INTRODUCTION: ISLAMISTS AND THE WESTERN-DOMINATED WORLD ORDER – DECONSTRUCTING A TALE OF TWO ENEMIES

At the Munich Security Conference in February 2016, the late John McCain gave a pessimistic speech on recent developments in and prospects for Syria. The conference took place at a time when the 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' organisation (ISIS), also known as Dā'ish, had already lost significant amounts of territory in Iraq and Syria. At the same time, however, there had been several attacks against targets outside these two countries in 2015, notably in France and Tunisia. The perpetrators had claimed to belong to ISIS. In January 2016, the air strikes carried out on Iraqi territory within the framework of Operation Inherent Resolve by the Global Coalition against Daesh (GCAD), led by the United States of America (USA), had reached their peak and the coalition would from then on mainly target Syria. In this context, McCain warned:

> I watched . . . giants of our transatlantic alliance come together year after year to address the greatest challenges of their time. They believed in the value of a rules-based international order, because they knew the horrors of global anarchy. They believed in sustaining a favorable balance of power, because they had survived the collapse of it. They believed in the *West*, and its power. And they succeeded. It is *that vision of world order – our vision* – that is under assault today . . . and nowhere more graphically than the Middle East.[1]

He feared that the 'world order that we built, our dearest inheritance . . . [was] coming apart'.[2]

When McCain delivered his speech, there was the growing realisation among Western policymakers and observers that a global transformation process was underway. The United States had already declared its strategic reorientation towards the Pacific, the 'pivot to Asia' (Campbell and Andrews 2013), which was intended as a response to the global power shifts brought about by China's rise (Mearsheimer 2014a). Just a few months after this speech, the British voted for Brexit, and Donald Trump was elected the forty-fifth president of the United States. Both the rise of non-Western powers and populism in the West would be debated as external and internal challenges or even outright threats to the liberal international order in the second half of the 2010s (Ikenberry, Parmar and Stokes 2018). But McCain's address to the global – in fact mostly Western – security community was made against the backdrop of dramatic images of violence from the 'Middle East' and North Africa (MENA).[3] Back in 2016, the MENA region was still at the top of Western security agendas – contrary to the declared political will of many politicians, especially in the US.

The 'global war on terror' (GWOT), launched a decade and a half earlier by George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks, had made MENA the prime target of Western attention and engagement in the 2000s and 2010s. The tone the Bush administration set for the deadly global campaign in the name of counterterrorism was unambiguous: 'Bin Laden and his terrorist allies have made their intentions as clear as Lenin and Hitler.'[4] According to Bush, any effort put into a more nuanced view of Islamism would be too much. For the 'Shia and Sunni extremists represent different faces of the same threat. They draw inspiration from different sources, but both seek to impose a dark vision of violent Islamic radicalism across the Middle East.'[5] The Bush era gave rise to an antagonistic worldview according to which the West and its leader, the US, appear as 'a beacon of "democracy", "progress" and "modernity", in contradistinction to an Islamist "other"' (Mullin 2011, 264), imagined as irrational, anti-modern and religiously fervent. Bush's successor, President Barack Obama, sought to 'eschew some of the more polarised language' (Mullin 2011, 274), referring to specific rather than generalised threats emanating from some versions of Islam. Yet, ultimately, he was unable to fully shake off the legacies of the structure

his predecessor had created: the ideologisation of terror, the employment of double standards regarding legitimate political violence and the conflation of Islamist movements, which went hand in hand with a tendency to frame the latter as a security problem to be dealt with through counterterrorism (Mullin 2011, 266). Until the end of his presidency, Obama maintained that 'violent fanatics who claim to speak for Islam' were up against

> a post-World War II order [which we built] with other democracies, an order based not just on military power or national affiliations but built on principles – the rule of law, human rights, freedom of religion, and speech, and assembly, and an independent press.[6]

In the age of the 'GWOT', which began in 2001 and lasted at least until the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021,[7] 'Islamism' had come to replace communism as the spectre haunting the global order of the West's making (Camilleri 2012).

What This Book Is About

In this book, I seek to show that a dichotomous imaginary of 'Islamists' versus the 'Western world order' is mistaken.[8] The reason for this is that neither part of this conflict constellation is a unitary and homogeneous subject or structure. By deconstructing these two terms and reconstructing the different versions and meanings in all their plurality and ambiguity, what appears to be a static and intractable polarity can be subjected to an open empirical analysis: what kinds of relationship do actually existing actors dubbed 'Islamist' have with a global order under Western hegemony? The book is dedicated to continuing the important work of scholars who have invested in deconstructing essentialised and securitised images of 'Islamism' and Islam in Western discourse and in providing a more nuanced picture of them in a post-9/11 world. These scholars come from various disciplines, including anthropology, religious studies, critical terrorism and security studies, area studies and international relations (IR). This book brings together three strands of research, in particular: the interdisciplinary debate on secularism (Chapter 1), conceptualisations of (global) order and ordering from IR and political theory and philosophy (Chapter 2), and analyses of political Islam and Islamism from area studies (Chapter 3). This allows me to interrogate how Islamist actors perceive

the world order, the position they adopt towards it, and why. The empirical part of this book scrutinises the world order discourse of two Islamist actors in the post-Arab-uprisings era: Ennahda, the largest Islamist actor in Tunisia, which re-emerged as a successful party after the toppling of the Ben Ali regime in 2011, and Hezbollah, a powerful Shi'i party–militia hybrid in Lebanon. Drawing on transcripts of political speeches, newspaper opinion pieces and interviews with various party elites, and official party programmes and statements between 2011 and 2016, the book reveals how Ennahda and Hezbollah position themselves towards other actors and speakers in the global discourse on world order, as well as how they have developed their own conceptions of that same order. The book presents the results of an agent-centred, critical constructivist discourse analysis (Holzscheiter 2014) of documents published by party elites for a (potential) global audience. The study sheds light on Ennahda's and Hezbollah's conceptions of sovereignty (Chapter 4) and legitimacy (Chapter 5), as well as the goals and values an order should pursue, which I call *teloi*. These *teloi* are connected to wider narratives about history (Chapter 6). In contrast to conventional wisdom, the book demonstrates that Islamists do not reject the 'Western world order'. Rather, they are mostly recognisant of hegemonic discourse on world order, but sometimes resistant to certain interpretations of and practices employed in the name of a global (normative) order.

