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Bureaucratic Mobilization

Islamists vs. Bureaucrats after the Arab Spring

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Abstract

This article explores contemporary Islamist mobilization – collective mobilization aimed at structuring the public sphere along Islamic norms – in the context of the 2011-2013 Arab Spring. The central contention is that in a context where state organizations are caught in mobilized social cleavages - what I call “bureaucratic mobilization” - they can alter the relation between social and political activism within an Islamist project. More specifically, I take a social process, upward scale shift, to draw attention to these changes and argue that bureaucratic mobilization can cause a seeming “secularization” of Islamist demands in the political arena.

Keywords: Islamism, State Autonomy, Bureaucratic Mobilization, Social Movement Theory, Tunisia, Syria.

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Introduction

It is increasingly clear that in countries where the Arab spring resulted in the collapse of the political regime, Islamist mobilization - in both society and politics - has gained in influence. In Tunisia the Islamist Ennahda party was victorious in the first free and fair elections. In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the Salafist Nour party gained almost 70 percent in their first elections. In Syria the Muslim Brotherhood dominated external opposition bodies, conservative shaykhs lighted internal opposition and - as the uprising dragged on - Jihadi groups gained in power. In Libya, even though a liberal party won the elections, Salafist movements became increasingly powerful.

At the same time the traditional close alignment between ruling party and executive was severed due to the regime's collapse. As result struggles over controlling state institutions ensued. The political crises over purging Gaddafi era bureaucrats in Libya is an example. Other examples are struggles over Tunisian police reforms and institutionalization of councils for the safeguarding of the republic. In Syria similar discussions emerged over how to govern "liberated" areas. And, last but not least, an example is Egypt's discussion on the re-emergence - and eventual coup d'etat - of its ill-defined "deep state".

There seems to be a dialectic between the two issues. Through both its political and social influence Islamist-secular cleavages are drawn into questions of state reform. The outcry over the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's attempts at gaining control over police, media and judiciary - before the military coup - is an example. The assassinations of bureaucrats by Islamist movements in Libya is another. The struggle over "secular" or "religious" service provision in Syrian liberated areas is a third. Tunisian mobilization regarding "laique" university management and public TV is a fourth. Et cetera.

In all cases these conflicts are not just about influencing policy making processes, but also about controlling the state apparatus. Ordinary citizens end up mobilizing against state bureaucracies - and not just against political actors as such. In all cases these conflicts over state reform emerge along an Islamist-non-Islamist cleavage. The newly "democratic" era in the Arab world seems to be colored by a dialectic between social Islamist-secular polarization and struggles over state reform. Why the connection between the two? What does it mean for the relation between Islamist movements and parties?

The first question, I argue, mainly concerns the historical institutional emergence of (Arab) state-society relations; excluding particular social groups via

party-led clientelism from access to state controlled entitlements. It resulted in structural conditions conducive to the perception of a bias in socio-political representativeness of bureaucracies. I deal with this question elsewhere (see [Donker, 2013](#)). The second is a question of available strategies and mechanisms within mobilization, and how the availability of autonomous bureaucracies changes existing dynamics of Islamist mobilization. This last question is our main concern here.

Autonomous Bureaucracies How the increasing social polarization that has followed Arab regime breakdowns influences the relation between contentious mobilization and state reforms is still poorly understood among academics. Following the above observations I argue that to understand this relation we need to go beyond the usual focus on parties, political programs and their constituencies (e.i. [Wickham, 2013](#)) or their economic interests ([Springborg, 2011](#)) and focus on the influence of contentious mobilization around schools, universities, public welfare organizations and police apparatus (e.g. [Clark, 2004](#)). These Arab “street-level bureaucracies” have come to hold a particular position at the intersection of political power and society and thereby constitute a crucial field where movements compete over shaping Arab national identity following regime breakdown. This article is meant to outline some tentative ideas on the role of autonomous bureaucracies in shaping the relation between contentious mobilization and state reforms by focusing on reemerging Islamist mobilization in Tunisia and Syria.

I formulate these ideas by going beyond the above mentioned structuralist approaches that focus on identifying formal institutional and economic “sufficient or necessary conditions”. What is missing in these approaches, I would argue, is an appreciation of the dynamic nature of interactions between actors; and the importance of these dynamics in defining how contentious mobilization takes shape. In this respect, studies on social movements and contentious mobilization have been instrumental in our understanding of non-institutionalized forms of politics, theorizing the relation between specific contexts and the emergence of contentious mobilization, modes of protest and their eventual (non)success – in the last ten years going from a more structural approach to one that focuses on social mechanisms and strategies ([McAdam et al., 2001](#); [Jasper, 2004](#); [Fligstein and McAdam, 2012](#)). Social movement studies therefore provides a well developed conceptual and analytical framework to analyze dynamics between challengers and incumbents during contentious mobilization. Social processes such as “upward scale shift” have been central in theorizing how relational mechanisms (such as brokerage) relate to cognitives ones (such as boundary setting) in scaling up local societal demands to the national political arena ([Tarrow, 2010](#)).

Despite growing recognition that challengers and incumbents can be positioned in various organizations and constellations ([Armstrong and Bernstein,](#)

2008), the possible contentious nature of bureaucratic autonomy has not been acknowledged as such. It means that relations between social movements and the state in countries where bureaucracies are deeply embedded within society - as in the case of most Arab countries - are poorly reflected among current theories within social movements studies.

