

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book project started with a misgiving about the articulation of a supposedly irreconcilable difference between Islamists and the West in 2013. Since then, the project has been an exercise in proving and studying the existence of grey where there is supposedly only black and white. My observation is that thinking in binaries and antagonisms comes rather naturally to me and, I suppose, to many others who have grown up in the West. It is indeed hard to think in relative rather than absolute terms, to escape ‘either/or’ logic and replace it with ‘both/and’ assessments, nuance and ambivalence. In this sense, the book is also the undoubtedly imperfect result of my struggle to reorganise my habits of thinking, to learn to bear the inescapable complexity of the social world and to find ways of doing justice to it, by making modest but well-founded and carefully researched claims. If, with this book, I can hope to have made a good attempt at achieving these goals, this is thanks to two factors: time and social encounters with long-term companions and erstwhile strangers who became valuable interlocutors, colleagues and friends. Such encounters are sometimes confrontational and troublesome and have regularly demonstrated to me how limited and erroneous my thinking is. Luckily for me, virtually all of these encounters have simultaneously been underpinned by mutual respect, academic and social curiosity, and sometimes friendship and love. In this sense, I can only hope that more such discomforting encounters await me and thank all those from whom I have had the honour to learn. Not all of them can

be mentioned here individually but they can nonetheless rest assured of my gratitude.

Even as a child I dreamt of writing a book some day. But back then I did not think it was going to be an academic one. It feels quite wonderful, if somewhat unbelievable, to have written a book and I have many people to thank for having supported me in this endeavour, not least because it took me more than ten years from start to finish. The first person to whom I would like to express my gratitude is my PhD supervisor (*Doktormutter* as we say in German), former boss, mentor and colleague Anna Geis, who, I am proud to say, has also become a trusted friend over the years. Then a supervisor for my MA thesis, Anna recruited me from Munich in 2012 to become a member of her team at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg and, later, Helmut Schmidt University/University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg, where I received my PhD in 2017. Anna has many admirable qualities including meticulousness, humour and modesty. She also possesses an impressively broad and substantial knowledge of very diverse social science debates. From her, I have learnt to connect bodies of literature, to gain overviews of fields and to combine them in new ways, as well as to consolidate what we know across different areas. But most important to me is her unbreakable sincerity and ethics, even in the more difficult situations that academic life can bring. I am grateful to her for being such an excellent role model to me and others.

Before starting a PhD in political science, I was encouraged to work in academia by Elif Özmen, for whom I worked as a student assistant and tutor in practical philosophy and ethics at the University of Munich. Elif also wisely urged me to develop a thicker skin if I intended to embark on the journey of an academic career, which is something I tried and am still trying to do. I am grateful for this honest piece of advice and for the female power with which Elif's appearances and encounters are always imbued and which has always been an inspiration to me.

While I held my first university job at the Munich School of Philosophy and over the coming years, I had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between politics and religion with Michael Rederm and I learnt a lot from him. During this time, Stephan Stetter from the University of the Bundeswehr Munich accompanied me as my second PhD supervisor and Wolfgang Merkel from the WZB Berlin Social Science Center acted as my mentor. Gabi Schlag,

now working at the University of Tübingen, was my closest colleague and taught me everything I needed to know about the ‘IR business’ and community. I presented some of the very early stages of my work to the different participants of the colloquia Anna organised in Magdeburg and Hamburg. I also had a wonderful reading group, consisting of old friends from school and university, Steffen Murau, Lukas Rudolph and Kilian Spandler, who can all boast impressive career paths and great achievements in their respective academic fields. I am grateful to all of them for having enriched my intellectual perspective and academic work, but also my personal life.

During my PhD research, I had the pleasure of spending some time – albeit less than I would have liked – in Lebanon and Tunisia. I felt more than welcome in both countries and was met with hospitality and generosity, as well as much humour. As a PhD fellow at the Orient Institute Beirut (OIB) in 2014 and 2015, I not only conducted field research but also worked alongside brilliant young colleagues who, like me, were writing their dissertations, among them Sheryn Rindermann from the University of Leipzig and Samer Ghamroun from the Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Sheryn and I spent many hours in the OIB garden, smoking and whiling away the hours discussing our projects. Meeting Samer meant that I got to know many sides of Lebanon and Lebanese society that would otherwise have remained hidden to me. But more than that, he is one of the sharpest intellectuals and activists I have ever met. I am honoured to count him among my close friends.