I start by observing several problematic traits and distinctions (or rather a lack thereof) that characterise political and public discourse on 'Islamism'. Marc Lynch (2017) calls the use of the term 'Islamism' that I problematise in this book 'lumping'.[9] This concept refers to the practice of conflating a whole variety of distinct actors and phenomena under one umbrella term. Besides 'Islamists', other popular labels are 'fundamentalists' or 'fanatics' and 'radical' or 'political Islam'. Lumping not only blurs important distinctions but also tends to frame all Islamists as a security problem, as being linked to violence and terrorism (Mullin 2011). This securitising logic has even encroached on Muslim communities and Islam as a whole (Mavelli 2013). Indeed, such a narrow security perspective on Islamism is not limited to public and political discourse. Some strands of IR and especially policy-oriented approaches in the field of security and terrorism studies, too, are prone to essentialising political Islam, reverting to Orientalist clichés, obscuring differences between Islamist

groups and denying that their claims have any legitimacy or even a political quality (Volpi 2010, 149–73).[10]

Reducing all Islamists to somewhat apolitical, irrational and violent fanatics does not do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon of political Islam and the plurality of its manifestations. In particular, constructing Islamists as radical opponents or even enemies of a liberal world order is overly simplistic:[11] it constructs and reifies 'the Islamist' as a more or less unitary subject. But it also conveys the idea of a single, uncontested world order that aims at implementing liberal values – a project which 'the Islamist' tries to frustrate by force. Fortunately, the literature comprises more than the 'lumping' strand, and this book can build on a very nuanced and well-established academic debate on Islamists. As the following chapters will show, Islamist movements and parties, as well as armed groups, have been the subject of numerous studies from various disciplines, including comparative politics and area studies, security studies, and peace and conflict studies, as well as sociology and anthropology. However, Islamists have so far only rarely been studied as actors in international politics – that is, as subjects that, on the one hand, have agency in politics beyond regional and domestic contexts, but are subjected to the structures of the world order, on the other. How do Islamists perceive the world order, what position do they adopt towards it – and with what purpose? Our knowledge on this issue is limited because the context for the debate on Islamists has usually been the domestic and sometimes the regional, rather than the global order.

Where authors have shown an interest in how Islamist or jihadist actors position themselves beyond their narrow domestic or regional context, the concept of 'global order' or 'world order' is not sufficiently theorised or is reduced to the 'Westphalian order' or 'state-based international system' – and the studies have focused on Salafi jihadism (Gerges 2016, Maher 2016). Salafi jihadists are sometimes subsumed under the term 'Islamists' as well. There are various reasons for and against this, as I will discuss at later points in this book. Suffice it to say here that Salafi jihadism has preoccupied the public and academia since the 9/11 attacks. In the academic study of Salafists, the suggestion has been made to distinguish between the attitudes they hold towards the state and the international order and the methods by which they try to achieve change (Maher 2016, 3–27). Only a small number of Salafi actors have a rejectionist agenda, which they pursue by resorting to violent means. Despite

the fact that Salafi jihadism, defined in this way, is an ideology adhered to by a minority of Salafists and one that is marginal when considering the whole spectrum of Islamist groups, it has come to shape the image evoked whenever the danger of political Islam is publicly debated. Salafi jihadists have also been a key concern for scholars in the fields of security and IR (Volpi 2010, 149–73) and they have come to epitomise what it means for the 'Western world order' to be challenged (Mohamedou 2018). The focus on Salafi-jihadist groups, then, has come at the expense of a broader investigation and has sometimes led to a sidelining of other important political and social actors from the MENA region, including Islamists. More specifically, Islamist world order politics beyond Salafi jihadism have yet to be studied.

This book addresses that research gap, located at the intersection of area studies and IR, by assuming that Islamists, too, are political subjects and participants in a global discourse on world order. It argues that the image of a politics of rejection is an unwarranted reduction of a whole spectrum of theoretically possible and empirically observable positions Islamists hold vis-à-vis the global order. More precisely, the politics of rejection is only one of three possible forms an actor's encounter with the Western-dominated world order can take. The other two are the politics of recognition and the politics of resistance. I understand these forms as ideal types of how political actors – be they state or non-state – can position themselves towards the world order under Western hegemony. The tendency to see Salafi-jihadist actors as the archetype of 'Islamism' and, thus, to think of Islamist politics towards the Western world order in purely rejectionist terms needs to be corrected. With its focus on the Tunisian Ennahda and Lebanese Hezbollah, this book analyses two actors that are also labelled 'Islamist', but are not part of the Salafi-jihadist trend. It thereby offers new ways of thinking critically about potential (obstacles to) cooperation and about (driving forces of) contemporary conflict between 'the West' and 'the Islamists'. By investigating how Islamist actors discursively construct world order, it will show that there is both continuity and rupture with Western discourses, that Islamists' reaction to the world order under Western hegemony is not (violent) rejection and that the substantialised image of the Islamist as the 'chief ideological "other"' (Mandaville 2013, 184) of the West after the end of the 'Cold War'[12] should be revised. This necessitates the deconstruction of two terms: the 'Western world order' and the 'Islamists'.