A solution lies, I argue, with the discussions on state autonomy. In her groundbreaking work *States and Social Revolutions*, Theda Skocpol (1979) showed that the state can be in part autonomous from society. The state is to a certain extent “Janus faced”: presenting themselves to one side as implementer of policies on behalf of society, and to the other as having to abide by international standards and rules. Many others have followed Skocpol and showed the relative autonomy state institutions can have, not just from social forces but also from the domestic political sphere (see for instance Peters, 2001; Carpenter, 2001).

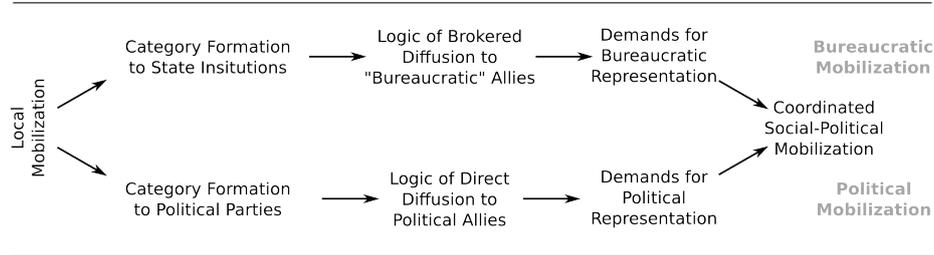
Especially interesting in this regard is Lipsky (2010) who focused on “street-level bureaucrats”. He showed that those bureaucrats that are in constant contact with citizens - such as teachers, welfare workers, local judges and police officers - necessarily have a level of discretion in the implementation of their tasks and are therefore actors that need to be taken into account in their own right. The discretion in allocation of state’s resources, in combination with their continuous interaction with citizens, provides them with a level of social control.

Bureaucratic Mobilization In situations where service provision is “caught” by social polarization (as described by Migdal (2001) for developing countries and by Tuğal (2009) for Turkey) access to street-level bureaucrats can be perceived as influenced by social and political affiliations. This is particularly true in settings where social polarization emerges around questions of national identity; and bureaucracies are seen as embodiment of the latter. Together with their importance in influencing social norms and values, it renders gaining access to public service agencies central in movements’ mobilization - influencing claims they make.

More specifically, bureaucratic mobilization - or the emergence of bureaucracies as autonomous actor in contentious mobilization - emerges when three conditions are met: a collective identity exists regarding civil servants; this collective identity is positioned along a specific social cleavage; and around this cleavage contentious mobilization emerges. It can both be active - when bureaucrats mobilize as collective actors in social conflicts - or passive - when others mobilize as reaction to (perceived) contentious collective identity of bureaucrats.

I argue that bureaucratic mobilization is crucial in understanding collective mobilization after the Arab Spring; as it can, and does, influence the relation between contentious mobilization and politics. Both in cases of passive and active bureaucratic mobilization, the appropriation of bureaucratic organizations will be available as part of a repertoire of contention; thereby altering the relation between social movements and their political representations. The task at

Figure 1: Bureaucratic Mobilization and Upward Scale Shift



Source: adapted from McAdam et al. (2001, p.333) and Tarrow (2010).

hand is to analyze how bureaucratic mobilization can alter the relation between contentious mobilization and its political representations.

In this article I will use the concept of “upward scale shift” as analytical framework to analyze this influence of bureaucratic mobilization. “Upward scale shift” has been central in theorizing the relation between contentious mobilization and its political representation within social movement studies. It is the process through which contentious mobilization diffuses across social sectors and creates instances for coordination at a higher institutional level than its initiation (adapted from Tarrow, 2010, p.214).¹

I substantiate the two central claims - that bureaucratic mobilization exists and influences the relation between social and political activism - through a paired comparison between Islamist mobilization in Syria and Tunisia. By increasing variance on strength of state institutions following the Arab Spring, I hope to show that bureaucratic mobilization can emerge in a wide array of setting - increasing the extent to which we can generalize. Focusing on reemerging Islamism, then, provides us with a movement that is both explicitly social and political in its focus, ensuring that upward scale shift is constantly attempted. The comparison builds on, first, extensive fieldwork over the course of four years in the Arab world (mainly Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Jordan) in which around 180 individuals have been interviewed. Second, it draws on a content analysis of primary sources from Islamist associations, state institutions, and individual autobiographies of (Islamist) actors; third, it uses secondary sources from local, Arab and international newspapers as the empirical basis for the analysis.

The Theory of Bureaucratic Mobilization

The role of bureaucratic mobilization in contemporary Islamism can be clarified using the concept of upward scale shift, as done in figure 1 (page 5). I discern two

¹ Note the difference with the traditional understanding of scale shift (as in McAdam et al., 2001) which denotes the horizontal spread of mobilization to multiple sites. Tarrow (2010) introduces “upward scale shift” in his contribution in *Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms, and Political Effects* (Givan et al., 2010). Although not an exact copy, the general aim of showing the influence of institutions on mobilization processes is similar.

analytical trajectories for upward scale shift: the bottom trajectory denotes a “traditional” direct “political upward scale shift”; the upper trajectory denotes a possible influence of bureaucratic mobilization through what can be called “bureaucratic upward scale shift”. Both trajectories consist of three mechanisms: diffusion, category formation and emulation of demands, but their constellations and the actors involved differ. Political scale shift denotes the principle formation of similarity and difference to political parties - finding shared identities with institutionalized political parties - enabling a direct diffusion of demands to the political arena. Despite that bureaucratic upward scale shift consists of similar mechanisms, it is now civil servants in bureaucracies and public institutions that are “caught” in the formation of categories along particular social cleavages. It means that bureaucracies emerge as possible sites for brokered diffusion.

