PART II

DISCURSIVE STRUGGLES OVER WORLD ORDER: TUNISIAN ENNAHDA AND LEBANESE HEZBOLLAH

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ENNAHDA AND HEZBOLLAH: ISLAMIST ACTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS

Despite recent calls for Shiʻa as the 'other Islamists' (Valbjørn and Gunning 2021) to be studied together with Sunni Islamism and Salafism, which have so far dominated the debate, treating Ennahda and Hezbollah in one book may seem odd at first glance. The two groups belong to different sects and Islamist schools of thought. The former has spent several decades renouncing violence, whereas the latter is one of the most active ANSAs in the region. The diverging repertoires of political activity also have consequences for their internal organisational structures. The domestic contexts in which the two operate are quite different, with regard to both societal composition and political system, as are the conditions under which the two movements emerged. Ennahda's activism was primarily directed 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.

But the two groups have a lot in common, too. Both can be classified as statist Islamists or as movements that at some point started participating in domestic politics (Volpi and Stein 2015, see also Chapter 1). Besides their statist orientation, they share a hybrid quality typical of many Islamists in that they are both a movement and a party. Importantly for the argument of this book, both Ennahda and Hezbollah have been and are still being met with 'misrecognition' (Clément, Geis and Pfeifer 2021) by the Western world for

being 'Islamist' (see Chapter 1). As the empirical part of this book (Chapters 4–6) will demonstrate, both actors struggle with their 'Islamist' legacy and the suspicion this label brings with it. At the same time, both parties have been exposed to the Western world order by virtue of having belonged to coalition governments in their respective countries over the whole period studied in this book. As the specific research interest and question are what makes certain phenomena appealing for a study (Philbrick Yadav 2013, 9), Ennahda and Hezbollah can be considered 'politically and analytically pregnant' (Hansen 2006, 76) for the question of the struggle over world order between 'the West' and 'the Islamists'. Admittedly, both are small parties in very small countries, even within the Arab-speaking 'Middle East' and North Africa. But for different reasons, Ennahda and Hezbollah can be considered highly influential in the 2010s, that is, the post-Arab uprisings era, under investigation in this book.

Ennahda's president Rached al-Ghannouchi is one of the foremost influential Muslim intellectuals and political thinkers of our time (March 2019, 153). Until Tunisia's clear deviation from its bumpy democratisation path in 2021, Ennahda was often seen as a potential model for other Islamist groups in the Maghreb and also in the Mashreq – not only for its ideological orientation but also for its practical achievements in the Tunisian transition process (Cavatorta and Merone 2015, Stepan 2012a). Hezbollah shaped the period between 2011 and 2016, too, but for other reasons. Even before this time, it had acquired a certain reputation and popularity beyond Lebanon for being the first and only actor to have 'defeated' Israel twice: in 2000 when it forced Israel as an occupying force out of Lebanon and in the July War of 2006 (Salem 2019, 517, Darwich 2021b, 5). Although it is questionable whether these were clear instances of military victory, they were perceived as a defeat in Israel and celebrated by Hezbollah. The militia had at least managed to demystify Israel and expose its vulnerability (Saade 2016, 110). Hezbollah has cultivated the image of a military force to be reckoned with ever since and expanded its activities after 2010, officially launching an intervention in the Syrian Civil War in support of the Assad regime in 2013. It also started creating its own 'proxies' in Syria, which it co-sponsors with Iraqi non-state actors and Iran (Leenders and Giustozzi 2022). Moreover, it is has been active in Yemen and Iraq, training Shi'i

militias (Daher 2016, 159, 197) and deploying fighters to help Ansar Allah militants, also known as Houthis (Cafiero and Krieg 2019). While most of the militias in other countries do not belong to the Twelver Shi'a, some still claim that the presence of Hezbollah may influence the worldviews held by local actors in Iraq or Yemen (Shanahan 2017). Be that as it may, it is clear that both Ennahda and Hezbollah have shaped the post-Arab-uprisings era, the regional dynamics and the global perception of the prevailing conflicts – notably sectarianism and the Islamist–secular divide, as the following chapters will show.

In terms of influence, other groups come to mind as candidates for the study. Arguably, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (or al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) and ISIS can be considered even more important in terms of size and regional political influence. The former is a statist Islamist organisation, like Ennahda and Hezbollah, whereas the latter is a Salafi-jihadist group. The Muslim Brotherhood was not chosen as a case here. This is not primarily related to the warnings against 'Egyptocentrism' and 'an overreliance on Egypt as a focal point in understanding Islamism . . . in other contexts' (Philbrick Yadav 2014, 56). Rather, the period of rule under al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun after the Egyptian revolution in 2011 was too short to yield relevant results with regard to the question of world order. It lasted from 2012 until the military coup in 2013. In that same year, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned and even listed as a terrorist organisation by the new regime under Abdel Fattah as-Sisi (Ranko and Sabra 2015). While this does not mean that the Brotherhood should be considered marginal, its minimal exposure to the international environment as a governing party makes it less relevant when it comes to studying its relationship with the Western world order – it did not have to enter the global 'clash of discourses' (Dryzek 2006, 155) or 'discursive encounters' (Hansen 2006, 76) with regard to global order. The same holds true for ISIS, but for other reasons (see Chapter 1). As a Salafi-jihadist group, ISIS does not discursively 'work through' its relationship with the Western world order but can, more or less from an outside position, reject the system as a whole (Maher 2016). One would also expect fewer nuances and ambivalences in this case because ISIS was not subjected to, or rather set out to eliminate, societal difference and political pluralism. It therefore did not need to negotiate or seek compromise with either local or global competitors. Rather than rendering the

