making of Political Salafism. I illustrated that even though they avoided formal political roles quietist Salafists were not divorced from politics. Indirect and informal participation in politics meant that quietist Salafists remained quietist despite the infrequent ventures into the realm of political Islam. There were many quietists, however, that became disillusioned with quietism altogether. For them informal political involvement was not sufficient to rectifying

what they see as “un-Islamic” regimes. From their point of view Arab/Muslim states are either ruling via secular political systems or paying lip service to Islam in matters of governance.

These dissident Salafists sought to establish Islamic states. Their quietist training coupled with revulsion for the Brotherhood’s participatory approach of participation in democratic politics steered them towards an insurrectionist path. These Salafists appropriated the concept of jihad in the military sense to justify their approach and went from quietism to jihadism. This was an extremely significant development in that it represented the first time Salafists entering into Islamism. However, Jihadist Salafism was not the only destination for Salafists who viewed quietism as inadequate. There were still others who sought a third way between quietism and jihadism and turned to the MB model of participation in democratic processes.[30] Since al-Dawah is a case of the metamorphosis of quietist Salafism into peaceful Islamism I will not go into the process by which quietist Salafists embraced violent Islamism. Instead in this section, I will highlight a few cases of electoral Salafism Islamists and well before the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings.

The founding of Algeria’s now defunct Front Islamique de Salut (FIS) in 1989 represents the first ever expression of electoral Salafism and a short one at that.[31] The FIS, however, was not a political party rather an umbrella group for different types of Islamist elements – mostly Salafists. Some were more committed to the democratic process while others saw the democratic reforms initiated by then President Chadli Benjadid’s government as an opportunity to seize power. FIS was a very unique entity in that it was a hurriedly created political party. It lacked an ideological core that could hold the group together. Put differently the world’s first Salafist party was not the result of a lengthy ideological and behavioral

transformation. For this reason it broke up rather quickly under the pressure of the military-dominated regime after the electoral process was terminated in late 1991 once the first round indicated that the FIS would gain an absolute majority in parliament. That the FIS formed an armed wing to fight the state after the 1992 coup shows that it represents a case radicalism as opposed to moderation.

In 1992 we also had another unique case of electoral Salafism in Kuwait. After the country was liberated from Iraqi control in the 1991 Gulf War the ruling al-Sabah family engaged in a noteworthy liberalization initiative. Two separate sets of Salafists emerged in parliament.[32] The formal political bloc called the Islamic Salafi Alliance included lawmakers from urban areas. In addition there were independent tribal MPs from rural areas. Organizationally Kuwait's Salafists are not cohesive, however, the trend towards electoral Salafism has considerable staying power.[33] This is in great part due to the heavy influence of the Egyptian preacher Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq who has long been settled in the tiny Persian Gulf emirate.[34] While Salafists are expected to be a key element within the Kuwaiti parliament for the long haul this is a limited case of electoral Salafism. That said, the Kuwait case has exhibited success in bringing the Salafists away from conservative social agendas and towards greater cross-ideological cooperation vis-à-vis democratic goals.[35]

From al-Dawah al-Salafiyah to Hizb al-Nour

In the previous two sections I laid out the broader global context of Salafist evolution. That historical analysis yielded two key observations. *First*, quietist Salafists have not been entirely apolitical; on the contrary they have, from time to time, gotten involved in political Islam. Second, there have been cases of Salafists becoming Islamists before the Arab spring. Together these two points strongly suggest that al-Dawah's transformation has been in the making for quite some time.

In fact, it began decades before the Arab Spring broke out. I now turn to locating al-Dawah within the complex Salafist landscape in Egypt. This will be followed by an analysis of how and why al-Nour emerged from al-Dawah.

As I stated earlier, two separate Salafist movements were active in Egypt decades before al-Dawah was founded. Though quietist for the most part, Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah obtained a legal license from the regime to operate during years before the onset of the Arab Spring.[36] The group intensely opposed armed insurrection against the state, which helped it avoid state repression. Along with the other Salafist group, Jamiyyah al-Shariayyah, it was worried about the declining of shariah in society.[37] Both were quietist in nature but not insulated from politics. As I pointed out in the section on quietist Salafism and political Islam both groups in their own ways engaged with political Islam. The founder of Jamiayyah al-Shariyyah, Mahmoud Khattab El-Sobki, a religious scholar from al-Azhar, addressed this very issue. He explained that he did not deem it appropriate to directly get involved in political activities and that he operated on the basis of the principle of "Being concerned with politics but not involved in it."[38]

Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah went further in that it would argue that Islam was both religion and state and called for ruling by Allah's laws. It referred to democracy as an un-Islamic political order but deemed elections as a legitimate process because it allows the believers to counter those who believe in democracy. [39] It was in Alexandria where the country's most organized Salafist movement, al-Dawah, was established in the aftermath of the 1967 war with Israel and the end of the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser. By this time Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah and Jamiyyah al-Shariyyah had merged but that did not prevent them from become inert.[40] It was these two watershed events, which allowed for

Gamaah al-Islamiyah dominate the campus scene in the 1970s. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood re-emerged under Sadat's presidency after a lengthy and severe repression during the Nasser era. It was in this atmosphere that al-Dawah emerged as a new form of quietist Salafism. It was far more organized than its two predecessors and much concerned about the national condition though clearly influenced in terms of its struggles between quietism and political Islam.[41]