Deconstructing the Secular, Liberal West and Pluralising Islamism in the World Order

Over the last two decades and building on insights from philosophy and anthropology, IR and related fields have problematised the stylised image of a modern, secular, liberal West on several levels. First, various authors have discussed the secularist bias in both Western politics and the academic theories on international politics. Since the mid-2000s, these authors have tried to challenge the 'oppositional binaries [that] exist within dominant understandings of religion in International Relations . . . and are used to separate religion and the secular and establish religion's subordination to the secular' (Wilson 2012, 58). As Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (2007, 1) argues, while an 'unquestioned acceptance of the secularist division between religion and politics' prevails in political and academic practice, secularism actually 'needs to be analyzed as a form of political authority in its own right'. By defining the '"proper place of religion" in a secular society' (Asad 2006, 526), secularism functions as a 'power-knowledge regime' (Mavelli 2014, 174). The Peace of Westphalia is at the core of the secular narrative: according to 'liberal mythology' (Thomas 2000, 819), it was the privatisation of religion, the secularisation of politics and the rise of the modern state that put an end to the era of religious wars – at least in the West. Based on this myth, a civilisational divide was introduced into the world, between those societies which meet standards of modernisation and those which do not (Eisenstadt 2000a). It is in this way that the 'messy' Orient was able to serve as a means of Western self-reassurance, as Edward Said argued several decades ago (Said [1978] 2003; Euben 1999). There is a discursive co-constitution of the rational, liberal nation-state in the West and an Islamism on the outside that 'has come to represent the "nonsecular" in European and American political thought and practice' (E. S. Hurd 2007, 49). The Islamist, then, appears either as 'an infringement of irrational forms of religion upon would-be secular public life in Muslim-majority societies' (E. S. Hurd 2007, 118) or as a civilisational feature of Muslim societies reluctant to modernise and secularise (Volpi 2010, 29–33).

As William T. Cavanaugh has argued, though, the 'myth of religious violence' not only serves to legitimise the liberal nation-state (Cavanaugh 2009, 3–4). It simultaneously constructs the role of the rogue, which is attributed

to non-secular orders and in particular to Muslim societies. Such a categorisation, then, becomes an important component in the legitimation of the use of force against these societies on the grounds that religiously motivated violence is something that needs to be countered (Cavanaugh 2009, 59). Without suggesting that fighting 'Islamists' is the only or even the most important motive for the use of military force, it is striking that Muslim-majority societies are particularly likely to be subject to foreign intervention. Since 2001, Western states have led or been involved in military interventions in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Libya (2011), Mali (2013), Syria/Iraq (2014) and Yemen (2015), to name but a few of the larger-scale operations. Besides this, 'smaller-scale' violent actions, such as drone strikes and targeted killings in Pakistan, Yemen, Libya and Somalia, occur on a regular basis, albeit largely unnoticed by the Western public (Bachman 2015). Through the 'war on terror' narrative, secularism operates at the very core of security policies (Gutkowski 2014, 2016). Consequently, a second strand of research has directed its attention to the securitisation of Islam in Western discourse. Increasingly, this securitisation has been extended from terrorists to Islamists in the MENA region to Muslim communities in the West and even to Islam as a whole (Mavelli 2013, Matthews 2015).

These first two strands of research have produced important results regarding the question of how secular Western power operates by creating an Other it can 'legitimately' and 'reasonably' fight. Attempts at deconstruction have been directed at the West as the hegemonic side in a postsecular power configuration. The perspective of those who challenge Western secular discourse, however, has only rarely been taken into account in academic work to date. How do Islamists perceive the West, their relationship with it and the distribution of power in, as well as the normative structure of, the global order?

To be sure, research on how Islamists view the world and the West, and their conception of a social and political order, does exist. But this kind of research is often rather disconnected from the discipline of IR.[13] Studies on Islamists frequently embrace a social-movements perspective (Wiktorowicz 2006), for example asking how mobilisation takes place (Donker 2013, Kandil 2015, Ketchley and Biggs 2017) or in what kind of social environment Islamist movements emerge (Deeb and Harb 2013). Studies from comparative politics try to classify different Islamist movements and parties (Volpi and Stein 2015)

and analyse the conditions under which they become more moderate and can be integrated into political systems (Schwedler 2011, Cavatorta and Merone 2013). A question which has been passionately debated for a long time – and declared as misleading by some – is whether Islamists can become democrats or not (Hamid 2014, Dalacoura 2015, Kubicek 2015, Esposito, Sonn and Voll 2016). More recently, contributions to the debate have taken a more inductive approach, investigating contemporary Islamists' conceptions of democracy and how they combine these with, or view them as a modern extension of, Islamic principles (Khanani 2021). Taking a more historical perspective, some authors have traced the development of modern Islamic thought in an exchange with and in opposition to Western thought (Donohue and Esposito 2007, Jung 2012), or they have concentrated on how changing political conditions influence Islamist thought and practice and the forms Islamists assume (Roy 1994). This sort of research often takes into account global society and the big changes in global politics, such as decolonisation, the end of the 'Cold War', economic globalisation and the (arguably) postnational constellation (Roy 2004, Mandaville 2007, Bayat 2013).

For instance, Olivier Roy's comprehensive work covers Islamism from its emergence as an anti-colonial movement, to its split over the question of violence, to the integration of some Islamists into their respective political system as parties, often followed by phases of repression and re-cooptation, to what came to be known as the 'failure of political Islam' (Roy 2004, 2012a, Boubekeur and Roy 2012a). Islamism as a political ideology had lost its persuasive power and thus the Islamists needed to find a new platform and form of organisation. Roy predicted two trajectories which mirrored not only the programmatic crisis but also the accelerating processes of deterritorialisation of Islam. In Roy's view, post-Islamists would abandon their programmatic demand for an Islamic state and attempt to insert religious values into political discourse 'from below', thereby transforming the relationship between religion and politics without claiming the total Islamisation of the state and politics. In contrast, neofundamentalists would place the emphasis on individual piety and spirituality, appearing as quietist, political or jihadist movements (Wiktorowicz 2006). This distinction has regained relevance since the Arab uprisings, with the Islamist and Salafist spectrum broadening and diversifying to an unprecedented degree.