simplistic image of a binary 'Islamist–Western' opposition more complicated, studying ISIS would in fact reiterate and reify the well-known narrative of incommensurateness, thus adding nothing new to the state of research.[1]

Finally, ruling Islamists, such as the Turkish AKP and the Saudi or Iranian regime, could also have been considered for selection. But their contexts are quite different from Ennahda's and Hezbollah's. The AKP has been in power for a long time in a state that is relatively deeply integrated into the Western security community. While there has been more lively debate on the Islamist character of the party since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began pushing for ever more conservative reforms and 'upgraded' (Heydemann 2007) the authoritarian traits of the Turkish system (Bayulgen, Arbatli, and Canbolat 2018), subjecting Turkey's Islamists to 'Othering' has been limited: Turkey is still a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a close partner (and candidate country) of the EU. As for the two Islamic states, their respective standings in the Western-dominated order could not be more different. Saudi Arabia is a key strategic partner first and foremost to the US, but also to other Western states. In contrast, Iran is one of the 'rogue states', a concept invented by George W. Bush in the 'global war on terror'. What they share, though, is that they can no longer be called Islamist parties or movements – or non-state actors. Until recently,[2] this meant that the two enjoyed the international privileges and protections that come with statehood. Non-state actors and their practices are regularly under more pressure to legitimise themselves and their actions, especially if they are transnationally active and involved in armed conflict (Pfeifer forthcoming). Moreover, neither system is marked by internal pluralism – Saudi Arabia less so than Iran – in particular regarding fundamental questions of ordering. None of this means, however, that the AKP, the Saudi or the Iranian regime could not be studied with regard to their discursive construction of world order and how it relates to Western discourse.

The remainder of this chapter introduces Ennahda and Hezbollah as two 'Selves' that articulate their conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi* towards the co-producers of, and while struggling with, the Western-dominated world order. It recounts the history of their emergence as what academics would call Islamist movements and positions this development in the evolution of Islamism more globally. It then zooms in on the

post-Arab-uprisings era in Tunisia and Lebanon, revealing an image of the (partially shared) context of the two parties in a political landscape in turmoil. They were subjected both to the pluralist, more or less democratic game of domestic politics, which saw the rise of new political forces, and to various forms of political violence, from terrorism to civil war, in the Arab MENA. The detailed reconstruction of events in Tunisia and Lebanon, as well as in the wider region, between 2011 and 2016 allows for a contextual understanding of Ennahda's and Hezbollah's discourse as analysed in the remainder of this study (Chapters 4–6). The conclusion of this book will then look beyond the narrow period of empirical investigation, providing an outlook on the unfolding of events after 2016. This allows for an appraisal of Ennahda's and Hezbollah's (discursive) practices of the early 2010s in a broader temporal context and a rough assessment of the consequences they had for Tunisia's and Lebanon's futures.

Who Is Speaking? Ennahda and Hezbollah as 'Selves' or 'Cases' of Islamism

One peculiarity of the study of political Islam is that the actors dubbed 'Islamists' do not refer to themselves using this term. However, it is not unusual for actors to be labelled by others differently than the labels they use for themselves, nor is such naming innocent. Rather, it carries with it implications of varying degrees of subtlety about the characteristics of the named actor, about the relationship between the party doing the naming and the one being named and, when the two are involved in a conflict, about the nature of their struggle and the legitimacy of the goals and means employed in it (Pfeifer, Geis and Clément 2022, Pfeifer forthcoming). As Martin Kramer (2003) aptly identifies, the term 'Islamism' entered the French language in the eighteenth century to refer to the religion practised by Muslims and, with this meaning, travelled to the English-speaking world in the nineteenth century. The meaning of the term was not changed until the 1970s and 1980s in the context of the French debate on new Islamic movements. The by then already dominant American (academic) debate called these movements 'fundamentalist', applying a term which had originally referred to Protestant Christian movements to the Islamic context. The French reintroduced *islamisme* into the semantic repertoire, which then travelled back to the US debate and eventually gained

currency – by then carrying a connotation of threat and extremism. As Kramer puts it, the

> entry of Islamism into common English usage had not improved the image of these movements and paradoxically made it easier to categorize them as threats of the first order . . . As the Muslim equivalent of fascists or bolshevists, they were clearly marked as the enemies of democracy and freedom. (Kramer 2003)