A half a dozen religious leaders founded al-Dawah. These include: Yasser Borhami, Mohamed Ismail El-Moqadem, Mohamed Abdel Fatah, Saeed Abdel Azeem, Ahmed Fareed and Ahmed Hotaybha. While El-Moqadem was the overall leader of the group, Borhami has been the real mover and shaker of al-Dawah. Each of these men were initially involved in the Gamaah al-Islamiyah chapters in different campuses where they interacted with both the future leaders of the Brotherhood and Gamaah al-Islamiyah. After having exposed to politics for some years in 1977, they limited themselves to quietism and founded what they called the Salafi School. Vehemently opposed to the growing jihadist tilt of Gamaah and equally wary of the Brotherhood the Salafi School decided to chart a third course. This allowed it to steer clear of confrontation with State Security Intelligence. This policy led to the spreading of rumors that the new group was connected with the establishment, which the group vociferously denies but does acknowledge an overlap in its interests and those of the regime.[42]

It assumed its current appellation, al-Dawah al-Salafiyah, in 1982 as part of its efforts to navigate what had become a very dangerous operating space in the aftermath of the assassination of President Sadat in 1981 at the hands of members of Tandheem al-Jihad and Gamaah al-Islamiyah. Under Sadat's successor Mubarak the regime was also navigating a crowded social space with so many different Islamist

actors and the fact that al-Dawah behaved very differently than almost all the other organizations earned it the ire of the Islamists. Just as it avoided conflicting with the regime, al-Dawah, also evaded confrontation with these rivals. It spent the 1980s building up its organizational core and public appeal through proselytization. Towards this end in 1985 it established a religious training entity called al-Furqan Institute, which helped it build its cadre and began publishing a monthly publication called the Voice of al-Dawah (Sawt al-Dawah). What helped it expand its following was a charitable body called the Zakat Committee, designed to provide financial assistance to needy families. The one aspect that rendered it a unique Salafist entity was that it formed a centralized leadership body called the Executive Committee, which helped it establish itself on a national scale – even though it was much of the group is based in Alexandria. Around the same time that al-Dawah was consolidating itself a major jihadist insurgency led by Gamaah al-Islamiyah was underway – a critical geopolitical event forced al-Dawah to develop political relations with the regime so as to preserve itself.[43]

During this time period the regime's focus was on the insurrectionist Gamaah al-Islamiyah it nonetheless grew very suspicious of al-Dawah. Cairo was happy to see in al-Dawah a large body of Salafists pursuing the quietist path and oppose the jihadist Salafism of Gamaah. But there was one major factor that made the government very nervous about al-Dawah, which was its organizational strength. The regime had been used to the older two Salafist movements who despite being around for far longer and being bigger in size did not possess the organizational strength to mobilize masses. Al-Dawah in this sense was unprecedented in many ways owing to its well-organized structure and processes. For this reason, the government decided that it could not take any chances, especially when there was so

much ideological overlap between these three Salafist sectors. Furthermore, in sharp contrast with Ansar al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah and Jamiyah al-Shariah, al-Dawah had grown phenomenally within a short span of under two decades. Consequently, in 1994 al-Dawah became the target of a large government crackdown.[44]

The regime arrested al-Dawah's founder El-Moqadem and another one of the six prominent shayukh. Borhami's movements – both in country and abroad – were highly restricted. Sawt al-Dawah, the movement's flagship publication as well as its religious training facility, al-Furqan, were shuttered. The movement was forced to cease administrative operations. What is most revealing here is that faced with this threat the movement adapted and loosened its quietist approach by negotiating with the regime. An agreement was made, which allowed the movement's youth wing, Vanguards of al-Dawah were allowed to continue their activities on campuses. This indicates a sophsiticated capacity to engage in political dealings with the state even though the group confined itself to religious activities in society. Here we see the first stirrings of a change in approach.[45]

By the end of the 1990s with Gamaah al-Islamiyah's insurgency neutralized and the group's decision to renounce violence the situation seemed as though returning to normal for al-Dawah. However, the events of 9/11 and the U.S. pressure on the Mubarak regime to crackdown on jihadist networks. As a result in 2002 the government accused some al-Dawah's shayukh and their students of receiving funds from outside the country and radicalizing society. Once again, the group fell back and compromised. Al-Dawah accepted to end the campus activities of its youth wing in exchange for the ability to continue preaching in the mosques. There was an attempt to isolate the central leadership from the movement's various branches. Those resident in Alexandria could not travel outside the governorate and those

elsewhere were not permitted to visit the movement's headquarters. Borhami who was trying hard to negotiate as best of a deal as possible was personally targeted by the restrictions. The regime curtailed him to a single mosque and for a while even prohibited the brain behind the movement from leading prayers.[46]

The government also prompted other pro-government Salafist elements to engage in propaganda against al-Dawah and in particular targeting Borhami. For the next several years al-Dawah continued to move forward in what was a very risky operating environment. It felt threatened by a diverse range of actors, which included the regime, rival Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Dawah cautiously navigated this political bayou. It was simultaneously seeking organizational security and growth – the latter to the extent that it was possible – considering the circumstances. Many activities were conducted in secret. It is difficult to quantify but it is safe to say that in the fifteen years before the Arab spring uprising al-Dawah did not experience the growth that it did in its first fifteen years. Between the initial period of relative latitude and the latter one marked by constraints the group had acquired enough political acumen to push ahead towards the path of least resistance. Shalata (2016) explains the evolution in the thought and practice of al-Dawah, especially when it came to political matters, by highlighting how the legal rulings (fatawah) were drawn from the political context in which the group found itself to be in.[47] The security situation in which al-Dawah operated led to the production of an entire treatise titled 'Political Opportunities' was introduced as part of a wider discourse on interests and social harms.

