**Explaining the Religion-Politics Distinction within Islamism: The Tunisian Case**

**Supplementary Material: Research Design and Data Collection Methods**

This study examines and theorizes the mobilizing experiences of the Tunisian Islamist organization today known as Ennahda. The organization first emerged in the early 1970s as the Islamic Group (*al-Jamaʿa al-Islamiyya*), then announced itself publicly in 1981 as the Islamic Tendency Movement (*Harakat al-Ittijah al-Islami*, MTI), and renamed itself as the Ennahda Movement (*Harakat al-Nahda*), to comply with a new political parties law ahead of elections in April 1989.

We use process tracing to develop an account explaining how mobilization around this organization developed in the 1970s and 1980s through three mechanisms: a counter-hegemonic ideology, social mobilization, and the construction of a political organization. We identify these mechanisms to explain the complex integration of religious and political activism in the founding years of an organization which later, in 2016, sought formally to differentiate these overlapping trends. Causal process observations were drawn from an array of qualitative data. First, we conducted 48 interviews with men and women who participated in Islamist mobilization in Tunisia in the 1970s and 1980s. Some remain members of the Ennahda; others have left the organization. Participants were interviewed during the period 2014-22 in the capital Tunis, and in the Sousse region, on Tunisia’s north-eastern coast, where from the 1970s the organization developed a strong base of support at a time of rural to urban migration and a rapidly growing university population. Running as independent candidates, members of Ennahda in Sousse, Tunisia’s third largest city, achieved some of their strongest electoral results in parliamentary elections 1989, securing nearly a third of the official vote (McCarthy 2018). Although Tunisia began a transition away from authoritarianism in 2011, following a popular uprising against the regime of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, our participants still represented a hard-to-reach group. Many had been jailed for their political views under the Ben Ali regime and were concerned about the risk of return to repression. After a coup in July 2021, many politicians, journalists, and civil society activists from across the political spectrum were arrested and detained, among them at least 17 current and former senior Ennahda leaders (Human Rights Watch 2023).

In these difficult conditions, we selected our participants using a chain-referral strategy, also known as snowball sampling, because trusted connections were often crucial in making contact with current and former members of the Ennahda organization. This technique effectively relies on a convenience sample, which places researchers at risk of both selection bias and gatekeeper bias (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Cohen and Arieli 2011). However, uncertain and authoritarian political contexts mean this research approach is widely used by social science researchers studying the Middle East region (Clark 2006; Cammett 2006). In this case, the use of trusted referrals was particularly valuable in making contact with a range of participants and identifying the different dimensions of mobilization as experienced within the organization. Our approach was respondent-driven, but it was different from research designed to administer formal survey questions to hard-to-reach populations (see, for example: Khoury 2020). To minimize the risk of selection and gatekeeper bias we undertook interviews in two different cities, we sampled for range across different levels of central, regional, and local membership within the organisation (Small 2009), and we relied on several different participants to act as entry points into the Islamist community. Some interviewees remain within what is today the Ennahda party, others have left the movement.

We coded our interviews using the NVivo software programme, employing a ‘flexible coding’ approach, starting with codes for broad content areas, and refining over time into more fine-grained analytic codes as conceptual themes developed (following the process outlined in: Deterding and Waters 2021). Multiple codes were developed, including for different chronological periods, for different levels of activism within the movement, and for different forms of activism, as well as for the wide range of detailed discussions relating forms of social, religious, and political activism, and especially to questions of identity and meaning making attached to that activism. Participants were typically well aware of the multiple dimensions of the Islamist project, but tended to focus on the areas and types of behaviours that they were most involved in. Some individuals maintained a reasonably constant position in the movement over a long period of time, but others moved up the hierarchy and as they rose to positions of greater responsibility, so the nature of their activism changed. Our goal was to capture a diverse range of understandings and experiences to show the range of mobilization undertaken (Small and Calarco 2022). We protect the anonymity of our participants to enable them to speak freely and without fear of persecution at a time of democratic backsliding in Tunisia.

In these interviews we captured a range of meaning-making, from leaders and ideologues articulating ideological positions, to local-level organizers who interpreted and acted on these ideas through their own practices. These interviews were contextualized against party documents, Islamist writings, news reports, and memoirs. These documentary sources include archives of the movement’s early writings including the magazine *al-Maʿrifa* (The Knowledge), obtained in part through the Centre de documentation nationale in Tunis, and in part through private archives maintained by some participants.