Ennahda and Hezbollah are among the movements that gained international attention in the 1970s and 1980s but never identified as Islamists. Ennahda emanated from a Tunisian Islamic movement that formed in the 1960s and 1970s. Hmida Ennaifer, Rached al-Ghannouchi and Abdelfattah Mourou founded al-Jamaʿa al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group) in the early 1970s. It was joined by the Islamic trend in the neo-Destour, an anti-colonial movement founded by Habib Bourguiba (later a long-standing Tunisian president) in 1934. The movement grew and was influenced by the writings of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood that were circulated among Tunisians. After violent clashes with leftist university students, the Islamic Group split. One strand advocated non-violent political activism against the Bourguiba regime and, after a congress in 1979, founded the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI, Harakat al-Ittijah al-Islami). Inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the same year, the MTI committed to a politico-economic agenda rather than working on the level of individual piety like the Islamic Group had originally done (Wolf 2017, 27–51, Yıldırım 2017). After a failed attempt at achieving recognition under the Bourguiba regime in 1981, which ended in mass imprisonment of its members, the MTI changed its name to Harakat al-Nahdha (Renaissance Movement, hereafter Ennahda) in 1989 (Hamdi 1998, 41–74). The new name was reminiscent of a school of thought which had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Islamic reformist movement or Salafiyya, which advocated a return to the pious ancestors in the age of renaissance (*ʿaṣr al-nahḍa*) (Jung 2012, 155, Mura 2015, 38). The reformist movement challenged the authority of religious scholars (*ʿulama'*) and established legal schools (*madhāhib*) in the Islamic tradition, calling for a new interpretation (*ijtihād*) of the Qur'an and the *sunna*.[3] The movement opened up the discursive space to examine the meaning of Islam in modern

times and called for renewal (*tajdīd*). As a consequence, it became an intellectual source for many of the contemporary movements (Roy 1994, 33–4) – including both today's Salafist groups and those classified as Islamists.

But Ennahda's version of Islamism is a derivative of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's brand, which developed at the beginning of the twentieth century and constituted both a break with and a continuation of the Salafiyya. Importantly, its call 'to leave the mosque' (Roy 1994, 35) made the Brotherhood's Islamism a genuinely political project with the aim of establishing an Islamic state. At its inception, Ennahda 'subscribed to the creation of an Islamic state whereby the application of sharia law for the whole society reflected the unitary vision embodied in the principle of *tawhid*' (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 860), the unity of or perfect overlap between the state and religion. Ennahda also had an Arab Islamic outlook on political order rather than a Tunisian one, for it subscribed to 'the idea that nation-states are historical contingencies that would one day give way to a pan-Islamic state' (Kubicek 2015, 288). What shaped the Islamist movement at least as much as its intellectual heritage from the nineteenth century was the very practical quest to free the Muslim world from colonial rule and foreign domination. It was 'out of the colonial experience [that] . . . the question of the Islamic concept of jihad with "striving" and "struggle" for freedom and independence in the modern political sense [emerged]' (Ayoob 2008, 8). The anti-colonial impetus of historical Islamism should not be underestimated, for it persists, sometimes translated into anti-imperialism, in contemporary versions of Islamism.

This is true not only for Ennahda but also for Hezbollah, which identifies as an Islamic resistance against occupation, imperialism and foreign rule. In the narrowest sense, resistance refers to the liberation of Lebanon and Palestine from Israeli occupation. More broadly, however, and as this book will demonstrate, it is directed against any oppressive scheme devised by foreign powers for the MENA region (see Chapter 6). As a Shi'i group, Hezbollah (or the Party of God) also emerged from a larger social movement that formed in Lebanon in the 1970s. As a politically and socially marginalised minority, albeit a large one, the Shi'i community primarily inhabited the Lebanese south and the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon and lived from agriculture. With growing modernisation and urbanisation, however, many Shi'a moved to the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Dahieh, where a new middle class emerged. This spurred

demands for more political rights in the sect-based Lebanese political system. This politicisation was reinforced by Shi'i clerics who had been sent to *ḥawzāt* (Shi'i seminaries) in Najaf (Iraq) and Qom (Iran) and brought an activist, revolutionary spirit to the movement. One of the clerics, Musa al-Sadr, founded the Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al-Mahrumin) in the early 1970s. When the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, Amal (Hope) was created as a military wing of the movement. Having been expelled from Jordan, members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had moved to southern Lebanon, establishing their operating base there and prompting the first Israeli invasion of 1978 (Operation Litani). The losses and suffering of the Shi'a in the south contributed to strengthening the militant trend. The suspicion that the Libyan regime was involved in Sadr's disappearance in 1978 had already led to some distancing between the Lebanese Shi'a and Palestinian factions that were supported by Muammar el Qaddafi. Amal's relationship with the Palestinians quickly deteriorated after the Israeli invasion, which had been prompted by the PLO presence but inflicted more damage on southern Lebanese villages than Palestinian camps. This resulted in clashes and, at the beginning of the 1980s, outright battles between the PLO and Amal. Importantly, an Islamic strand formed within the movement. Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, a few hundred Iranian Revolutionary Guards were sent to Lebanon in order to support the emerging Islamic militants in their fight against Israel and spread the teachings of the revolution. Following the teachings of Hossein Fadlallah, a new group formed and officially founded Hezbollah in 1982, the year of the second Israeli invasion (Azani 2009, 47–74, Norton 2014, 9–26, Pfeifer 2021, 150–3).