In this context, the transnational character of Islamism and Salafism has attracted attention again. But even more importantly, there is a growing awareness that they need to be analysed as phenomena embedded in domestic, regional and global political environments. For example, literature on ISIS now emphasises the extent to which recent political history in Iraq and Syria, as well as Western interventions in the region, created a favourable environment to disseminate the message of religious 'purification' and 'liberation' globally through the establishment of the *Khilāfa* (Isakhan 2015, Gerges 2016, Pfeifer and Günther 2021, Günther 2022). In the discipline of international relations, too, much academic effort is currently being put into understanding the radicalism and violence but also the appeal of Salafi jihadism (Friis 2015, 2018, Euben 2017, Heath-Kelly 2018). But focusing on the most destructive, most extreme, most totalitarian appearance of political Islam in this way reinforces the impression that it is all about violence, rather than working towards a more nuanced image that does justice to the complexity of actually existing Salafi-jihadist and Islamist groups. Rarely does IR seriously engage with research results from the area studies. Only recently have there been contributions that speak to the debate on or explicitly embrace the perspective of norm contestation in IR (Lecocq 2020). Centred on Hamas and Hezbollah, these studies have focused on resistance as a key norm and its consequences for political order (Koss 2018) and on how (religious) language is used in processes of norm contestation (Farida 2020). This book builds on the important contributions made by these scholars but moves beyond the focus on resistance, showing that Islamists simultaneously engage in practices of both recognition and resistance in the Western-dominated world order. It thereby responds to the desideratum of examining the relationship between Islamist and Western world order discourses (Lecocq 2020, 1079).

Islamists between the Struggle for Recognition and a Politics of Resistance in the World Order: Beyond Moderation and Rejectionism

The study of Islamists is much more nuanced in area studies than it is in IR, and has overcome the essentialism and instrumentalism traps that are still very much present in the discipline of international relations (Valbjørn and Gunning 2021). Conversely, area studies often do not make use of the rich theoretical repertoire IR has to offer in order to analyse empirical phenomena

in their global environment.[14] Studies often remain at the domestic or regional level in their explanatory frameworks and contextualisation.

A very popular framework for analysing changes in the ideology or strategy of Islamist movements is the inclusion-moderation paradigm. Its basic assumption is that actors who are included in political systems become more 'moderate' (Schwedler 2011). Even though the debate within this paradigm is multifaceted, some of the thesis's more problematic traits, as well as the binary between 'moderate' and 'radical' itself, have been justifiably criticised. First, 'moderate' is necessarily a relative term: something can only be moderate in relation to a certain normative standard. Have Islamists really been more radical than the authoritarian regimes in the MENA region that suppressed them? These very regimes also used the term 'moderate' in reference to acceptable forms of public Islam, thereby simultaneously stigmatising oppositional Islamism as illegitimate (Pahwa 2017, Pfeifer 2018). This indicates that 'moderation' is also a political term with a secular bias: anything that is not religious automatically seems more moderate.

Second, and related to this point, 'moderation' is closely associated with Western democracy promotion in the region, which reinforces the concept's normative bias. It is often used as a synonym for 'more democratic' or 'more secular' (Netterstrøm 2015, 113–15). Third, an important distinction in the inclusion-moderation paradigm is between tactical (behavioural) and ideological (substantial) moderation (Schwedler 2011, Karakaya and Yildirim 2013). Whereas the former denotes a change in behaviour for opportunistic reasons, the latter refers to a 'genuine' change in political ideology. This distinction is also mirrored in the 'wolf in sheep's clothing' metaphor, according to which Islamists show 'their real face' once they are in power. Such claims are part of self-proclaimed secular autocrats' rhetorical repertoire and are typically used to fend off demands to include the Islamist opposition in the political system. The results of the Ennahda case study in this book support the critics of this distinction (Netterstrøm 2015), as they demonstrate how difficult it is to dispel the suspicion that apparent moderation is illusive and to convincingly exhibit ideological change. Once they were in power, the Islamists had to demonstrate time and again that they were willing to compromise. When they pushed for their own platform, their previous concessions were considered merely tactical, thus 'proving' how unchangeable they are.

Fourth, the inclusion-moderation thesis has been challenged by empirical cases that seem to suggest the exact opposite, namely that it is exclusion, or even violent repression, which triggers learning processes within Islamist groups. According to this logic, Islamists adapt their platform (and behaviour) because the old version did not resonate well enough in society – or even sparked opposition – and led the regime to resort to repressive measures (Cavatorta and Merone 2013). Finally, current developments related to the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP, Justice and Development Party) in Turkey, but also the Muslim Brotherhood's brief period of rule in Egypt have raised the question of what happens to 'moderate' Islamists once they are in power. While Tunisia's Ennahda is seen as an exception to the rule, it was claimed that incumbent Islamists would embark on a journey of 'immoderation', understood as 'a top-down pursuit of morality issues and unwillingness to compromise with the opposition' (Kirdiş 2018, 309). However, when taking into account recent studies on the governance of religion by former authoritarian regimes in the MENA region, it seems rather unclear why this 'immoderation' would be a phenomenon specific to Islamists in power (Cesari 2014).

This book presents an alternative theoretical perspective on Islamist groups which are part of their respective political system, that is they act as parties and run in elections. It allows us to analyse how they relate to a global order under Western hegemony without falling into the trap of normativity that prevails in (some) approaches in the moderation debate by explicitly scrutinising and reflecting on the normative reference system: the Western-dominated world order. I suggest that these Islamists have to navigate between two poles with regard to global order: resistance and recognition. On the one hand, Islamist parties originated in social and political movements which emerged as a form of resistance against social marginalisation, political domination and cultural hegemony – in particular where this was perceived as heteronomy and interference or imposition from the outside. Inevitably, this historical origin shapes their agendas and worldviews: Islamists do have divergent programmes, because they were opposed to colonial rule and postcolonial regimes. Moreover, the West as a former colonial power and hegemon *a priori* plays the role of an adversary. But this image is not as clear cut and unchangeable as is often suggested – not least because Islamists, too, are subjected to the actually existing power relations in the world order.

This means that, to a certain degree, they have to embrace the struggle for recognition. This especially applies to those actors which have either been labelled terrorist groups by their respective regimes in the past (Ennahda) or are still deemed such by international actors today (Hezbollah). For the terrorism label is particularly powerful at marginalising and delegitimising actors. Talking to and negotiating with actors that are considered 'terrorists' is a taboo, which reduces the options to engage them in a non-violent way (Toros 2008, Clément, Geis and Pfeifer 2021, Dudouet 2021). In order to have successful interactions with others in the domestic and international realms, and in particular to take over the responsibility of government, Islamists therefore depend on gaining recognition as political actors. They need to be seen as actors whose claims can be accorded a certain degree of legitimacy and with whom others can talk, negotiate and cooperate (Fierke 2009). Hezbollah and Ennahda, for instance, were both part of different coalition governments between 2011 and 2016. This meant that they had to struggle for the support of their coalition partners for their agendas as well as making concessions to the latter, and ensuring that their interests were respected in their states' foreign relations. They also needed to develop a position on international politics and justify this position vis-à-vis their constituency, but also to transnational support groups and international partners. A mere politics of resistance cannot be successful in an interdependent world – and this holds true for Islamists, too.