The following table provides demographic characteristics of our participants. Ennahda is a highly-structured organization, with central offices in Tunis, a regional bureau in each of the country’s 24 governorates, and local bureaux in each of the governorate’s administrative districts. In the table a local MTI or Ennahda member refers to an individual who is or was an ordinary member of the organization at the lowest level, through their local bureau. A local Ennahda leader is one of up to a dozen individuals elected to sit on the committee of a local Ennahda bureau. A regional Ennahda leader is elected to sit on the committee of a regional bureau and may also sit in the higher structures of the party. A senior Ennahda leader here includes members elected to the movement’s national Consultative Council (*majlis al-shūrā*), a 150-member body which is the party’s internal parliament and its main authority between its four-yearly congresses. It also includes those Consultative Council members also sit in the more senior Executive Bureau (*al-maktab al-tanfīdhī*) and Political Bureau (*al-maktab al-siyāsī*), or who work elsewhere in the senior administration of the party in Tunis.

Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identifier** | **Gender** | **Birth** | **Education Level** | **Position** | **Location** | **Interview Date** |
| T01 | M | 1960 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Sousse | January 2014 |
| T02 | M | 1952 | Graduate | Former local Islamic Tendency Movement member | Sousse | March 2014 |
| T03 | M | 1961 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader | Hammam Sousse | April 2014 |
| T04 | M | 1965 | Graduate | Former Ennahda member | Sousse | April, August, October 2014 |
| T05 | M | 1983 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Sousse | April 2014 |
| T06 | M | 1963 | Graduate | Regional & Senior Ennahda leader | Sousse | April, September 2014; May 2015  |
| T07 | M | 1958 | Graduate | Local Islamic Tendency Movement & Ennahda member | Akouda | June 2014 |
| T08 | M | 1953 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Sousse | June, August 2014 |
| T09 | M | 1985 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Sousse | June 2014 |
| T10 | F | 1955 | Graduate | Local Ennahda member | Sousse | June 2014 |
| T11 | M | 1957 | Graduate | Regional & Senior Ennahda leader | Msaken | June 2014 |
| T12 | M | 1963 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader  | Sousse | August 2014 |
| T13 | M | 1958 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader | Sousse | August 2014 |
| T14 | F | 1960 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader | Sousse | August 2014 |
| T15 | M | 1962 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader  | Sousse | August 2014 |
| T16 | M | 1966 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Sousse | August, September 2014 |
| T17 | M | 1973 | Graduate | Former Ennahda member | Sousse | September 2014 |
| T18 | M | 1960 | Secondary school  | Local Ennahda member | Sousse | September 2014 |
| T19 | F | 1962 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader | Sousse | September 2014 |
| T20 | M | 1962 | Secondary school  | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | October 2014 |
| T21 | M | 1933 | Secondary school  | Local Ennahda member | Sousse | May 2015 |
| T22 | M | 1971 | Graduate | Former Ennahda member | Sousse | May 2015 |
| T23 | M | 1972 | Graduate | Former local Ennahda leader | Sousse | November 2013; March 2014; May 2015 |
| T24 | M | 1961 | Graduate | Local Ennahda leader | Sousse | March 2014; May 2015 |
| T25 | M | 1965 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Monastir | May 2015 |
| T26 | M | 1956 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Monastir | May 2015 |
| T27 | M | 1962 | Secondary school  | Local Ennahda member | Sousse | June 2015 |
| T28 | M | 1955 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January 2019 |
| T29 | M | 1954 | Graduate | Former Islamic Tendency Movement leader | Tunis | January 2022 |
| T30 | M | 1960 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January 2019; January 2022 |
| T31 | M | 1955 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | July 2011; January 2019; January 2022 |
| T32 | F | 1963 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January, August 2022 |
| T33 | F | 1985 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | July 2013; January 2022 |
| T34 | M | 1983 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January 2022 |
| T35 | M | 1962 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January, August 2022 |
| T36 | M | 1960 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January 2022 |
| T37 | M | 1971 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | January 2022 |
| T38 | M | 1987 | Graduate | Former senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | February 2022 |
| T39 | F | 1995 | Graduate | Former Ennahda member | Tunis | February 2022 |
| T40 | M | 1983 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | July 2013; February 2022 |
| T41 | M | 1961 | Graduate | Regional Ennahda leader | Tunis | July 2022 |
| T42 | M | 1961 | Secondary school  | Former regional Ennahda leader | Tunis | July 2022 |
| T43 | F | 1962 | Graduate | Local Islamic Tendency Movement & Ennahda member | Tunis | July 2022 |
| T44 | M | 1954 | Secondary school  | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | August 2017; January 2022; August 2022 |
| T45 | M | 1958 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader | Tunis | August 2022 |
| T46 | F | 1983 | Graduate | Local Ennahda member | Sousse | August 2022 |
| T47 | F | 1968 | Graduate | Senior Ennahda leader  | Tunis | August 2022 |
| T48 | M | 1942 | Graduate | Former Islamic Tendency Movement leader | Tunis | August 2022 |

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