While the Islamic Revolution in Iran gave a boost to many Islamist movements working to establish an Islamic political order, it was of particular significance to Hezbollah. Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary thought was founded on Shi'i theology. At the core of his theory of *velāyat-e faqīh* or, in Arabic, *wilāyat al-faqīh* (the guardianship of the Islamic jurist) is the story of the disappearance of the twelfth imam, al-Mahdi, in the ninth century. Twelver Shi'a believe that al-Mahdi was the legitimate ruler in the line of succession after the Prophet and that he returned to earth to establish just rule as a messianic figure. His absence, however, meant that Islamic authority could not be legitimately established. Khomeini's theory allowed for a tem-

porary but legitimate rule by a 'just, knowledgeable, and faithful *faqih* . . . obliged to exercise both religious and political power' (Mahdavi 2013, 184) until the return of al-Mahdi. Hezbollah subscribes to *wilāyat al-faqīh* as one pillar of its programme. In the absence of the last infallible imam, it is the jurist-theologian's task to reveal 'Sharia's verdicts and judgments, becoming the spiritual authority of last resort' (Qassem 2010, 113); he is the source of authority and the leader of the Islamic *umma*. As a consequence, establishing a state based on the Iranian example was among Hezbollah's objectives at its inception.

The famous 'Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World', released in 1985, was the party's first programmatic document. It contained three goals: 'first, the expulsion of all foreigners from Lebanon; second, the liberation of Jerusalem; and third, the establishment of an Islamic regime in Lebanon' (Azani 2009, 63). It is noteworthy that the document was addressed to the oppressed of the world 'irrespective of their color, race, or religion', simultaneously emphasising that 'this usage conveys and is in conformity with its identity as an Islamic jihadi movement struggling to address and redress the injustices that the oppressed suffer' (Alagha 2011, 16). There has thus been a strong anti-imperialist element in Hezbollah's platform from the very start, at the time directed against the USA and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). More concretely, Hezbollah railed against the foreign presence in Lebanon in the 1980s, especially – but not only – against the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), even engaging in armed struggle against them. The year of the Israeli invasion, 1982, is also the foundational year of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance (al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya) project, which is at the very core of the group. Between 1985 and 1987, an organisational unit called the Islamic Resistance was created to mobilise fighters and serve as the armed wing of Hezbollah (Azani 2009, 67–8). But the project of resistance is much broader than this. Resistance is constitutive of Hezbollah's identity, its version of Islamism is geared towards military resistance, and resistance serves as a prism for its endeavour to build a Lebanese nation and society (Saade 2016).

In 1989 and 1992 respectively, Ennahda and Hezbollah ran in their first national elections. This was a rather typical development for the 'second generation of post-colonial Islamist activists [who] conceived of Islamism in

a more overt political competition' (Boubekeur and Roy 2012a, 4). It was around the same time that Olivier Roy formulated his diagnosis of the – somewhat misleadingly termed – 'failure of political Islam' (Roy 1994). He held that the Islamist revolutionary programme, which aimed to profoundly transform politics through Islam, had not achieved its goals. Some parties faced state repression, while others failed to provide a truly alternative order rooted in Islam. The prognosis, then, was that Islamism, in this narrow sense, would be replaced by neofundamentalism or a conservative movement that focused on the social rather than the political realm. The other trajectory for the old Islamists would be a transformation into conservative parties as part of a post-Islamist trend (Roy 2012b, 9). The fact that both Ennahda and Hezbollah gave up on the project of establishing an Islamic state or Islamising 'society through the state' (Roy 2012a, 18) places them in this latter group, even though the 'boundaries between Islamism and post-Islamism are fluid and interconnected, bound by deep historical continuities and not by sharp ruptures' (Boubekeur and Roy 2012a, 6).

The term 'statist Islamists', indicating 'the close connection between national structures of governance and the strategies of activists in their particular socio-cultural and socio-economic circumstances' (Volpi and Stein 2015, 277), is more fitting in the context of this book. For Ennahda and Hezbollah continued to participate in their respective political systems. Ennahda faced severe repression at the hands of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's regime and his Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) party. After significant gains in the 1989 elections, 20,000 Nahdawis (Ennahda members) were imprisoned and a further 10,000 were exiled (Stepan 2012b). While creating and promoting a version of Islam that served its legitimation (Cesari 2014, 43), the Ben Ali regime systematically discredited and dismantled the Islamic movement and presented it as an Islamist threat. Ghannouchi and other leaders tried to keep Ennahda in exile throughout the 1990s. But the movement was weak, disconnected from the imprisoned Tunis leadership, and suffering from an ideological split between advocates of violent and non-violent means (Wolf 2017, 87–98). The 2000s seemed to bring a change in the dynamics, with Ennahda reaching out to the secular opposition, which had come to face similar repression to the Islamists by dint of an increasingly closed authoritarian system. Several opposition groups, Ennahda among

them, formed the 18 October Movement in 2005, initiated a hunger strike demanding the respect of human rights in Tunisia and developed a vision for a new democratic Tunisia (Boubekeur 2016, 110, Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 870). In 2004 and 2006 respectively, Ali Laarayedh and Hamadi Jebali, two of Ennahda's leading figures, were released from prison. And finally, a student movement with ties to Ennahda emerged in the mid-2000s, but did not reveal its allegiance until the Arab uprisings.