In this way it was following an ijtihadic approach in the face of geopolitical constraints. Such a course of action was only to be exercised by the shayukh of the group who were well versed in the matters of shariah, knowledgeable about how the

rules of religiously sanctioned politics were derived, highly mindful of shifting ground realities and considered pious and trustworthy. In theory these ideological modifications were supposed to be done by the apex shayukh. But in practice it was Borhami whose ideas shaped the way in which al-Dawah's politics evolved.[48] Hamming (2013) highlights the changes in the mission and thinking of al-Dawah in both the religious and political fields that have taken place over a period of many years.[49] Yildirim (2014) points out that in the pre-2011 era while it maintained strict opposition to the secular political order and deemed democracy as un-Islamic, al-Dawah nonetheless viewed elections for student associations, trade unions, professional syndicates as legitimate. The rationale was that these institutions were not in the business of legislating laws. This is why there was there was substantial internal discord over parliamentary elections prior to the events related to the Arab spring.

As the years rolled on al-Dawah's ambivalent stance between its quietist Salafism and a slowly increasing imperative to address political Islam only became acute. Between the need to mitigate security risks and deal with a steady stream of new emerging realities, the movement was forced into a continuing rethink of its religious positions. It was in this context that it found itself when protests seeking the ouster of Mubarak broke out in Cairo's Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011. None of the major organizations in then country including the much larger and far more organized Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood did not have any ideological baggage to offload in order to jump into the fray of public agitation. Al-Dawah, however, was caught in an ideological quandary given that it had long been struggling to find the equilibrium between its quietist Salafism and political Islam. This would explain why Borhami, responding to the public call on social media to

protest replied that al-Dawah "will not join because of our commitment to our religion, responsibility towards our country, our sensitivity over the country's interests, our priority over the security of the country and citizens in this tough process that we have been going through and our effort to deter enemies who try to cause instigation."[50] Within days though they were forced to change this position when it became clear that the demonstrations had assumed critical mass and al-Dawah re-assessed the situation after it became clear that Mubarak was not going to survive and political change was inevitable.

Al-Dawah justified the change in its stance vis-à-vis the protests because that new realities necessitated new interpretations of the shariah. Al-Dawah had to defend its positions to the public as well as ensure internal harmony prevailed through such a transformation. What worked in its favor was that while al-Dawah was staunchly opposed to democracy it never rejected politics. This distinction is often missed and something that the party leaders have been trying to emphasize. [51] In addition to the strongly held theological view (pressed by Borhami) that democracy was un-Islamic there was also a rational assessment. According to this strategic calculus al-Dawah deemed involvement in politics as an exercise in futility given that the balance of power in the country was heavily in favor of the regime.[52] Even after having abandoned quietist approach altogether this view persisted as is evident from a 2012 statement from Borhami in which he remarks, "our reality is smaller than our creed."[53] Put differently, Borhami was saying that the Dawah has an extensive political agenda for change but cannot pursue it because of the limited nature of the objective geopolitical ground realities in the country.

Nonetheless, the ouster of Mubarak created a new reality where the old balance of power was gone. The status quo, vis-à-vis Islam and politics, which had

existed since the founding of al-Dawah, had eviscerated. Mubarak's ouster was a massive shift in the balance of power. Suddenly the nation was in undiscovered country and al-Dawah no longer in its comfort zone. The continuity of the political order built by Nasser, shepherded for a while by Sadat and then carried forward by Mubarak maintained a certain balance of power among the country's stakeholders. For decades al-Dawah took comfort from the fact that things were locked down under the weight of the autocratic regime. While the movement despised it they had grown familiar with the regime. There were not going to be any surprises in the sense of radical changes. Neither the Muslim Brotherhood was in a position to takeover nor would there be greater secularization.

There was a perfect stagnation in which the ideological conflicts were frozen. Despite all the sound and fury the jihadist Salafists failed to shake the system. The unthinkable happened with the country signing a peace treaty with Israel. The worst that could happen to the state was Sadat's assassination, which it absorbed and moved on. Until the Arab spring came out of nowhere the incumbent political order was firmly in place. Under these circumstances al-Dawah could afford to play its balancing act between quietist Salafism and political Islam. But the uncertainty unleashed by the shocking manner in which Mubarak was forced from office was a red alert situation for al-Dawah. It could no longer afford to be quietist because the military establishment that they had relied on for decades to maintain order as they had come to know it could not protect the president who was one of their own. Alarm bells were going off at al-Dawah headquarters in Alexandria.

Al-Dawah immediately realized that Mubarak's ouster had unleashed forces that had to be controlled. Because the January 25 uprising was led by secular youth the fear was that the nation's religious identity was in danger. A new charter was

going to be crafted and the nightmare scenario for al-Dawah involved secularists and Coptic Christians would do away with clauses that guaranteed that the laws of the land would be shariah compliant. This fear was magnified by the thought that the Muslim Brotherhood as the country's largest opposition movement would benefit under a new democratic political system. After all this is the moment that the Brotherhood had been waiting for and they had 83 years to prepare for it. From al-Dawah's perspective the Islam of the Brotherhood was well frankly not Islam. As far as the Salafist movement was concerned the Brotherhood was quick to compromise on religious principles for political advantage. For al-Dawah, the Muslim Brotherhood cutting deals with secularists and Copts and thus weakening the Islamic foundations of the Islamic nation was not beyond the pale.

Al-Dawah had long been convinced that the Brotherhood sought to weaken (if not destroy) it.[54] At the same time it was also clear that the Islamist movement sought to gain power. Thus, the Salafist group could easily see the Brotherhood (in an effort) shaking hands with secularists and Copts. Al-Dawah could not allow such a turn of events. As it is, the January 25 uprising had upended al-Dawah's universe. It was imperative that the group act before it was too late. Indeed, within a matter of weeks al-Dawah had decided to bid farewell to quietist Salafism. It could no longer afford to indirectly dabble in political Islam and had enter into the space of Islamism. While al-Dawah was being driven by threats it also realized the opportunity in front it. But the scale of transformation was as such that it was not going to be easy as it meant getting involved in democratic politics, which was the only path towards the future.