Both trajectories result in bridging Islamist demands to the formal political arena. But, crucially, through the first trajectory there is a more literal translation of Islamist demands to the political arena than is the case through the second one: demanding sharia as the basis of the constitution for instance. With bureaucratic scale shift it is not so much about policies, but about those civil servants that implement policies: Islamizing state institutions becoming an aim, to the detriment of Islamizing state policies. A seemingly “secularization” of claims made by Islamic parties and movements can be the result.

We will now disentangle this process, and build the argument, by focusing on its constitutive mechanisms. The subsequent section provides an extensive empirical account of the influence of bureaucratic brokerage on Islamist upward scale shift in Tunisia and Syria.

Social Cleavages and State Autonomy A key mechanism in scale shift is category formation, or creating “a set of sites that share a boundary distinguishing all of them from, and relating all of them to, at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the boundary” (McAdam et al., 2001, p.157). Though dissimilar these two mechanisms in dialectic constitute the basis of changing and interacting social cleavages within a given society.

In both Tunisia and Syria we can observe that the main social cleavage within society is based on religion, specifically Islam. This is not to say that no other cleavages exist: in Syria we have strong sectarian boundaries dividing society, in Tunisia there have always been strong differences between the rural periphery and the coastal cities. In both instances the initial uprising was explicitly national in its identity, transcending any tribal, family, political or religious divides existing in these countries. But as protests (Tunisia) and the insurgency (Syria) developed over the years, it is clear that this national identity of initial collective contentious mobilization has collapsed in both settings.

In both settings it has split along a religiously defined cleavage. Thus whereas in Tunisia we initially see national protests, transcending sub-national

cleavages, against a political regime (as was the case during the uprising, December 2010-January 2011; and Kasbah II protests, end of February 2011) a later rally at national protests (Kasbah III, July 2011) fails. At this stage numerous other cleavages had already become apparent: in the periphery numerous protests demanded better rural development; at factories people mobilized to demand better wages and economic equality. But the Islamist/Secular divide gained in salience, increasingly polarizing and became prevalent. In November, December 2011 thousands protests in favor - and against - the Islamist Ennahda in front of the Constituent Assembly in Bardo. 25 March 2012, 9 February 2013 are two days when Islamists protested in their thousands. A few examples of mass secular movements are the protests on 28 November 2012, 15 January 2013 and 15 August 2013.

Among the Syrian opposition a similar dynamic took place. Whereas the initial uprising was explicitly non-sectarian (and non-Islamist) as it developed it turned increasingly Sunni based. It thereby also took an increasingly Islamist tone. In a context of state collapse, and tentative rebuilding, a cleavage between “secular” and various shades of “Islamists” became prevalent. A cleavage emerged - between the more traditional leftist opposition and Islamist movements - with the latter proving more powerful, especially among those groups fighting inside the country. In Aleppo and Raqqa these conflicts became increasingly polarized.

A key observation in this respect is that bureaucracies in both contexts have been “caught” by this cleavage. Following the Tunisian revolution, various conflicts emerged around the identity of state bureaucracies: mobilization demanding the creation of mosques at universities, the possibility for Niqabi girls to register for university classes, addressing a perceived “secular” nature of national television are examples from Tunisia. In Syria these issues emerge as the creation of proto-state institutions in liberated areas becomes polarized along divides between “religious” or “civil” service provision.

In both cases polarization between more secular and more Islamist groups centers around formulating the position of religion in a national identity. The state and its institutions are seen both as embodiment of this national identity and a crucial tool in enforcing it. Education, welfare organizations, local courts and police apparatus gain importance as organizations that can be “Islamic” or “secular” in how they implement their tasks and thereby influence public conduct.

Brokerage and Bureaucrats The second set of mechanisms are diffusion and brokerage. Diffusion denotes the process in which ideas, resources and/or repertoires spread from one site to others.² The latter can be seen as “the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites” (McAdam et al., 2001;

² For an extended discussion see Soule (2004).

Han, 2009, p.26). Brokerage is a relational mechanism that influences how exchange between actors takes place. I will make here a distinction between “political diffusion”, or the unmediated diffusion of Islamist ideas from Islamist movements to parties; and “bureaucratic brokerage”, or the mediated exchange of Islamist ideas between Islamist movements and the political arena via an autonomous bureaucracy.

In both settings we can observe diffusion of Islamist demands taking place. Consider Ennahda: though formally a political party and therefore without links to social Islamist movements as such, they state themselves they are “informed” by social Islamist mobilization in society. These are not just political slogans: many Nahdaoui are individually active in society, creating a well-developed informal network between movements and the party through which diffusion takes place: Nahdaoui are well embedded within social mobilization and take note of what Islamist activists’ demands are. More clearly, diffusion was taking place among political parties and movements with a more fundamentalist ideology, such as Hizb al-Tahrir and Jabhat al-Islah. As these parties do not make an explicit differentiation between social and political activism, those active in either are in constant contact with each other and shared similar ideas.

In Syria, in the context of the uprising, direct diffusion of Islamist demands gradually became more powerful. Some Islamist organizations, for instance Ahrar al-Sham, combine both in a cohesive institutional structure. Others, such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, are more institutionally specialized with political activism dominating their activities. Though direct diffusion is present in both, it is more pervasive in the former than in the latter.

Concurrently, in both settings a tendency can be observed among some groups to encroach on bureaucracies - especially at the street-level - and if not successful to make these bureaucracies more receptive to Islamists advances. In Tunisia, people mobilize at universities, public media, and lower judges are called to improve their social representativeness. This process is supported from the political arena: Ennahda actively attempts to replace the director general of the ministry of religious affairs and the editor-in-chief of the national television station. In addition police recruits are tested on their Islamic knowledge through a test drafted by bureaucrats in the Ministry of Interior.