Resistance and recognition can be seen as complementary concepts (Geis 2018, 612) which lend themselves to providing a nuanced analysis of Islamists who are part of a government and thus need to engage in the world order politics to which they are subjected. Meanwhile, Islamists also adopt a critical position towards a world order under Western hegemony, a position which is historically grounded and legitimised on the basis of religious and political arguments. By using this theoretical perspective, this book makes a valuable contribution to existing literatures. First, the complementary view on resistance and recognition in Islamist discursive practice is a theoretical innovation in its own right.[15] It directs our attention to the world order discourse of actors on the Islamist spectrum who are not Salafi jihadists and, thus, helps us move beyond the idea of rejectionism. Second, the book offers a more fine-grained concept of world order, which in the existing literature is sometimes not sufficiently theorised. Rather, broad terms like 'Westphalian order' or 'state-based

international system' are used to describe the rejectionist position of actors under investigation (Maher 2016, Gerges 2016). But for the analysis of the Islamist groups of interest in this book, a more disaggregated understanding of world order is needed, if we are to detect positions of recognition of, and resistance to, a global order under Western hegemony. Third, the book makes an empirical contribution by analysing Islamist world order discourse after the Arab uprisings, a period for which there is still a dearth of research on Islamists' regional and international relations. Finally, by comparing Ennahda and Hezbollah, the book also contributes to the recent debate on similarities between Sunni and Shi'i Islamist groups, in particular regarding the question of where religion 'comes in' in (world) order discourses (Valbjørn and Gunning 2021).

At first glance, treating Ennahda and Hezbollah in one book may seem odd, as there are a lot of differences between these two groups of Islamists (Chapter 3). Ennahda and Hezbollah belong to different sects and Islamist schools of thought; the former renounced violence several decades ago, whereas the latter is one of the most active armed non-state actors (ANSAs) in the region. The diverging repertoires of political activity also have consequences for their distinct internal organisational structures. The domestic contexts in which the two groups are active are quite different, with regard to both societal composition and political system, as are the conditions under which the two movements emerged. Ennahda directed its activism primarily against domestic repression, whereas Hezbollah became active in the context of a civil war and, notably, foreign intervention and occupation by Israel, against which it called for resistance.

That said, the two groups have a lot in common, too. Both have been regarded as 'statist' Islamists or as movements that have at some point started participating in domestic politics (Volpi and Stein 2015). Being both a movement and a party, they also share the hybrid quality that is typical of many Islamist groups. Most importantly, both Ennahda and Hezbollah have been met with scepticism or outright rejection from the Western world for being 'Islamist' (Chapter 1). At the same time, both actors have been exposed to the Western world order, and vice versa, by virtue of having belonged to coalition governments in their respective countries for several years, covering the whole period under analysis (Chapter 3). This makes them 'politically pregnant'

(Hansen 2006, 76) cases for this study. They have to somehow position themselves vis-à-vis the global order they encounter in their capacity as government actors. Their discourse is also regionally significant as they do not operate from a marginalised position or in a very limited local context, but rather from a position of relative power within their respective systems. What is more, both are subjected to (a certain degree of) pluralism and democratic competition in the systems in which they operate. In a competitive environment, actors have to legitimise political decisions and action. In their communication, Hezbollah and Ennahda thus tend to take positions on both everyday domestic and international political matters. Finally, the selected cases *a priori* seem to represent two ends of a spectrum with an ideal type of a politics of resistance at one end and a politics of recognition at the other. While Hezbollah calls itself the Islamic resistance, Ennahda has ultimately even tried to shed the Islamist label for the sake of gaining recognition on a domestic and international level. However, as this book will show, elements of recognition and resistance can be found in both actors' discourse on world order. They strive for recognition in the world order under Western hegemony and yet resist that same world order and aim to transform parts of it.

World Order as a Global Discourse: Assessing how Islamists Relate to the West

This book starts by identifying a dual research gap: the debate on global order in IR is missing an Islamist perspective and the debate on Islamism lacks analyses of these actors' views of international relations and specifically the world order. To address these shortcomings of the existing research, I suggest understanding Islamists not only as relevant actors in the MENA region but also as active participants in a global discourse on world order. Thus, the book takes a discourse analysis perspective to elucidate how Islamists understand world order, how they relate to the Western world order discourse and what their own conceptions of world order are.

The term 'world order' may not immediately be associated with a discourse, but rather with the institutions, rules and norms of the international system (Lipscy 2016). The liberal world order is often described as the post-World War II set of international institutions built up primarily by the US and aiming at the promotion of liberal values, such as human rights, democracy

and freedom, as well as prosperity, through economic and political cooperation and peaceful relations among states (Sørensen 2006, Ikenberry 2009). Contemporaries expected it to experience a boost with the end of the 'Cold War', which ushered in a phase of Western hegemony under the leadership of the US. The activities of many international organisations and state practices of global security, such as military interventions, were framed in and legitimised by a language of liberal norms and values and an attempt at enlarging the 'democratic zone' in the world (Doyle 1983, Russett 1994). But failed peace-building and state-building efforts and the disastrous outcomes of 'liberal' interventions in the 1990s and 2000s soon cast doubt on the virtues of 'liberal internationalism' (Richmond, Visoka and Jahn 2021). And with the rise of populism in several Western countries and a perceived erosion of multilateralism and international institutions in the 2010s, some have declared that the liberal international order is in crisis (Ikenberry, Parmar and Stokes 2018, 1). But what exactly does 'liberal' world order mean? Authors within IR have emphasised that there is more than one understanding of liberalism (Sørensen 2011, Dunne and Flockhart 2013, Zürn and Gerschewski 2021), and the conclusion that the liberal world order is being challenged, in crisis or being undermined may, therefore, be misleading. What is more, the term 'liberal' has often been used interchangeably with, or as a shortcut for, 'Western'. Not only does this veil the numerous illiberal practices that the West has pursued in international relations but it also creates a false image of unity and coherence. There is no single 'Western' world order, but rather many different versions of it (Chapter 2).