Even though the group's experiences over the years had prepared it for the task of getting directly involved in politics democratic politics was an entirely

different ballgame. After years of having denounced it as un-Islamic how could it now partake in it? Doing so entailed serious risks to the group's credibility and integrity. Al-Dawah was not just staring at a loss of social support but also fracturing of the organization itself. It is true that over the years it had developed a tradition of revising its religious stances based on emerging realities. But it was now faced with the challenge of justifying participation in something that it had been condemning as a system of disbelief. Al-Dawah resorted to its tried and tested shariatic method of outweighing the potential benefits against the harms.[55] The post-Mubarak roadmap outlined by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which had assumed power following the ousted president's departure helped in this regard.

The first step was going to be a constitutional referendum. Al-Dawah used the opportunity to make the case that participation along with a yes vote for the amendments was absolutely critical for Egypt's future as an Islamic nation. This was al-Dawah's first hand at political participation. The outcome of the national plebiscite approving the constitutional amendments was al-Dawah first taste of victory in elections. It helped the group justify entering into the democratic process. That said, it wasn't quite ready to form a political party just yet. There was still the issue of religious justification. Far more importantly, however, there was the lack of experience of running a party. Again al-Dawah did not have the experience of the Brotherhood.

How to ensure that the party remained within the orbit of the parent organization was an issue even for the Brotherhood. But its experiences in running civil society entities helped. In contrast, while it did have some political experiences, at its core, al-Dawah was a religious organization. A political party would have to engage in compromises, which the al-Dawah leadership was fearful would damage

the mother organization. In addition, there were many questions regarding the functional relationship between al-Dawah and the proposed party. Al-Dawah, for obvious reasons, was also fearful of the party acting out of line with the wishes of parent organization. Yet, forming a party was the need of the hour and it gave way to the birth of Hizb al-Nour. Longtime senior al-Dawah leader Emad Abdel Ghafour was entrusted with leading al-Nour. In fact, Abdel Ghafour had been a leading advocate within the movement calling for the formation of a political party. His lengthy stay in Turkey also afforded him experiences in politics that al-Dawah found useful – though there apprehensions about his rather liberal ideas.[56]

Al-Nour was granted a license on June 15, 2011 and it began preparing for parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, a half dozen other Salafist parties were formed as well by other smaller and less organized Salafist trends. Al-Nour would go onto to forming an electoral coalition with two of them, Hizb al-Asala (Authenticity Party) founded by Cairo based Salafist network surrounding a prominent shaykh, Muhammad Abdel Maqsoud and Hizb al-Bina wa al-Tanmiya (Building and Construction Party), which represents Gamaah al-Islamiya. The alliance, known as the Islamist Bloc, won 127 seats and came in second place behind the Brotherhood-led alliance, which captured 228 seats. Despite its lack of prior political experience al-Nour's performance was phenomenal winning a 111 of the 127 seats bagged by its coalition. This was a major victory that would boost the confidence of al-Dawah. Al-Nour began to participate in the democratic process with far greater confidence as is clear from the statement of one of the party's leaders in the town of Tanta. This unnamed party official rejected the idea that al-Dawah prior to 2011 was against politics, explaining that: "we had our own way of practicing politics; our stance was fundamentally a political stance."[57]

As part of its effort to defend the decision to enter into democratic politics al-Nour is careful to distinguish between the "procedures of democracy" and the "philosophy of democracy". It enthusiastically accepts the former while rejecting the latter. This distinction is based on al-Nour's view that sovereignty is ultimately with the divine and popular sovereignty must remain within the boundaries prescribed by shariah. This is why al-Nour was insistent to have Article 2 of the constitution tightened up by rewording it from "the principles of shariah are the main source of legislation" to "the rulings of shariah are the main source of law".[58] Where al-Nour has maintained a hardline on certain issues in other areas it has shown quite a bit of flexibility. Borhami in 2013 supported the taking of an interest-bearing loan from the IMF in the light of the extremely weakened economic conditions.[59]

In the little over a year between its parliamentary victory and the July 3, 2013 coup, al-Nour had a very mixed set of relationships across the ideological divide. Initially, it tried to align with the Brotherhood in the lead up to the elections but then ended up forming its Islamist Bloc coalition. After the parliamentary elections it worked closely with the Brotherhood on two objective: 1) Ensuring that the presidential election was not clinched by a Mubarak-era candidate (though it only supported the candidacy of ousted President Mohamed Morsi in the second round); 2) Ensuring that the 2012 constitution was Islamic to the party's approval. However, relations with the Brotherhood quickly soured in early 2013. By this time the Brotherhood had aligned with the other half a dozen or smaller Salafist parties and even reportedly supported a split within the al-Nour, which led to its central leader Abdel Ghafour leaving to form another Salafist party called Hizb al-Watan. The dissolution of the parliament in which both al-Nour and the MB had comfortable

majorities was also a major blow to al-Nour because the MB at least held the presidency.