In Syria these dynamics emerge in a different context - of state building instead of reform - but similarities can be observed. For instance in emerging public services provision explicit Islamic cleavages emerge. One example are the increasing conflict in the Homs region between civil and religious governance organizations between April and May 2013. But also in Aleppo and al-Raqqa and in the south these conflicts emerged.

Where this happens bureaucrats end up - often unwittingly - mediating Islamist ideas between movement and parties: their emergence as autonomous actors in social conflicts between “Islamists” and “seculars” aid a further a differentiation within the Islamist project between social and political activism:

Islamist parties pressure bureaucracies through appointments from above, Islamist movement pressure them from below through contentious mobilization. Bureaucrats have become, in a sense, unwilling brokers: mediating claims between diverging Islamist political parties and movements, through providing a shared goal (Islamization of bureaucracies) around which a common Islamist identity can be preserved.

Emulation of Demands To understand how the above mechanisms interrelate and influence upward scale shift we need to, I argue, take into account differences between the two trajectories articulated above. We called the first “political scale shift”: due to a strong shared identity between Islamist parties and movements (sometimes not making this divide at all) ideas are diffused directly between the two. I will show that it ends up emulating societal Islamist demands quite literally into the political arena. The second trajectory we called “bureaucratic scale shift”. Due to the influence of bureaucratic mobilization, the bureaucracy - especially at the street-level - becomes a target in mobilization. It means that political parties and movements are forced into different roles. Movements encroach from below; parties pressure from above. While they retain their shared identity the relation between the two becomes brokered. As a result demands are emulated liberally: demands are not so much about policies, but more about the collective identity of those implementing these policies.

If we take a look at the Tunisian and Syrian practices we can observe how political emulation of Islamist movements’ claims is taking place differently through these two trajectories. In Tunisia after the revolution Islamist movements’ protests were not only aimed at demanding sharia-based legislation but also at strengthening public Islamic observance at universities, elementary education, public press and relevant ministries. Ennahda in its turn changed the director general and civil servants at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and attempted to change key civil servants at public media. This seemingly all in an attempt to facilitate Islamist mobilization and nurture Islamization of public life. Islamist social movements encroach on public institutions and bureaucracies to gain access to state resources.

In Syria, specifically in the context of an emerging proto-state apparatus in “liberated” areas, we can observe differences in political emulation between the MB and more Salafist-leaning groups. Whereas the former is active in political bodies abroad, and supports the creation of a civil state bureaucracy and public institutions, the latter are creating a state apparatus based on religion and assume a “natural” representativeness through pure religious credentials. Though both approaches are fraught with difficulties, related differences in political demands made is striking. The MB continues as pragmatic political actor trying to build alliances with, or create, Islamist movement organizations. The Salafists often explicitly negate any such differentiations and continue to demand the enforcement of a religious system on both society and politics.

What trajectory is taken influences how emulation between political and social Islamic mobilization occurs. With an increased focus on changing state bureaucracies and public institutions, the importance of Islamist policy setting in creating legitimacy for political Islamist parties can decrease. Thus failure to explicitly implement sharia-based laws might affect political legitimacy of these parties in a limited sense, as long as they are perceived to support the Islamization of state bureaucracies and public institutions, thereby nurturing the Islamization of public life. Therefore scale shift occurs in both instances, as there is an (implicit) coordination between social and political mobilization, but the extent to which demands and grievances are literally *emulated* differs between the two trajectories. Summarized, we can state that bureaucratic mobilization, and the pervasive bureaucratic brokerage it enables, supports a secularization of political Islamist programs. In essence the political message is rendered subservient to attempts at gaining control over, and altering the national identity of, state bureaucracies.

The Practice of Bureaucratic Mobilization

We now turn to the practice of bureaucratic mobilization and its influence on the political salience of Islamist mobilization. The following section provides an anthology of practical issues relating to, first, bureaucracies being positioned along social cleavages, and, second, its influence on Islamist political claim making. It thereby provides substance to the argument proposed in the previous section. We will see how, following the Arab Spring in both Tunisia and Syria, bureaucracies are “caught” in social cleavages. We will also see how changes among the bureaucratic corps not only reflect state reform, but are reflected among and polarize along, social cleavages that exist within society; especially concerning the Islamist-non-Islamist divide. Bureaucracies, and especially those at the street-level, thereby become an (often unwilling) actor in collective contentious mobilization. They end up influencing mobilization repertoires of Islamist movements in their societies.

Social Cleavages & Bureaucracies Following the collapse of the Ben Ali regime, in a context where state institutions remained strong, conflicts emerged over the national identity of various Tunisian bureaucracies. For one, the Tunisian public press was seen as a bastion of secular forces. A perception that was only strengthened, in March 2012, after an attempted appointment of a new editor-in-chief at the national TV by the Ennahda-led interim government was met with stiff resistance inside the public TV itself.³ Newly mobilized Islamists in society decried the lasting influence of secularist tendencies in these public institutions.