Adopting a well-established constructivist perspective where social facts exist because of intersubjectively shared meanings, that is, 'because people collectively believe they exist and act accordingly' (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 393), this book proposes a discursive understanding of world order. While not denying that the world order is made up of institutions, rules and norms, it focuses on the discursive practices which 'bring them to life' through interpretation and reinterpretation. 'World order', then, is a contested term and different actors participate in this 'struggle over meaning', that is, they intentionally and 'actively construct, re-negotiate and transform intersubjectively shared interpretations of reality' (Holzscheiter 2014, 144, 147). By emphasising the discursive constructedness of the concept, the idea of a single

Western-dominated world order can be left behind. To challenge the claim that Islamists are the enemies of this world order, I suggest that the concept of the 'Western world order' should first be disaggregated into competing discursive strands that offer a whole repertoire of interpretations of global order. This brings to light the great diversity within the West. It also relativises claims of radical otherness, as any assessment of difference must be more specific: different from which tradition of thought, from which line of argumentation; in opposition to which practice or norm?

To say that Western discourse is fragmented and internally contested does not preclude that it is also hegemonic. In the discursive understanding proposed here, world order is produced through the utterances of a variety of actors who are embedded in asymmetrical power relations. They are both part of and subjected to the global discursive structure. At the same time, they may recognise and reproduce that structure through their actions, but they may also oppose and challenge, reject and transgress it. The order is hierarchical in that it creates actor positions with varying degrees of power. I support the thesis that the global order is dominated by Western hegemony, which began to unfold after World War II, but consolidated after the end of the 'Cold War'. In the discursive approach to world order, this means that the West has the most powerful speaker position, even though this position may now be challenged.

On an empirical level, this perspective on world order suggests that actors' contributions to a global discourse should be studied in relation to other available meanings and will probably not be univocal, but will mobilise several different repertoires of meanings, too. This book investigates the relationship between Western and Islamist interpretations of world order, whether, where and how they differ and why. To provide such a nuanced picture of world order discourses, I investigate three key fields in which struggles over meaning take place: sovereignty, legitimacy and the goals and values an order should bring about, which I call *teloi*. These *teloi* are connected to broader narratives about history. The three fields correspond with what Hedley Bull identifies as elements of social order (Bull 1995, 3–4). Sovereignty refers to the entities that constitute the order (what are the entities to be ordered?) and thereby also identifies the level of ultimate decision-making authority. For instance, it could be argued that the world order is composed of states, only some states,

peoples, or sub- or supranational entities. Legitimacy describes the discernible principle or pattern according to which the order is organised (how are the entities ordered?). It comprises ideas regarding how a certain political authority can be justified. Legitimacy claims commonly refer to the individual or a specific community as the ultimate reason and purpose which any order needs to take into consideration. However, some legitimacy claims are also based on the quality of certain processes, for instance the fairness of public deliberation or the fervour of political struggle. *Teloi* are the normative aspirations connected to the order or the substantial ideas regarding what the order should bring about (to what end are the entities ordered?). They are global scenarios that contain broad narratives on how history develops, where an order came from, where it is aiming for and what values and purpose it is built to achieve. *Teloi* can be utopian visions, for example when they involve a peaceful and just order, but also dystopian, for example envisaging orders of inequality and violence. These three fields are not exhaustive and notably do not encompass the global economic order – or at least only touch on it here and there. But in terms of the global political discourse on world order, they cover the main discursive battlefields. Importantly, they provide 'hard cases' for the thesis that Islamists do not simply reject the world order under Western hegemony. For in the simplified view that prevails in political discourse – but also some academic accounts – Islamists rely on divine sovereignty, which renders democratic forms of rule and legitimacy impossible, and they project their normative aspirations onto the afterworld rather than the here and now.

The book identifies four main traditions in Western discourse for each of the three discursive fields (Chapter 2). Contrasting these different discursive traditions of world order allows for a more nuanced understanding of a world order under Western hegemony. Based on this structured reading of the Western discourse on world order and using the four discursive strands for each field as a heuristic, Ennahda's and Hezbollah's world order discourses are scrutinised against this representation of Western discourse in the empirical part of the book (Chapters 4–6). This part of the book is the result of a three-step discourse analysis of documents issued between 2011 and 2016. The first of these steps was a qualitative content analysis 'in the service' of a critical discourse analysis (Schreier 2012, 28). The deductive category frame, representing Western discourse on global order, was inductively modified in the

process of coding more than 420 documents (speeches by party leaders, party programmes and statements, opinion pieces by and interviews with party representatives in newspapers, etc.) as published by party elites for a global audience. Categories were modified and sometimes dropped, new categories and subcategories were added until the respective category frame covered all the meanings of world order identified in Ennahda's and Hezbollah's discourses (Schreier 2012). Drawing on critical and poststructuralist discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy 2002, Hansen 2006), the second and third step involved (critical) contextualisation of the results of the text analysis, as well as an examination of images of Selves and Others found in both discourses. To illuminate the broader discursive formations the analysed texts are part of, as well as their political and social contexts, competing discourses, political processes and events were analysed for both case studies. For this purpose, a broad body of secondary literature, as well as interviews conducted in Tunisia and Lebanon between 2014 and 2017, were used.