Thanks to an invitation from Mathias Rohe, I was able to spend a month as a guest researcher at the Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe, where I got to know Jörn Thielmann. Together with Moncef Ben Abdeljelil from the Université de Sousse, Jörn implemented a project entitled ‘The Struggles over Identity, Morality, and Public Space in Middle Eastern Cities’ for which the late Christoph Schumann had acquired funding from the Volkswagen Foundation. They generously let me participate in an insightful workshop at the Université de Sousse in 2016. This not only helped me with field access later on, it also introduced me to yet another circle of wonderful colleagues, including Firas Ben Nasr, Oussama Bouffrikha (both Université de Sousse), Durgham Shtaya (An-Najah National University), Abdulsalam Al-Rubaidi and Nina Nowar (both Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg).

Besides these companions, colleagues and friends, I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the interlocutors who were willing to share their assessments of Ennahda's and Hezbollah's views on global order, as well as of Tunisian and Lebanese politics respectively, all of whom remain anonymous in this book. Owing to their generosity, the time they spent answering my questions and sharing their knowledge, I gained many insights about two lifeworlds which I had previously only known from the literature and primary sources. Their perspectives also helped me correct my analytical hunches and sometimes biases. I would also like to thank Stefan Leder, Said AlDailami and Takouoi K. for their invaluable help in finding interlocutors and arranging interviews.

For the final stages of this publishing project, I was accompanied by my esteemed colleagues in Frankfurt, both at Goethe University and at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). I discussed my introductory chapter with the members of PRIF's research group on terrorism at the time: Damaris Braun, Mustafa Karahamad, Amr Sakr, Regine Schwab and David Weiß. David also helped me to prepare and format the final manuscript. Felix Anderl gave me indispensable feedback on the book proposal that I submitted to Edinburgh University Press (EUP). Antonia Witt provided wisdom and moral support whenever needed. Irene Weipert-Fenner acted as my cheerleader urging me to submit the final draft of this book to the publisher before Christmas 2022, as a gift to myself. It is thanks to her and all my other wonderful colleagues that the email with the manuscript that would later be accepted for publication reached Louise Hutton and Frédéric Volpi on 24 December at 2.26 p.m. – right before my family and I left for our traditional Christmas Eve walk. Besides Louise, I am grateful to Emma House, Isobel Birks and Eddie Clark from EUP for their outstanding support and the absolute professionalism with which they have accompanied the publishing process. Besides Frédéric and the EUP Press Committee, I would like to extend my gratitude to two anonymous reviewers whose keen observations and prudent suggestions helped me improve the manuscript. Finally, I am grateful to Carla Hammes-Welch, whose editorial work has made the book a more pleasant read and who helped me find the words to best express my ideas, and to copy-editor Jonathan Wadman for the final polishing of the manuscript and his exceptional eye for decisive details.

I wrote this book in various places, the most important of which were libraries. I have a lot of affection for these places, their smell and atmosphere. Sincere thanks are owed to the Bavarian State Library in Munich, the library of the Munich University of Applied Sciences, the central library of Goethe University Frankfurt, the libraries of the Orient Institute Beirut, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg and Clare Hall, Cambridge, and the small library of the Arnold-Niederer-Haus in Ferden for hosting me and my laptop for many days and months. For funding at different stages of this project, I would also like to thank the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes) and the Max Weber Foundation/OIB for supporting my research through PhD scholarships, PRIF and the research initiative ConTrust: Trust in Conflict – Political Life under Conditions of Uncertainty at Goethe University Frankfurt for financing the language editing of this book, as well as the Leibniz Association and ConTrust for allowing me to make this book available as an open access publication.

Much like many other professions, academic work is sometimes exhausting, given the job uncertainty, long working hours, mobility requirements and, well, the constant need to acknowledge and overcome one's own limitations. It can be as stressful as it is rewarding. I am lucky enough to be part of an incredible group of friends with whom I can share these feelings and whose love, care and laughter I can always count on. Just before starting to revise my research to write this book manuscript, life also gave me a brilliant partner in crime. Thomas tickles my academic mind and makes my heart chuckle. I thank him for the joy and ease he brings to me every day. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my beloved parents, Maria and Joachim, who never let me doubt that I could pursue an academic career – and who, when I did anyway, assured me of their unconditional support and belief in my abilities. From them, I learnt to be curious and thorough. It is to them I want to dedicate this book.

*Hanna Pfeifer
Frankfurt, September 2023*