Hezbollah's trajectory of the 1990s was marked by the legacies of the Lebanese Civil War. The 1989 Taif Agreement did not put an immediate end to the war, which lasted until 1990. But it contained provisions for post-conflict Lebanon, including reforms of the ratios of sectarian representation for the multireligious Lebanese society with its eighteen recognised sects (Norton 2014, 12). Moreover, the agreement stated that all non-state militias must be disarmed – except for Hezbollah. This was an achievement of the Syrian negotiators, who had argued that Hezbollah was a resistance movement rather than a militia and needed to retain its arms to end Israeli occupation (Salem 2019, 515). Finally, the Taif Agreement also stipulated an immediate and full withdrawal of Israeli troops, with the help of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). As for Syria, the document stipulated that the two governments find an agreement to determine the duration of the Syrian presence. The two states did not withdraw until 2000 (Israeli withdrawal) and 2005 (the Cedar Revolution against Syrian occupation). In 1992, Hezbollah's leader, Abbas al-Musawi, and his family were killed in a targeted assassination by Israel. Just a month earlier, Hezbollah had declared its willingness to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections. This process of opening up towards the Lebanese public and integrating into the Lebanese political system came to be known as the *infitāḥ* (opening-up) policy and the Lebanonisation of Hezbollah (Worrall, Mabon and Clubb 2015, Saouli 2018, critically Saade 2016, 37).

Under Hassan Nasrallah, Musawi's successor as secretary general, the party continued its path of inclusion. In the run-up to its first elections, Hezbollah showcased its Lebanese roots and identity, emphasising that the resistance against Israel was its priority. Well prepared, the party won eight seats in parliament – a huge success for a first-time runner in the sect-based Lebanese system. Hezbollah's new political activities required a change to its

internal structure. It established a political council, a jihad council and 'the Loyalty to the Resistance parliamentary bloc to meet the demands of involvement in government' (Azani 2013, 904). It continued its armed struggle against Israel in southern Lebanon until the IDF started withdrawing in 2000. Under Israel's newly elected prime minister, Ehud Barak, the Israeli occupation came to an end – with the exception of the Sheb'a Farms, a piece of land in the Golan Heights that Lebanon claims as its national territory and that is under Israeli control to this day (Norton 2014, 79–94). To the Lebanese public, this served as an important justification for Hezbollah to keep its arms and continue its militant activity. Meanwhile, the conflict over the continued presence of the Syrian occupation forces in Lebanon intensified. It escalated when the then Lebanese prime minister, Rafiq al-Hariri, was killed along with more than twenty others in a massive car bomb explosion in the middle of Beirut on 14 February 2005. Many Lebanese immediately suspected the direct involvement of the Syrian regime. On 14 March, more than one million people came together in Beirut's Martyrs' Square to demonstrate against the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. Six days earlier, on 8 March, Hezbollah and allied groups had organised a protest supporting continued Syrian presence in Lebanon. Nevertheless, under Lebanese and international pressure, the Syrians withdrew (Salem 2019).

The so-called Cedar Revolution reconfigured the Lebanese political landscape, which had previously been defined by sectarian cleavages. Now, the polarisation between two newly formed blocs, the March 8 and the March 14 alliances, dominated (Nagle 2016). The latter was a coalition of several Christian parties and the Sunni Future Movement led by Rafiq al-Hariri's son, Saad al-Hariri. The former combined the two Shi'i parties, Hezbollah and Amal, and the largest Christian party, the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun, who served as president of Lebanon until October 2022; the Druze Lebanese Democratic Party would join the alliance later. These camps cut across sectarian boundaries between Muslims and Christians, but created new tensions between Sunnis and Shi'a. This antagonism was reinforced by the regional support for both groups, with Saudi Arabia assisting the Sunni Future Movement and Iran backing Hezbollah.

A year after the Syrian withdrawal, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel escalated yet again. In July 2006, Hezbollah militants attacked Israeli sol-

diers on a routine patrol, killing three and taking two captive. In an attempt to capture the attackers, who fled to Lebanon, five more IDF soldiers were killed. Israel's reactions were much more severe than Hezbollah had anticipated: the IDF launched what came to be known as the July War. In total, over 1,100 Lebanese and more than forty Israeli civilians were killed during the war and several hundreds of thousands of people were displaced in both countries. The Lebanese south as well as the Dahieh were devastated (Norton 2014, 132–43). Yet Hezbollah still celebrated the withdrawal of Israeli forces as a success and claimed victory.