Al-Nour then made a very significant decision in that it exploited the June 30 anti-MB secularist-led protests, which eventually led to the coup that ousted Morsi. Al-Nour assumed the middle ground in the unrest leading up to Morsi's ouster as it did not participate in the demonstrations against the former president. However, once the coup happened it supported the putsch and since then has remain aligned with the regime of President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi. It openly supported El-Sisi's presidential bid despite the fact that the rest of the other Islamist forces have either opposed the coup or do not want to have anything to do with the post-coup political process. Al-Nour has paid a huge cost for its decision to align tightly with the military-dominated regime. It has lost its popular appeal, which is clear from the 11 seats it managed to win in the 2015 parliamentary polls. Likewise it faces opposition from the secularists, which would want to see the party outlawed given that it has been formed on a religious basis. Earlier in the 2014 amendments that were made to the 2012 constitution al-Nour eventually, after great deliberation, accepted the removal of Article 219, which the party had introduced to remove any ambiguities on shariah being the main source of legislation.[60]

Electoral Salafism As Moderation Among Salafists

In the previous section, I chronicled al-Dawah al-Salafiyyah's history from inception to the founding of its party Hizb al-Nour in 2011 and the party's trajectory till the 2015 elections. Al-Dawah's tortuous journey represents a story of a largely quietist Salafist movement moderating its thought and practices to enter into what I refer to as *electoral* Salafism in the shape of the political wing it established. I show how this unique case of moderation occured in keeping with my theoretical

framework of *Geopolitical Ijtihadic Moderation*, which explains how Islamists undergo ideological and behavioral transformation even while under quasi-democratic political systems or outright autocratic regimes. The changes that al-Dawah has undergone have also taken place in a context where there is no pre-existing model to emulate. Al-Dawah represented a unique form of radicalism – very different from other quietist Salafist and jihadist Salafist groups. It had a unique starting point where despite its quietist nature it was very early on indirectly involving itself in matters of political Islam. Since its founding in the 1970s it has been faced with numerous geopolitical constraints and latitudes. On each occasion these new emerging threats and opportunities forced it to review its prior interpretations of Islamic religious texts. From its earliest days it was gradually moving away from quietism towards political Islam. However, the January 25 protests was the major event that brought with it threats and opportunities leading to its entry into the arena of democratic politics. Its rather short experience of five some odd years highlights how it has been willing to borrow extra-religious concepts albeit in a limited fashion. Being the most well organized Salafist organization in Egypt al-Nour it was able to mitigate the crises that came about as it adopted new ideas and practices. While it faced hostility from cecularist forces, however, the willingness of different state organs and civil society elements to work with it showed moderation among its ideological rivals. This accommodating attitude went a long way in the making of al-Dawah's own moderation. Its unique starting point where it was already willing to more than test the political waters allowed it to travel a considerable distance and go to the next level of formal political participation via the creation of a political wing.

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[2] Meijer, Roel. 2013. "Introduction." In *Global Salafism Islam's New Religious Movement,* ed. Meijer, Roel. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1-32.
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[8] Bokhari, op. cit.
[9] After half a dozen or so Salafist parties were formed in Egypt after the Arab Spring uprising there has been a trend towards identifying this phenomenon as 'Political Salafism'. See: Al-Anani, Khalil and Mazlee Malik. 2013. "Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt." *Digest of Middle East Studies*. 22(1): 57-73; Lacroix, Stéphane. "Sheikhs & Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism." Brookings Doha Center Policy Brief. June 2012. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Stephane-Lacroix-Policy-Briefing-English.pdf; Hamming, Tore. 2013. "Politicization of the Salafi Movement: The Emergence and Influence of Political Salafism in Egypt". International Affairs Review. Vol. 22, no. 1 (Fall): 1-18.
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[11] See: Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 29 (August) no. 3: 207 – 239
[12] Boubekeur, Amel. 2008. "Salafism and Radical Politics in Postconflict Algeria." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Occasional Papers.* (September) no. 11
[13] Mneimneh, Hassan. 2011. "The Spring of a New Political Salafism?" *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology.* Hudson Institute. 12: 21-36.
[14] McCants, Will. 2015. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press; Hassan Hassan. 2016. The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Occasional Papers.* (June); Lister, Charles. 2015. The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency. New York, NY: Oxford University Press & Maher, Shiraz, 2016. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press are some of the more prominent examples of this genre of work.
[15] Olidort, Jacob. 2015. "The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism". *Brooking Institution Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World.* Analysis Paper. No. 18.
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[18] For a full discussion of the difference between the two see Ibid, p. 18-22.
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[22] Ibid, p.4
[23] Hegghammer, op. cit.
[24] Fandy, Mamoun. 1999. *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
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[27] Ibid, pp. 37-38.
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[31] Boubekeur, op. cit.
[32] Monroe, Steven L. "Salafis in Parliament: Democratic Attitudes and Party Politics in the Gulf." *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 66, no. 3 (Summer), pp. 409-424.
[33] Utvik, op. cit.
[34] McCants, Will. "The Lesser of Two Evils: The Salafi Turn to Party Politics in Egypt." Middle East memo No. 23. Saban Center. *Brookings Institution*. May 2012. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0501_salafi_egypt_mccants.pdf;
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[40] Shalata, Ahmed Zaghloul. 2016. "The Salafist Call in Alexandria: The Trajectory of the Organization and Outcomes of its Politics." *Contemporary Arab Affairs*. Vol. 9, no. 3: pp. 351-364.
[41] Yildirim, op. cit. p. 20
[42] Awad, op cit, p.8
[43] Ibid, p.9
[44] Ibid
[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid
[47] Shalata, Op. Cit. p. 358
[48] Ibid, p. 359
[49] Hamming, op.cit. pp. 4-5.
[50] Yildirim, Op Cit. p. 15
[51] Personal conversation with senior leader and spokesman, Nader Bakkar.
[52] Shalata, op.cit. p.11.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Awad, op cit, p.11
[55] Ibid, p.12
[56] Ibid.
[57] Lacroix, Stéphane. "Sheikhs & Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism." Brookings Doha Center Policy Brief. June 2012. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Stephane-Lacroix-Policy-Briefing-English.pdf p.4
[58] Ibid, p.5
[59] McCants, Will. "A New Salafi Politics". *Foreign Policy*. 12 October 2012. http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/12/a-new-salafi-politics/
[60] Personal conversion with former Brotherhood leader Kamal Helbawi who was involved in lengthy debates to convince al-Nour to accept the reversal of the controversial clause. According to Helbawi it took a while but al-Nour finally agreed to not oppose the exclusion of the said article. Helbwai's account suggests that al-Nour relented not due to the post-coup pressures nor did simply compromise. Rather it was a case of where the Salafist party moderated its position in that it did not feel that the removal would undermine the role of the shariah in legislation.