³ Reuters (2012) *Tunisian Press Protests Against Islamists Attempts to Control the Press*, October 17

Table 1: Overview Processes “Upward Scale Shift”

	Category Formation	(Brokered/Direct) Diffusion	Emulation
Bureaucratic Scale Shift	<i>Tunisia</i> : a secularity identified by Islamists at universities and public TV. Complaints about “Islamization” of state institutions.	<i>Tunisia</i> : attempts by Islamist movements to find likeminded bureaucrats. Attempts to “open up” state institutions by Ennahda.	<i>Tunisia</i> : Mobilization regarding Public press, universities and bureaucracies. Ennahda’s “secular” political program but attempts to influence bureaucratic corps.
Bureaucratic Scale Shift	<i>Syria</i> : Proto-state institutions defined by their (differing) religious credentials. Muslim Brotherhood active in civil religious institutions.	<i>Syria</i> : Emergence of autonomous governance bodies in liberated areas. Cooperation and conflict between rebels and governance organizations.	<i>Syria</i> : demands for civil governance structures in liberated areas after start uprising. Muslim Brotherhood’s attempts at funding and creating civil governance structures
Bureaucratic Scale Shift	<i>Tunisia</i> : no differentiation social and political activism with Hut, AS. “Nahdaoui” identity more than party membership.	<i>Tunisia</i> : direct contact between social and political activism; often in one organizations. Some direct diffusion (Nahdaoui) vs only direct diffusion (Hut and Salafists).	<i>Tunisia</i> : Protests including Sharia in constitution. Hizb al-Tahrir: we will abolish secular democracy if they are in power.
Political Scale Shift	<i>Syria</i> : JN, ISIS, SIF: no difference political and social activism. Concerning MB: Islam as source, both movements and party.	<i>Syria</i> : emergege “Islamic states” in liberated areas. JN attempting to create governance structures in liberated areas.	<i>Syria</i> : JN and ISIS: Islamic state in Syria (and beyond). SIF and Ahrār al-Shām: society demands Islamic rules.

The same applied to educational institutes that are perceived to be an embodiment of secular Tunisian society. The ban on niqabs in classrooms and the enforced absence of prayer rooms at university campuses, nurtures the view that at universities a secularization of public space was still enforced. A secular group, in their view, dominates the management and professors at these institutions of higher education.

Concerning state administrations, many saw those that worked at the ministry of religious affairs as explicitly secular, and leftovers from Ben Ali's attempts to curtail any religious activism. For instance, during an Islamist protest in front of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the capital, the author observed how a female civil servant, without headscarf, was harassed by Islamist activists shouting that such a person should not be able to work for a *wizara muqadisa* (a holy ministry). They demanded that people who worked within the ministry would have to behave according to religious norms.⁴ The minister of religious affairs under the interim government of Caid as-Sebsi, Azuri Mizuri, was constantly harshly attacked on his perceived lack of religious credentials.

All in all, we can see that a social cleavage between "secular" and "Islamist" is somehow mirrored into these bureaucracies. These organizations were perceived to be in need of reform to be better positioned along a perceived secular-Islamist divide. Not only do those on the Islamist side of the divide perceive state bureaucracies to be overwhelmingly secular, those inside these organizations fear an "Islamist" attack on their independence.



A similar dynamic can be observed in Syria, despite the fact that the institutional situation is completely different.⁵ Initially civil in nature, newly emerging proto-state institutions were related to and grew out of local protest coordination committees and received - in theory at least - financial support from the Syrian National Coalition (NC). The NC would be initially dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. Alongside, pre-existing religious institutions provided a foundation for service provision: Mosques, charitable associations, schools and courts, in addition to the 'ulamā' manning them, provided a well developed and accepted institutional structure for providing food aid, shelter, a justice system and schooling.⁶ As result, in Idlib at least, a conglomerate of Islamic

⁴ Observation at Ministry of Religious Affairs, February 11, 2011, Tunis; conversation with Islamists youngster at the same place and date.

⁵ As the following section has been written as recently as possible, it was impossible to interview Syrians on these topics. Therefore the following overtly depends on public sources, including propaganda clips from various Islamist groups and English- and Arabic-language secondary newspaper articles.

⁶ See Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (2013a) *Aleppo: Mosques regain their Positions in Building Society*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya, March 24.

shaykhs, advocates and judges rule over the area.⁷ In many other regions *Hay'at al-Shar'iyah* (“sharia boards”) were formed that created a unified Islamic institutional structure to manage these liberated areas: for instance in Aleppo,⁸ but also in Raqqa and the eastern regions.⁹

These boards were not about implementing sharia laws on society; it was the “normal” provision of services that was being Islamized. Thus, in a propaganda clip from the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF) these attempts are explicitly discussed, including interviewing a baker stating that the SIF have laid down the rule that bakeries are forbidden terrain for any armed group - including the SIF itself.¹⁰ Jabhat an-Nuṣra (JN) has attempted similar strategies in stabilizing food supplies in liberated areas, especially urban areas such as Aleppo.¹¹ Additionally, there were attempts at providing basic schooling in liberated areas, after the education system collapsed, for instance by the SIF.¹²

The above meant that those structures that emerged to manage the day-to-day provision of services became starkly structured along a “civil”-“Islamist” divide. The struggle over the degree to which religion should be part of national identity became embedded within emerging proto-state institutions. Thus, in some areas that had been “liberated” from government control, the regime lost practical influence and an immediate need for some kind of governance emerged. Around the issue of building governance structures we can observe how a cleavage between “Islamic” and “civil” management emerges and gradually became polarized.

Bureaucratic Mobilization After the revolution state bureaucracies and public institutions became - often unwillingly and sometimes unwittingly - autonomous actors in contentious mobilization. These organizations were not only recognized as “secular”, their secularity was contentious and aim for mobilization. An example is Islamist mobilization at the University of Tunis, in March 2011, when Islamist students turned a classroom into a mosque.¹³ The action was met by a furious reaction of the council of professors, the mosque was closed,

⁷ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (2013a) *Struggle between "Civil Judiciary" and "Sharia Organizations" about Management of Affairs in Liberated Areas*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, April 11. The problem is also noted in other Arabic newspapers: Balūṭ (2013) *al-Nusra and Hittu Compete for the Management of Syria*, al-Safir, April 12.