In 2009, Hezbollah issued a new manifesto. While there are continuities with the 'Open Letter', the manifesto also features some important changes. It suggests a more nuanced stance on European countries and warns the latter against complicity with US hegemonic plans and submitting to an '"Atlantic drift" (NATO) of colonial backgrounds' (quoted in Alagha 2011, 31). Moreover, this document already contains a call for recognition or, rather, an appeal to end Hezbollah's misrecognition as a terrorist organisation (Pfeifer 2021) – a plea that would become more urgent when Hezbollah began fighting against ISIS in Syria, as the analysis in the following chapters will demonstrate. Hezbollah's demand for recognition was addressed to European nations and embedded in the invocation of their collective memory: through their history, Europeans were familiar with the fight against oppression. Finally, and most importantly, Hezbollah officially revoked its goal of a Lebanese Islamic state. Instead, it advocated a strong Lebanese state that would abolish the sectarian system (Alagha 2011, 32).

Talking about a Revolution: Ennahda and Hezbollah during and after the Arab Uprisings (2011–16)

So many accounts of the Arab uprisings start with the horrific story of Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid in December 2010. The 26-year-old street vendor not only found himself in a desperate economic situation but had also suffered several instances of police harassment. On 17 December 2010, Bouazizi's produce and weighing scales were confiscated by a female police officer, Faida Hamdi, on the grounds that he allegedly did not have the correct permit to sell his wares. When he tried to circumvent the confiscation and take back his apples, the policewoman

allegedly slapped and insulted the vendor. Turning to the governor's office (or, according to some reports, the provincial headquarters) to complain and retrieve the scales taken from him, officials refused to meet him. 'If you don't see me, I'll burn myself,' Bouazizi is quoted as saying. A short time later, he returned to the site and set himself on fire, dying in hospital two weeks later due to the severity of his injuries (H. Hussain 2018, Ammar 2022).

This drastic act triggered a massive wave of protest in Tunisia, first in the marginalised areas in the south, then all over the country. The Ben Ali regime reacted with brutal repression and by mid-January, more than thirty Tunisians had died. Soon, however, civil society organisations, labour unions, notably the powerful Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), student organisations and professional bodies joined the protests. Realising the scale of the demonstrations, Ben Ali tried to make concessions. But they came too late to stop the protests. When the president ordered the military to shoot at the protestors, the chief of staff refused. On 14 January 2011, Ben Ali fled the country (Esposito, Sonn and Voll 2016, 174–5). His Egyptian counterpart, long-term president Hosni Mubarak, would be ousted just a month later, after millions protested under the slogan '*al-Shaʿb yurīd isqāṭ al-niẓām*' ('The people want to topple the regime'). With breathtaking speed, protests spread across the region, hitting virtually all authoritarian Arab republics (Schumann 2013): 'Bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity (*al-karama*) were the rallying cries that echoed from *mayadeen al-tahrir* (liberation squares) in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and elsewhere' (Gerges 2014, 3).

Tunisia's Revolution and Post-revolutionary Phase (2011–16)

After Ben Ali was forced to leave office in January 2011, an interim government was installed in the same month. The government consisted mainly of old elites and some representatives of opposition parties. This state of affairs prompted new protests by leftist parties and UGTT members. Under the pressure of the Kasbah sit-ins,[4] interim prime minister Mohamed Ghannouchi – not to be confused with Rashed al-Ghannouchi – from Ben Ali's party, the RCD, created the Haute Instance pour la Réalisation des Objectifs de la Révolution, des Réformes Politiques et de la Transition Démocratique (HIROR). This body was supposed to facilitate the transition process. While many members of the opposition rejected the institution, Ennahda agreed to accept HIROR despite
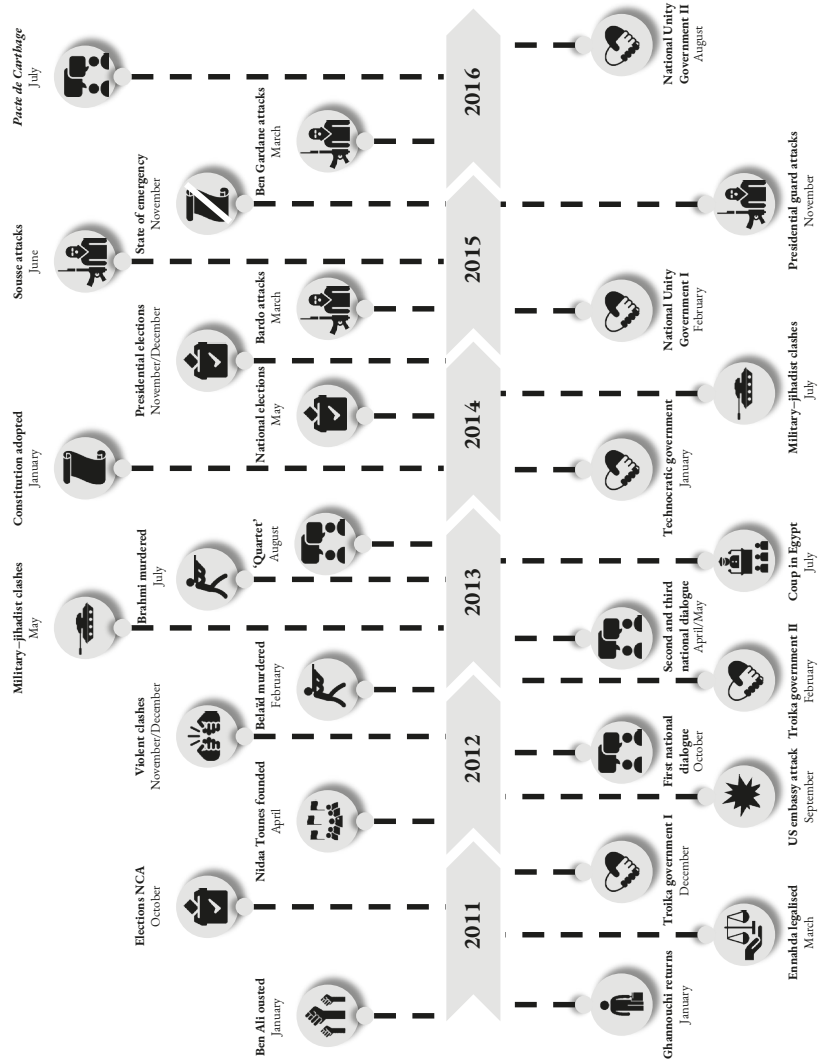
Figure 3.1 Political events in Tunisia and the wider region, 2011–16