Chapter VI – Jihadist Case Study: The Afghan Taliban

In this chapter, I apply my theoretical framework of Geopolitical Ijtihadic Moderation in an effort to explain why the Afghan Taliban movement made a strategic decision in 2010 to enter into negotiations with the United States and other countries as a way to try and bring about an end to the longest war in American history. The Afghan Taliban (here on referred to as simply the Taliban) desire to seek international recognition as a bonafide Afghan national political movement represents a unique form of Islamist moderation. Normally, jihadist groups, by definition pursue their envisioned Islamic states, through armed struggle – rejecting international recognition. This remains the case with al-Qaeda, Daesh, Boko Haram, Shabaab, as well as the many different rebel groups currently fighting the Syrian regime. In fact, the Taliban established their first regime (1996-2001) by fighting their way to power. There are cases of deradicalization such as that of al-Gamaah al-Islamiyah and Tandheem al-Jihad in Egypt, the Armee Islamique de Salut in Algeria where the groups in question gave up armed struggle (but not necessarily agreed to join the mainstream).[1] Each of these, however, have one common denominator in that the groups in question had been defeated on the battlefield. This is not the situation with the Taliban. On the contrary, U.S.-led NATO forces could not suppress the group militarily and now after the drawdown, the Afghan jihadist militia continues to take over vast swathes of territory across the southwest Asian country.

The highly unique type of moderation exhibited by the Taliban validates my multiple radicalisms and hence multiple moderations argument. It is for this reason that none of the three main sets of theories on Islamist moderation (inclusion-moderation

hypothesis, deradicalization, and post-Islamism) can explain the shift in the ideas and behavior of the Taliban. I will begin this analysis by showing that the case of the Taliban (like that of Egypt's al-Dawah al-Salafiyyah) is not going to entail an embracement of democracy because of its absence in its geopolitical context. By applying the concept of *starting points* I will highlight the specific path of the Taliban towards a specific form and scope of change in its ideas and actions. Using my Geopolitical Ijtihadic Theory of moderation I will explain how the lack of constraints and latitudes has prevented the Taliban from undergoing any significant behavior and/or ideological shifts – despite their desire to be recognized as a legitimate Afghan national movement. The Taliban have not been able to move much beyond their original religio-political precepts because the movement has not faced the objective geopolitical climate, which can alter its subjective geopolitical preferences. In other words, the Taliban have not engaged in substantive revision to their pre-existing ijtihad because they have not been compelled and/or incentivized enough to do so. The Taliban have thus not progressed to the point where they can be expected to expand their horizons of permissible (mubah) actions. The fact that the Taliban represent an organizationally amorphous entity explains why the option of negotiations remains an elite concept limited to the apex leadership. Finally, the lack of moderation among many of its ideological opponents has served as an arrestor in the Taliban's path to moderation. Therefore, this case study is an example of why the actor did not undergo substantive change in its ideas and actions.

Structurally, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first one I will go through the historical context in which the Taliban emerged as a distinct jihadist

movement and have been operating since. Next, I will go through the Taliban's jihadist approach to power and how it is conflated with notion of seeking to end foreign occupation. In other words, the insurgency in Afghanistan is driven by both the classical concept of jihad and the modern ideology that privileges armed struggle over all other approaches to establishing an Islamic state. I will then highlight the geopolitical constraints and latitudes that have shaped the limited progress the Taliban have made towards embracing mainstream politics. Finally, I will show how my theoretical framework of Geopolitical Ijtihadic Moderation explains why the Afghan insurgent movement has been unable to develop a political wing.

Afghanistan: The Perennial Ghost State

Afghanistan has been going through regime-changes ever since its establishment as a sovereign nation-state in the mid 18th century by the Durrani dynasty. The country was ruled first by the Durrani Empire (1747-1823), which was followed by the Emirate of Afghanistan (1823-1926). The Kingdom of Afghanistan (1926-73) succeeded the emiratic regime. It was during the reign of the country's last monarch, Zahir Shah, (1933-73) that the country experienced the longest stretch of stability since the dawn of the modern era. Zahir Shah was ousted in a coup led by his cousin, Sardar Mohammed Daud Khan, who established a secular autocratic republic. Five years later, the country's factionalized communist movement, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), seized power in a military coup in 1978 and installed a Marxist stratocracy and named it the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). The DRA regime went through four presidents during its 9-year rule (1978-87) – two of whom were assassinated in the violent rivalry between the Khalqi and Parchami factions of the

ruling communist party. The last communist ruler of Afghanistan was Mohammad Najibullah during whose tenure (1987-92) the country got yet another regime called the Republic of Afghanistan. The Soviet military intervention (1979-89) prompted the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to join hands in shaping a seven party alliance of Islamist insurgents, which together with volunteers from all over the Arab/Muslim world, sought to topple the communist regime.