⁸ Aleppo Media Center (2012) *The Statement of the Creation to the Sharia Board in Aleppo and Surroundings*, Aleppo Media Center, November 11.

⁹ *Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions (2013) a Military Parade of the Police of the Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions*, youtube.com, March 9.

¹⁰ Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (2013c) *The Islamic Movement for the Liberation of the Levant: the Production of Bread and delivery to Families in Aleppo*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya, March 5.

¹¹ Jabhat al-Nuṣra (2013) *Jabhat al-Nuṣra in Raqqa, the Popular and Da'wa Car Between People*, al-Manāra al-Bayḍā', March 29.

¹² Aḥrār al-Shām al-Islāmī (2013b) *The Islamic Movement for the Liberation of the Levant: Cultural and Da'wa Activities in Aleppo*, al-Jabha al-Islāmiya al-Sūriya, March 11.

¹³ Observation at the Univeristy of Tunis, March 5, 2011, Tunis.

but following student mobilization the university promised to build one on campus.¹⁴ A similar episode took place in October 2011 in Sousse after Niqabi girls were barred from registering at a local university.¹⁵ This struggle gained national attention around the Manouba University that became the symbol of the conflict between those that defended the secular nature of higher education and those that aimed to bring down the “secularized” university system. For months Islamists would bar the entrance to the social science faculty demanding a more public position of Islam on campus and in management.¹⁶

Concerning national media, an Islamist interaction is visible firstly in social mobilization challenging this perceived secular bias in national media and by political Islamists parties supporting these claims. This happened, for instance, in April 2012 at the headquarters of the national public TV where a standoff between protesters and employees of the TV station developed.¹⁷ It was also true of the demonstrations against the director of the public “Islamic” Zeytuna channel. According to the director of the Zeytuna channel, Iqbal Gharbi, she was attacked in November 2011 outside the office of the radio station by members of an Islamists organization named “The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice”. She resigned a week later and (state-regulated) changes to the editorial board followed and complaints surfaced that Zeytuna radio became more (religiously) politicized afterwards.¹⁸

Concerning ministries, in practice this translates into demands to have “proper” individual civil servants at ministries, especially at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For instance, during an Islamist protest in front of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the capital, the author observed how a female civil servant, without headscarf, was harassed by Islamist activists shouting that such a person should not be able to work for a *wizara muqadisa* (a holy ministry). They demanded that people who worked within the ministry would have to behave according to religious norms.¹⁹ These feelings, though less extreme, are actually mirrored by some civil servants themselves. The situation at the Ministry of Religious Affairs was described by one civil servant as a “war” between different views of how the ministry should position itself regarding citizens’ religious activism.²⁰

¹⁴ See: Council of Professors (2011) *About the Seizure of a Classroom in the Call to Use It as a Prayer House*, 5 March.

¹⁵ See: al-Shurūq (2011) *Sousse: Attack on the Academic director of the Literature Faculty after refusing to register a Niqab student*, al-Shurūq, October 9.

¹⁶ France 24 (2012) *Salafist Students Have a Sit-in at the Literature Department in Manouba to Force the Allowing of the Niqab*, January 25.

¹⁷ al-Shurūq (2012b) *Sit-in Protesters at the Television Escalate: Confrontations... and Television Union Threatens to Strike*, April 24.

¹⁸ Tunisia live (2012) *Radio Zeytouna Accused of Airing Politicized Content*, Tunisia Live, October 19.

¹⁹ Observation at Ministry of Religious Affairs, February 11, 2011, Tunis; conversation with Islamists youngster at the same place and date.

²⁰ Conversation with a civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, November 3, 2011, Tunis.



Similar issues emerged in Syria. Proto-state bureaucracies emerged as autonomous actors in contentious mobilization. Some Islamist groups present turned explicitly to religion in building new governance structures. These attempts began to be institutionalized in the earlier mentioned “sharia boards”.

The sharia boards are specifically aimed at providing a complete system of governance - including police, service provision, food distribution - and increasingly gained a level of autonomy. Thus in Raqqa we see that Jabhat al-Nusra is forced to give up financial resources gained by taking over the regional bank to a sharia board.²¹ In Aleppo a “sharia board” has emerged that manages everything from food distribution to police tasks,²² while in the East Islamist groups founded a Sharia board for daily governance and intra-opposition conflict resolution.²³

At the same time, the Nation Coalition of Opposition and Revolutionary Forces attempted to build more civil “provincial councils” with a similar set of functions, for instance in Aleppo.²⁴ These governance bodies are highly contentious not only for the policies they implement, but also for the national identity they represent. Though coexisting at the start, with time these two types of “emergency” institutions developed further and the difference between these two approaches grew starker. In an April 2013 al-Sharq al-Awsat . article it is noted that an open conflict is currently emerging between civil organizations and Islamic ones governing liberated areas.

The above goes to show that, though not showing the type of mobilization vis-a-vis state institutional reforms as in the case of Tunisia, tensions evolve around the creation of an “Islamic” state apparatus. Even the more “fundamentalist” Islamist movements face questions over how to implement an Islamic system in practice. Contention does not only revolve around the extent to which Islamist ideals should be implemented through laws on society, but it involves the religious nature of those bureaucracies providing public services to society.