Structure of the Book

The theoretical part of the book is dedicated to the deconstruction and reconstruction of 'Islamism' (Chapter 1) and the 'Western world order' (Chapter 2). Only then is it possible to empirically study the positioning of actually existing Islamist actors towards a global order under Western hegemony. Chapter 1 traces the emergence of the Islamist enemy image in both political and academic discourse. It shows how the study of religion and its supposed disappearance led to a preliminary secular consensus: the world (order) should and would eventually be free from religion. This changed in the 1990s, when religion appeared to make a violent comeback on the world stage, taking politicians and academic observers by surprise. These debates contributed to the image that religion and especially Islam were drivers of conflict and a danger to be contained. But they also paved the way for a critical recalibration of secularism and the relationship between religion and politics in the 2000s in academic discourse. When political discourse securitised Islam(ism) in the post-9/11 era, an interdisciplinary effort was made to challenge and deconstruct distorted images of Islam and show how they contributed to the legitimation of secular violence. This did not, however, prevent a powerful enemy image from forming and persisting: Islamists came to be considered the archetype of 'large and

fervent resistance to . . . a liberal (global) order' (Zürn 2018, 1). To this day, Islamists are widely considered a threat. The chapter concludes by arguing that, in contrast to Salafi jihadists, Islamists' repertoire goes beyond rejectionism when it comes to their position towards a global order under Western hegemony: their position comprises part recognition, part resistance.

But what exactly do they recognise and what do they resist? Chapter 2 scrutinises and disaggregates the notion of the 'Western world order'. It introduces a discursive understanding of world order that is rooted in constructivism and is distinct from institutionalist approaches (Ikenberry 2011, Zürn 2018) on the one hand, and from power-based approaches (Mearsheimer 2019) on the other. I build on sociological theorists' interpretation of the deep structures of global order as intersubjectively shared principles, norms and beliefs that fulfil ordering functions, notably defining legitimate actors and rightful action in the international system (see, for example, Reus-Smit 1997, Buzan 2009). But while certain interpretations of these structures may be shared or become hegemonic, this does not imply that their meaning is uncontested. Rather, competing discourses and meanings underpin the deep structures of global order. The theoretical contribution of this book is to shift attention to this world order discourse and conceptualise it as a space in which actors negotiate and sometimes fiercely fight over the meaning of order. While, as a whole, Western discourse on world order can be considered hegemonic, it would be wrong to assume there is one Western way of interpreting world order. I scrutinise three discursive fields centred on constitutive parts of the deep structure of global order to show the degree of contestedness within what is deemed the Western world order discourse. I argue that this disaggregation allows us to establish with more accuracy and in an empirical manner whether and how non-Western actors reproduce or challenge, reject or seek to transform the global order. The chapter studies three discursive fields of world order in which the position of these non-Western actors can be observed: sovereignty (what are the entities to be ordered?), legitimacy (according to what principle?) and *teloi* (to what end?). More specifically, the *teloi* discursive field examines the concrete normative ideas about what the order should bring about. The chapter then identifies four strands of Western discourse for each of these fields: absolute, popular, shared and conditional sovereignty; individual- and community-based as well as deliberative and agonistic concep-

tions of legitimacy; liberal convergence and the pluriverse as utopias; and the clash of civilisations and Western hegemony as dystopias. Chapter 2 concludes with a methodological reflection on how an empirical study of the relationship between Islamist discourse and Western world order discourse can be used.

Chapter 3 introduces the empirical cases under study in this book: Tunisia's Ennahda and Lebanon's Hezbollah after the Arab uprisings. A core argument of this book is that the debate on Islamism needs more differentiation and nuance. I also hold that Islamist discourse needs to be studied in context. The chapter, therefore, presents Ennahda and Hezbollah as speakers in a global discourse on world order and as 'cases' of Islamism. It traces their historical emergence and evolution while simultaneously reconstructing the debate on Islamism as it developed in the area studies. It then zooms in on the Arab uprisings and the subsequent years (2011–16) in Tunisia and Lebanon, depicting their situatedness in the turbulent wider MENA region. Finally, the chapter discusses what constitutes appropriate material for the cases of Ennahda and Hezbollah and the analysis of their world order discourse.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are the empirical part and core of the book. They are organised along the three discursive fields. Besides their conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi*, Ennahda's and Hezbollah's construction of Selves and Others, of identity and difference, are also scrutinised. The results of the discourse analysis are presented and discussed with a view to establishing the extent to which Ennahda and Hezbollah reproduce, transform, challenge or innovate upon Western conceptions of global order. Chapter 4 demonstrates that the two Islamist groups reproduce understandings of absolute and popular sovereignty as established in Western discourse, add their own takes on shared sovereignty and reject the idea of conditional sovereignty. The anti-colonial and anti-imperial identity of both actors is reflected in their sovereignty discourse. Chapter 5 demonstrates that Ennahda is developing a sophisticated model of community-based legitimacy that it aims to implement in its model of Islamic democracy. The model also comprises institutions and rights that are grounded in considerations of individual-based legitimacy. It is combined with a methodology of consensus as the modus operandi of political decision-making which bears similarities with, but goes beyond, deliberative conceptions of legitimacy. In contrast, Hezbollah's conception of legitimacy varies depending on its scope of application. For the domestic realm, Hezbollah identifies the multireligious

composition of Lebanese society as a fact with normative consequences: it calls for a political system that allows a peaceful coexistence of diverse communities rather than an Islamic state. Hezbollah's version of community-based legitimacy is combined with a dialogue- and cooperation-oriented approach to domestic affairs. This crude version of deliberative legitimacy is geared towards maintaining societal peace and mitigating domestic conflict – not least to increase Hezbollah's room for manoeuvre with regard to its core project: the transnational resistance. For, according to Hezbollah, the core question of legitimacy in the international realm, marked as it is by inescapable conflict dynamics, is: When is it legitimate to resort to violence? In Ennahda's and Hezbollah's legitimacy discourses, both recognition and resistance can be found – sometimes in rather unexpected places.

Chapter 6 shows that Ennahda has a progressive view of history as a story of the liberation of the Tunisian people and the Arab-Islamic world. In synchronicity with the unfolding of history, the Islamic movement eventually becomes a party of Muslim democrats in a free, democratic Tunisian state – recognised as equal in a global order that allows for a pluralism of domestic and regional orders. The road to this *telos*, however, is bumpy: authoritarian relapse, terrorism, foreign intervention and societal polarisation are among the dangers blocking the way. Conversely, Hezbollah has a dystopian outlook on the global order. It sees it as marked by an unescapable conflict structure between the oppressors and the oppressed. This struggle has existed since the early days of Islam and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. Throughout this period, it has reappeared in different guises and schemes that need to be uncovered – and resisted. While this means the future prospects for the global order are, thus, somewhat bleak, there are glimpses of optimism in Hezbollah's belief in the plausibility of victory and in its visions of peaceful coexistence in the midst of difference.