The communists were ousted from power in 1992 but the civil war did not end. It merely took a new form with those seven Islamist factions who were united in their struggle against the Marxist regime turning their guns on each other. The chaos that reigned for the next four years (1992-96) led to the emergence of a new jihadist faction called the Taliban. It was able to impose a harsh brutal order on the country, which lasted for five years during which it had taken control of most of the country. Its opponents under the banner of the Northern Alliance (remnants of the factions that had fought the Soviets and their communist proxy regime) were barely able to hold on to a small slither of territory near the border with Tajikistan. Having played host to al-Qaeda the Taliban lost their regime in the fall of 2001 when the U.S. began a military campaign in response to the Sept 11 attacks. The international community in 2002 established a democratic political system called the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which was dominated by the various anti-Taliban factions. After 15 years and despite $110 billion in international financial assistance the Afghan state created by the west is buckling under the pressure of rapidly growing Taliban insurgency.

Jihad & Jihadism in Afghanistan

Since its founding as a nation-state in the mid 18th century, Afghanistan has more or less seen wars of conquest and power shifting hands through armed struggle. Beginning in the 1920s under the kingdom regime the country began to experience the rise of a modern state and society. In spite of the civil war during the 1980s a strong state lasted till 1992. In other words, the last effective regime the country had was the one led by the Communists. Since its fall the country has been a collection of non-state actors led by regional warlords and/or Islamists. The most powerful of all these factions is the Taliban. The rest are more or less equally weak or strong and the only thing they share with one another is that they all oppose the Taliban. In essence the country anymore is composed of one strong non-state actor (Taliban), a weak state, and many other weaker factions whom we can call the anti-Taliban camp. The key thing about the anti-Taliban factions is that they are former Islamist insurgents who fought the Soviets, each other and then the Taliban.

It is only in 2002 via the Bonn Process that they were brought together in the form of a democratic political system, which has never really taken off. The government of President Hamid Karzai (2002-14) was much more stable because the country had almost a hundred thousand NATO troops, which prevented the Taliban from making too many gains. In the last two years the Afghan state is rapidly descending into incoherence. Power struggles between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have continued all throughout the two-year term of the power-sharing arrangement crafted by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry following the controversial presidential elections in 2014. The deal was brokered to end a stand-off between Ghani and Abdullah after the latter alleged foul play and refused to

acknowledge the results of the presidential vote. The fact that the opponents of the Taliban – even though they have formally embraced democracy – cannot get along is one of the key reasons why the Afghan state has been floundering in the face of an increasingly aggressive insurgency.

In many ways the country has not moved much beyond the time period of Islamist militia warfare. The Islamist insurgency that began against the communists and lasted all the way to 2001 has affected the political culture of the country. Initially the fighting began in the 1980s as a jihad seeking to defend the country against the Soviets who were an occupying force. The objective of the Afghan Islamist insurgents as well as the volunteers who had flocked to Afghanistan from different Arab and Muslim nations was the liberation of the country from foreign non-Muslim occupiers who had invaded the country. This liberation, however, was linked to the Soviet-backed communist government, which was seen as illegitimate as well as trying to implement an anti-Islamic ideology on the country. Here is where a very close second goal emerged, i.e., the establishment of an Islamic government. It was assumed that once the Soviets were forced out its proxy regime would crumble. It didn't until three years after the Soviets left and the Kremlin in the wake of the implosion of the Soviet Union could no longer support Marxist Kabul. Nonetheless, the jihad to liberate the country conceptually and practically blended into the secondary goal of establishing of establishing Islamic state.

The distinction between *jihad* as a military struggle against foreign occupation of Muslim land and *jihadism*, a 20th century ideology, which calls for the establishment of an Islamic state through armed insurrection became extremely blurry. This dynamic had a serious impact for stability and security in post-communist Afghanistan. The groups

that fought the communist regime and its allied Soviet forces did not have any post-conflict plan for restoring peace to the country through the instituting of a power-sharing arrangement. These groups were essentially insurgent movements – suffering from an acute poverty of thought when it came to political governance. They essentially did not know how to share power through institutional mechanisms. They were bereft of such a culture because they were essentially militias designed to fight and were not equipped for governance. Hence, the ill-fated attempts to broker a power-sharing agreement in the early 90s. There was a reason why they went to war with one another.

It was in this context that the Taliban emerged as the most powerful faction when the more established groups had exhausted themselves in endless conflict. From the point of view of each of these Islamist warlord militias they were still engaged in jihad against "deviants", who were blocking the establishment of an Islamic state. When the Taliban joined this fray they were doing the same waging jihad to establish security in the war-torn country via the establishment of an Islamic state, which in their view was the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan led by the movement's founder, Mullah Mohammed Omar. It was interesting that there was a defunct regime led by the Islamist insurgent groups who had fought the Soviets, which they called the Islamic State of Afghanistan. Therefore the war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance factions was between two rival Islamic regimes the former dominated by ethnic Pashtuns while the latter claimed by the largely Persian speaking ethnic minorities. Even though the bulk of the territory was under the control of the Taliban this conflict continued until after the U.S. toppled the Taliban regime, which brought their opponents to power.

Therefore, until the democratic political dispensation that emerged out of the Bonn conference in 2002 the way to power and an Islamic state was via jihadist approach. The Taliban were steeped into this political thought even more so because they hailed from rural areas and underwent religious education based on a medieval understanding of Islam and politics. Though their opponents to varying degrees subscribe to the Brotherhood model of democratic politics their two decades of participation in armed conflict has prevented them from embracing democratic political norms. It is in this geopolitical context that we must examine the Taliban's move to enter into negotiations with the United States and their attempt to establish a political bureau in Qatar – a project that was aborted within days after it was established given the displeasure of the Kabul government.

The Taliban recall the problems they had during the years of their regime when it was only recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. They also realize that the circumstances in the here and now are very different from the situation that existed in country during the 1990s when they were able to literally fight their way to power. Even if they somehow were to reproduce that military feat once against in a post-NATO context they would still run into the problem of the lack of international recognition. As it is they are still an internationally proscribed organization and their leaders are on terrorist watch lists. These were the concerns that initially drove the Taliban into talks with the United States.