its connection to the old regime and the nomination of Beji Caid Essebsi as head of the new interim government. Essebsi had been a leading political figure under both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. However, Tunisians still took to the streets against the HIROR and the interim government (Boubekeur 2016). After several rounds of expanding the membership of HIROR in order to satisfy the demands of the streets, the institution was tasked with outlining post-revolution trajectories. Interim head of state Fouad Mebazaa decided that elections for a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) would be held in the same year. The NCA would be charged with drafting a new constitution and electing an interim president and prime minister. The old constitution was partially suspended. HIROR drafted a new electoral law and installed the Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections (ISIE). It organised and supervised the NCA elections that took place on 23 October 2011 and were considered largely free and fair. The NCA was inaugurated in November of the same year (Carter Center 2015).

Despite the restrictions on Ennahda's activity and its quasi-invisibility in the 1990s and 2000s (Hamdi 1998, 72–3), its underground activities and structures allowed for a quick mobilisation of its networks in Tunisia in 2011. When Ghannouchi returned from exile in late January 2011, 10,000 supporters were there to welcome him back to Tunisia (Wolf 2017, 131). Ennahda was formally legalised on 1 March (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, 857) and, upon the arrival of other important leaders, organised itself and went on to conduct an effective election campaign (Esposito, Sonn and Voll 2016, 189–90, 250). Ennahda received 37 per cent of all votes or 54 per cent of the votes cast for those parties that eventually gained a seat in the NCA (Donker 2013, 222), making it the clear winner of the 2011 elections. Due to a formula that favoured small parties, Ennahda received 'only' 90 of 217 seats and had to build a coalition government. In December 2011, the first 'Troika' government was formed together with two leftist secular parties, the Congrès pour la République (CPR) and Ettakatol (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties). Hamadi Jebali from Ennahda became prime minister and Moncef Marzouki (CPR) president of the republic, while Mustafa Ben Jafar (Ettakatol) took over as president of the NCA. The Troika I coalition lasted until February 2013 but witnessed many conflicts (Filiu 2015). These mainly revolved around Ennahda's reputed dominance in government, the

lack of transparency in the distribution of public sector posts and ministerial positions, the alleged distribution of subsidies among Ennahda members and the question of how to deal with former RCD members. Since the latter had been involved in regime repression, Ennahda had initially taken a firm stance against their inclusion in the new political system. But Ennahda still used informal channels to negotiate with the former RCD members as a bargaining move so as to ensure its survival should the cadres of the old regime undergo a resurgence (Boubekeur 2016).

What was more, there was discord in the government about the role of Islam in a future constitution – and the same applied to the Tunisian population. Some Tunisians suspected Ennahda of planning to make shariʿa an integral part of the new constitution and to abandon the Personal Status Code, established in 1956, which had been an important step in Tunisian women's emancipation (Wolf 2017, 4, 28). In April 2012, Essebsi founded a new party called Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia) which mainly comprised old RCD cadres and was intended as a counterweight to Ennahda. Several members of the CPR and Ettakatol left their parties and the government, some of them joining the new party. Delays in implementing transitional justice measures, economic reforms and the constitution-drafting process added to the tensions. As discontent with Ennahda and the Troika government grew stronger and the political process seemed to have reached an impasse, the UGTT launched an initiative for a national dialogue, which was meant to put an end to the political deadlock. But Ennahda and the CPR refused to take up the UGTT's invitation to enter into dialogue in October 2012 as they would have been forced to sit at the same table as Nidaa Tounes.