The conclusion summarises Ennahda's and Hezbollah's world order discourse and the findings on recognition and resistance. Based on the empirical results, I characterise Ennahda as highly recognisant of and Hezbollah as moderately resistant towards a global order under Western hegemony. For both parties, significant overlaps with Western discourse can be seen. Both Ennahda and Hezbollah largely recognise the global order. Ennahda seeks to be recognised as a 'normal' party and for Tunisia to be recognised as a democratic state.

But it constantly – and rightfully – fears misrecognition and being forced back into marginalisation, demonisation and repression. Hezbollah performs resistance, articulately and sometimes dramatically. But this does not hide the fact that, in its own discourse, it reproduces many standards and norms found in Western hegemonic world order discourse. It also cannot deceive its antagonists about the political necessities and practical constraints the party faces. Next, I recontextualise Ennahda's and Hezbollah's discourses between 2011 and 2016 by discussing their ramifications for the now known future. The most recent history of Tunisia, Lebanon and the MENA region (2017–23) is presented and analysed with regard to its implications for the two actors' world order discourses. Finally, the conclusion discusses the broader lessons to be drawn from this study for other Islamists and the debate on a global order in transformation or even crisis. In line with other recent studies (Zarakol 2022), I conclude that world orders exist in the plural, that 'world ordering' is a practice pursued not only by states and not exclusively in the West – and that Islamists are (world) political actors more than religious ideologues or unscrupulous opportunists. They are, thus, less special than often assumed.

Notes

1. https://warontherocks.com/2016/02/the-syria-ceasefire-plan-is-a-sign-of-the-decaying-world-order/ (accessed 6 November 2023).
2. https://warontherocks.com/2016/02/the-syria-ceasefire-plan-is-a-sign-of-the-decaying-world-order/ (accessed 6 November 2023).
3. As 'Middle East' is still more common in academic accounts than the geographical term West Asia, I will continue to use it in this book. Given the problematic history of the term 'Middle East' (see, for example, Yilmaz 2012), however, it will be put in inverted commas. The abbreviation MENA will be used without inverted commas.
4. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html (accessed 6 October 2023).
5. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html (accessed 6 October 2023).
6. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/farewell (accessed 6 November 2023).
7. While there are good reasons to believe that the withdrawal from Afghanistan marks a turning point for (military) counterterrorism, it is too early to claim that the 'global war on terror' era has ended. The full Russian invasion of Ukraine that

started in February 2022 has elevated interstate war and territorial defence to a priority in security discourse and policy for the foreseeable future. Among policy-makers and analysts, this war of aggression was perceived as a rupture in the global (security) order. For a moment, it seemed like the world would transition into a new era of international security – one in which the importance of 'Islamists' in Western discourse would decline, and where terrorism and counterterrorism, insurgency and counterinsurgency, as well as civil war and intervention, would gradually fade from view. However, this changed when Palestinian Hamas penetrated Israeli territory in October 2023, assaulting and killing over 350 members of the security forces, and perpetrating acts of terrorism that claimed the lives of more than 750 Israeli and foreign civilians. The Israeli government responded with massive air raids and initiated a comprehensive ground offensive. In just the first weeks of the Israeli military operations, thousands of Palestinians lost their lives, predominantly women and children, along with an unknown number of male civilians.

8. To mark the book's critical take on any substantialist idea or unambiguous meaning of the 'West', and the 'Western world order', in particular, I sometimes use quotation marks when the constructedness, deconstruction and reconstruction of these terms are explicitly addressed. To say that the 'West' has no universal and only temporarily fixed meanings is not the same as claiming that the idea has no power or real-world consequences (see Chapter 2).
9. To flag this problematic, that is, 'lumping', use of the term 'Islamism', it has so far been put in inverted commas. For the sake of readability, I will mostly abstain from doing so in the remainder of this book – except when I explicitly discuss issues of naming.
10. One pertinent example of academic 'lumping' is a study by Boaz Ganor (2015) called *Global Alert. The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism and the Challenge to the Liberal Democratic World*, which appeared in the Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare series. The study makes bold claims about the danger of 'Islamist terrorism', 'Islamist-jihadist terrorism', 'radical Islamists' and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. These terms are used interchangeably and are applied to, among others, Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qa'ida and its branches, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyya.
11. The complicated relationship between liberal and Western discourse is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
12. In contrast to what the term 'Cold War' suggests, the post-World War II era that lasted until 1990 witnessed many armed conflicts, military interventions and out-

right wars that were directly linked to the system competition between the US-led West and the USSR. See, for example, M. T. Berger (2008).

13. Exceptions include Dionigi (2014), Adraoui (2018), Darwich (2021b), Pfeifer (2021) and Stein (2021).
14. This has been a well-known diagnosis since the 'area studies controversy' at the end of the 1990s. It revolved around 'the alleged incompatibility of disciplinary-focussed social sciences and area studies', the former striving for 'a universalism that risks not properly considering existing cultural variations of specific regions', the latter tending to a particularism which 'claims that the region under investigation is unique and thus not comparable to other regions in the world' (Bank and Busse 2021, 550). See also Teti (2007) and Valbjørn (2017).
15. In his study of Lebanese Hezbollah's thought and practice until its manifesto of 2009, Filippo Dionigi (2014) follows a very similar line of thought but adopts the language of IR norms research. He argues that Hezbollah, too, is subjected to processes of norm socialisation and thereby moves beyond the idea that its politics is only about 'Islamic resistance' and, thus, hostile towards liberal norms. As Dionigi himself states, however, the events triggered by the Arab uprisings and in particular Hezbollah's violent engagement in the Syrian Civil War challenge Hezbollah's politics and the issue of norms in new ways (Dionigi 2014, 14). It is here that this book provides updated empirical evidence. Moreover, while socialisation into *and* contestation of norms (see, for example, Wiener 2018, 40–50) bear some similarities with the conceptual approach in this book, recognition and resistance refer to political (discursive) practices and thus open up a broader analytical view on Islamist politics in a world order under Western hegemony.