Emulation of Demands Literal emulation of Islamist claims between Islamist movements and the political sphere can be observed in both settings. In Tunisia there are various groups that ask for the implementation of Sharia law on all aspects of public life. Anṣar al-Sharia is an extreme example, but Jabhat al-Islāḥ is another one.²⁵ There have been multiple instances where Tunisians went to the street - in their ten-thousands - demanding the implementation of

²¹ al-Ḥayāt (2013) *The Islamic Boards.. Imperfect Justice and the Establishment of a New Dictatorship for Syria*, al-Ḥayāt, May 19.

²² Aleppo Media Center (2012) *The Statement of the Creation to the Sharia Board in Aleppo and Surroundings*, Aleppo Media Center, November 11.

²³ Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions (2013) *a Military Parade of the Police of the Sharia Committee in the Eastern Regions*, youtube.com, March 9.

²⁴ See www.aleppocouncil.com.

²⁵ The Reform Front (2012) *Program of Jabhat al-Islāḥ*, undated.

Sharia law.²⁶ In Syria it is even more readily observable in groups such as Ahrār al-Shām that combines social and political activism in one cohesive institutional structure. The same, of course, applies to groups as al-Nuṣra and al-Qaeda that do not make an explicit differentiation at all between social and political arenas. Therefore, within these organizations, societal and political demands are never “brokered” between different contexts; making literal emulation the only option.

At the same time, it is clear that the above issues relating to bureaucratic mobilization often influences how contentious mobilization relates to politics, and vice versa. Direct diffusion, and the fundamentalists that are its embodiment, are not all there is to Islamist activism today. With the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood this influence can for instance be observed. It is increasingly pragmatic in its political strategies and does not demand any outright Islamic legislation. But they *have* constantly attempted to influence emerging institutional structures inside the country - though with differing degrees of success.

In Tunisia this approach has become increasingly obvious under Ennahda’s rule. Ennahda has repeatedly ignored demands for inclusion of Sharia in the constitution. Up to the point where Rashd Ghanoushi explicitly stated they would not push for such legislation.²⁷ But at the same time, they *will* push for changes in the bureaucracies. For instance, in reaction to mobilization around public TV in Tunisia, an Ennahda leader and Constitutional Assembly member demanded in April 2012 that public media would have to “open up” to “social forces” or else they would privatize the organization.²⁸ In the setting of conflicts over the Manouba university, Ennahda offered to play the role of mediator between Islamist and secular protesters. A professor at the university complained that this “mediation” had been more about pressing the university to give in to some of the protesters’ demands. At the Ministry of Religious Affairs the new Ennahda-led government appointed Nour ad-Din al-Khadimi, a central figure in post-revolution Islamists social mobilization, as replacement of the much despised “non-religious” previous minister. The ministry became more attuned to Islamist demands within society as result. In April 2013 the entrance exam for police recruits suddenly included religion related questions; it had been silently redrafted by bureaucrats within the ministry of interior.²⁹

Tellingly, in April 2012, in the setting of continued protests for the inclusion of sharia in the Tunisian constitution, Ghanoushi had a phone call with a Salafist activists discussing the strategy to take concerning public Islam in the country. The taped phone call was leaked months later.³⁰ Ghanoushi attempted

²⁶ For instance, see: ‘Amāra (2013) *Tens of Thousands Protest in Tunis in Support of Sharia in Islamist Rule*, February 16.

²⁷ al-Ṣabāḥ (2012) *Shaykh Rashd Ghanoushi: Maintaining the First Article of the Constitution from 59 Is a Commitment Stipulated in the Electoral Program of Ennahda*”, March 27.

²⁸ Brik (2012) *Debate on Privatization of Media in Tunisia*, al-Jazeera, April 21.

²⁹ Tunisia live (2013) *Security Force Applicants Quizzed on Islam*, April 22.

³⁰ al-Shurūq (2012a) *The Pillars of the State and Organizations are still in the Hands of the Seculars...* , al-Shurūq, October 11. The leaked tape was not uncontested, in an

to convince a Salafist activist to take a “gradual” rather than more direct approach. In doing so he outlined in detail what this actually meant - implying the close interrelation between activism in society and the political arena; in addition to showing the importance of controlling the state administration in building a successful Islamist project:

... as I said, the Tunisian people want this [Islamic] religion. At the moment seculars groups in this country, it's correct, do not make up the majority. But look at the press now: until now it is in their hands. And the economy is in their hands, as is the Tunisian administration. [...] I say to our brothers concerning these issues, don't deceive yourselves with numbers because of the fact that you go out [and protest] with a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand or twenty thousand. The pillars of the state and its divisions are still in their hands. Take your time to change. At the moment we don't have a mosque, but we have the Ministry of Religious Affairs. At the moment we don't have a shop, but we have the state [...]³¹

Beyond Tunisia & Syria

The the other two states that were faced with regime breakdowns due to the Arab Spring, Libya and Egypt, differ enormously on political institutional structures and (previous) strength of Islamist mobilization. Despite the differences between these settings we see similar dilemmas and mechanisms of Islamist mobilization emerge during and after the Arab Spring. Thus we see that in both countries social cleavages extent into bureaucracies through polarization around a (religious) national identity in which these institutions have a (perceived) position. In both cases this ends up influencing how Islamist political parties and social movements relate to each other.