The Taliban's Immoderation

Despite considerable international efforts into pushing forward the talks several different factors have prevented them from moving forward. First and foremost is that

the nature of the Taliban as such that joining the existing system places them at a disadvantage because they have not evolved into a movement that can compete in a democratic setup. For this reason they seek a settlement in which the current political system would need considerable constitutional modifications to allow for a special accommodation for the Taliban movement. Even though they have come a long way from the days of the emirate the Taliban also still see the current democratic system as in conflict with Islamic principles as they understand them. These problems notwithstanding the Taliban had agreed to the first direct talks with the Afghan government under the auspices of the international quartet on Afghanistan that were held in the summer of 2015 in Pakistan. Shortly thereafter it became evident that the founder of the movement had been dead since early 2013. This development created an internal crisis for the Taliban and the ensuing power struggle that threatened the position of Mullah Omar's successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour forced him to hold off on the talks until further notice and escalate the insurgency in order to establish his jihadist credentials. That decision was able to help Mansour consolidate power and also improve the negotiating position of the Taliban.

With the Taliban now dealing from a position of relative strength due to their gains on the battlefield meant that the Americans needed to regain the initiative. Working with Afghan intelligence they were able to track down the new Taliban chief in a remote area of Pakistan and conducted a drone strike in which Mullah Mansour was assassinated. What this has done is further reduced the chances of negotiations. Meanwhile, the role of Pakistan as a backer of the Afghan Taliban has further complicated the situation. Islamabad over the years since the fall of the Taliban regime

has lost its influence over the Afghan insurgent movement to the point where it is playing off various factions to ensure that any negotiations do not undermine Pakistani interests. The roles of Iran and India who are close allies of the regime in Kabul have only further eroded the chances for the various stakeholders to compel the Taliban to the enter into meaningful negotiations. The rise of Daesh in parts of Afghanistan and the continued influence of al-Qaeda among different elements of the Taliban, especially the Haqqani network further hamper any moves towards reconciliation. The single most factor that reduces the Taliban's incentive for talks is that the militia has a very clear upper hand in the battlespace. The Taliban movement is now controlling a great many districts across a wide geography of the country including in the northern strongholds of many of their opponent factions and are now mounting simultaneous assaults against urban centers in different provinces.

Taliban & the Geopolitical Ijtihadic Moderation Theory

As a nationalist jihadist force with no transnational ambitions the Taliban movement is a unique manifestation of Islamist radicalism. Likewise its moves to negotiate – informed by the need to gain international recognition as a legitimate Afghan nationalist movement – underscores a very different form of potential moderation. What this means is that if the Taliban will moderate it will not mean its entry into democratic politics – as was the case of al-Dawah in Egypt. A key reason for this is because the Taliban's journey towards moderation begins with a cessation of hostilities. What reduces the prospects for this even further is that there is very little incentive for the Taliban to entertain this option and the lack of democratic options on the side of its opponents – not to mention that democracy is a problematic concept for

the Afghan jihadist movement. The Taliban's starting point is armed struggle and therefore moderation will assume a much more basic forms, e.g., ceasefires, exchange of prisoners with power sharing talks much further down the line. Given its position of relative strength in the battlespace, and the lack of threats and/or opportunities the Taliban is unlikely to engage in any noteworthy changes to its political thought and practice. The absence of these factors explains why it has not moved much beyond what are highly pre-modern notions of governance. The Taliban have thus not engaged in revision of their ijtihad on how they conceptualize Islamic governance. Thus the Afghan jihadist movement is an example of the lack of moderation in keeping with the Geopolitical Ijtihadic Theory of Moderation.

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Chapter VII - Conclusion

The world we live in is inundated with different types of Islamist extremists. Many of them are non-violent while many others are quite violent. They subscribe to different ideologies or hail from competing strains of the same core ideology. In essence, we are dealing with are different forms of radicalisms. What this means is that we are bound to have different forms of moderation. In this research, I have examined two types of radical actors who in their different ways have exhibited significant signs of transformation in their ideas and actions. The existing literature on Islamist moderation (Inclusion-Moderation hypothesis, Deradicalization and Post-Islamism), however, is unable to explain the changes in their thought and practice. I have advanced an alternative explanation of how Islamist moderation either takes place or does not. My Geopolitical Ijtihadic Theory of Moderation states that objective geopolitical realities – both in the form of constraints and latitudes trigger a rethink among Islamist radicals leading them to revise their understanding of Islamic law. Since there is no one process type of radicalism there will be multiple types of moderations – each depending upon the starting point associated with the radical actor in question. Moderation among Islamists only occurs when a radical actor has evolved its understanding of the juristic categories of prohibited and permissible behavior This theory allowed me to explain the process by which Egypt's quietist Salafist movement, al-Dawah al-Salafiyah, has changed its ideological position to where it is now participating in democratic political processes. This same theory also helped to explain why the Afghan Taliban is a case of arrested moderation. This theory has considerable policy relevance in the context of trying to nudge the various rebel forces in Syria towards the political center so as

to realize a settlement to the civil war. By understanding the mechanics of moderation we can then understand what kind of compromises can be expected of different types of radical actors. Moderation in this ways is an evolutionary process whose end point is unknown and trajectory opaque. This is because the actors in question themselves do not know where they will be ideationally over a given time horizon. This is the main flaw in the existing theories in that they expect a specific outcome whereas the centerpiece is that there are multiple moderations among both non-violent and violent Islamists. These actors can offload Islamism but not what they perceive as Islam.

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