With the Arab Spring, and its related sudden political changes, the position of bureaucracies and public institutions in Islamist mobilization emerged (Libya) or reemerged (Egypt).³² In each case the dynamics of Islamist mobilization closely mirrored local particularities of state-society relations and Islamist movements present. One key issue emerging from Libyan state reform after the revolution, and of relevance here, is the extent to which Qadhafi-linked civil servants should be replaced in state institutions. In May 2013, various - often

Ennahda statement Amr al-Laridh wrote that according to Ghanoushi specific sentences had been taken out of context. See La'ridh (2011) *Press Statement*, www.ennahdha.tn, October 10. The specific contested sentences (relating to police and armed forces) have been deleted from this quote.

³¹ al-Shurūq (2012a) *The Pillars of the State and Organizations are still in the Hands of the Seculars...*, al-Shurūq, October 11.

³² Note that the following paragraphs are based on a limited base of primary and secondary sources. Due to time constraints the main period researched was about three month (February - May 2013).

Islamist related - militias that emerged during the uprising and are impossible to reign in due to the weakness of Libya's state apparatus, took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and surrounded the Ministry of Justice demanding the immediate implementation of a proposed law to replace Qadhafi-linked civil servants.³³ Interestingly enough, the (MB-linked) Justice and Construction Party not only supported their claims but pushed for a version that was even more far reaching in its attempts to reconstitute the work force within state institutions. The law was passed but is still awaits implementation. It has the potential to open up state bureaucracies and public institutions to a new wave of civil servants.³⁴

In Egypt, many of the above issues have emerged with increasing clarity during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. Allegations were going back and forth over attempts to control various state organizations and public institutions after the post-revolutionary elections of November 2011-February 2012. One of the more interesting ones was a leader of the Jihadi Salafists complaining that reforms by the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP of the judiciary, police and media were explicitly aimed at gaining control over these institutions.³⁵ These conflicts generally ran along a "secular"- "Islamist" divide. Increasing attempts to curtail the media were slammed as the Muslim Brothers' attempts to intimidate "seculars" within these organizations.³⁶ The same applied to conflicts over the judiciary, with seculars going out to protest in support of the judiciary and Islamists against their perceived bias against new Islamist forces.³⁷ These tensions came to head in the *tamarod* campaign that was used by the army to legitimize its subsequent coup against the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist activism more generally in the country.

Although the sudden political changes have brought these dilemmas very clearly to the fore, they are not specific to the four countries discussed here. Similar dynamics can be observed in other Muslim-majority countries as well. The relation between the Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and various Islamist movements - especially the Gülen movement - is a clear example. As is the encroachment of the Islamist movements on the police services and education (see for a more elaborate discussion for instance: White, 2002; Turam, 2004). In the Gulf a similar dynamic can be seen in Kuwait and the project of *al-Ḥaraka al-Dustūriyya al-Islāmiyya* ("Islamic Constitutional Movement", Hadas), during the 1990s, to create an independent body *within* the

³³ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (2013b) *Militias Surround the Ministry of Justice After Raking over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, May 1.

³⁴ al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (2013c) *President of the Justice and Construction Party: We are Not Thinking of Withdrawing from the Zidan Government*, al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ, March 4.

³⁵ Ramaḍān (2013) *Jihad: "The Brotherhood" will Continue to Dominate the Nation without Taking the People into Consideration*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, May 18.

³⁶ Maḥdī (2013) *"Reporters Without Borders" Demands form Mursi to Stop Ikhwani attacks on Seculars*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, April 24.

³⁷ Concerning the latter see: 'Alī (2013) *"The Brotherhood": a Million this Friday Aimed at the Corruption of Mubarak's Men on the Judiciary*, al-Maṣrī al-Yuwm, April 14.

Ministry of Religion that was a direct representation of and controlled by Islamist movements. Time and space - and the scope of this article - make it impossible to discuss these other examples at length. But initial indications are that the dynamics described in this article can also be observed in other Muslim-majority countries - either Arab or not.

Conclusion

In this article I argued that bureaucratic mobilization - or the emergence of bureaucracies as autonomous actors in contentious mobilization - is crucial in understanding collective mobilization after the Arab Spring; as it can, and does, influence the relation between contentious mobilization and politics. Both in cases of passive and active bureaucratic mobilization, the appropriation of bureaucratic organizations will be available as part of a repertoire of contention; thereby altering the relation between social movements and their political representations.

I used the concept of “upward scale shift” as analytical framework to analyze the influence of bureaucratic mobilization. It is the process through which contentious mobilization diffuses across social sectors and creates instances for coordination at a higher institutional level than its initiation (adapted from Tarrow, 2010, p.241). I discerned two analytical trajectories: one trajectory denoted a “traditional” direct “political upward scale shift”; a second a possible influence of bureaucratic mobilization through “bureaucratic upward scale shift”. Both trajectories consist of three mechanisms: diffusion, category formation and emulation of demands, but their constellation and actors involved differ. Political scale shift denotes the principle formation of similarity and difference to political parties - finding shared identities with institutionalized political parties - enabling a direct diffusion of demands to the political arena.

Despite that bureaucratic upward scale shift consists of similar mechanisms, it is now civil servants in bureaucracies and public institutions that are “caught” in the formation of categories along particular social cleavages. It means that bureaucracies emerge as possible sites for brokered diffusion. Both trajectories result in bridging Islamist demands to the formal political arena. But, I argued, through the first trajectory there is a more literal translation of Islamist demands to the political arena than is the case through the second one: demanding sharia as the basis of the constitution for instance. With bureaucratic scale shift it is not so much about policies, but about those civil servants that implement policies: Islamizing state institutions becoming an aim, to the detriment of Islamizing state policies. A seemingly “secularization” of claims made by Islamic parties and movements can be the result.

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