This phase was also marked by instances of political violence. In September 2012, a film on the Prophet made in the US and perceived as deeply offensive to Muslims provoked a demonstration by Islamists and Salafists. The US embassy in Tunis was stormed by protestors, leaving two people dead (S. Chayes 2014). There were violent clashes between anti-government protestors and the police in April and November in Tunis and Siliana respectively. The potentially excessive response of the security forces was considered by many not to have been properly investigated. In December 2012, there were violent clashes between the UGTT and the Ligue de Protection de la Révolution. The latter was a political movement that had formed in the vacuum after the revolution

to 'provide' public security and was mainly composed of Ennahda supporters, despite not being formally affiliated with the party. Finally, in February 2013, the human rights activist and leftist politician Chokri Belaïd of the Front Populaire was shot dead (Boubekeur 2016, Hemkemeyer 2016).

The events described above put the Ennahda-led government under even more pressure. They were now accused of not being able to handle escalating political violence or even of protecting the perpetrators. All this culminated in the resignation of Jebali as prime minister and a significant cabinet reshuffle. Ali Laarayedh (Ennahda) replaced Jebali and was able to obtain the NCA's vote of confidence. Despite these changes, Tunisian society was polarised after the spate of violence. In this atmosphere, President Marzouki tried to launch a government-initiated dialogue round in April 2013. While it managed to bring Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes to the table, this time the dialogue was boycotted by the UGTT and some of the opposition parties. Nonetheless, the forum was able to solve some of the contentious issues regarding the constitution. A month later, the UGTT agreed to launch a third round of national dialogue, which would focus on social and economic issues as well as the security situation. The latter had deteriorated yet again. Troops that had been deployed to Jebel ech Chambi, a mountain close to the Algerian border, violently clashed with militant Salafist groups that had created a stronghold there (Carter Center 2015). In July, yet another political murder was committed against a high-ranking member of the Front Populaire, Mohamed Brahmi. In the same month, the Egyptian military initiated a putsch against the elected president, Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood who had been in office since 2012. Officer Abdel Fattah as-Sisi declared himself the new president of Egypt. In August 2013, the new regime committed a massacre against civilians demonstrating against the putsch in Cairo. Up to 1,000 protestors were killed. Ennahda was in shock over the events. Many Nahdawis showed their solidarity with the Brotherhood and the victims by taking to the streets in Tunisia. Against the backdrop of a polarised society, Ennahda's fears that it might face a similar fate to its Egyptian counterpart grew (Marks 2015).

Following the second political assassination in one year, the Front Populaire and Nidaa Tounes had organised street protests, directed in particular against Ennahda and demanding the dissolution of the NCA and the end of the Troika government. This 'soft coup attempt' (Marks 2017, 103)

further reified the secular-versus-Islamist cleavage among the Tunisian public. Moreover, seventy deputies withdrew from the NCA. In a unilateral decision, the NCA president, Ben Jafar, suspended the assembly's activities on 6 August 2013. In the same month, a secret meeting between Ghannouchi and Essebsi took place in Paris. Moreover, the UGTT, together with the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat), the Tunisian Human Rights League (Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme) and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers (Ordre National des Avocats de Tunisie) formed the so-called 'Quartet', which would go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. Although it had set out to mediate between the rivalling political parties, it soon established itself as a moderator in the transition process. It developed a roadmap that consisted of three tracks. First, the ISIE should appoint new commissioners and subsequently organise the elections under a new electoral law to be voted on in the NCA. Second, an independent government should replace the second Troika government. Third, the final draft of the constitution should be voted on in the NCA (Boubekeur 2016, Carter Center 2015).

The constitution was indeed adopted in January 2014. Moreover, an independent government took over in the same month under the leadership of Mehdi Jomaa. In May 2014, the first parliamentary elections in the new Tunisian political system took place. Nidaa Tounes won almost 40 per cent of the seats in the Assembly of the Representatives of the People, while Ennahda received a mere 32 per cent. First Nidaa Tounes tried to establish a minority government, but then the two parties came together in a broad coalition, also referred to as the 'National Unity Government', under the leadership of Habib Essid, an independent prime minister. The new government took office in February 2015. Presidential elections had been held in November 2014, in which Ennahda decided not to field its own candidate. In December 2014, Nidaa Tounes's leader Essebsi had become president of the republic (Quamar 2015).

Meanwhile, the tensions in Jebel ech Chambi had intensified again. The operations by the militants increased until their attack on the Tunisian armed forces in July 2014 that left fifteen soldiers dead (Gartenstein-Ross, Moreng and Soucy 2014, 7–9). The following year would be a traumatic one for Tunisian society with several large-scale terrorist attacks. In March,

terrorists attacked the Bardo National Museum, next to the Assembly of the Representatives of the People, killing twenty-one. Just three months later, a man shot thirty-eight people dead in the tourist area of Port El Kantaoui near Sousse. Later, ISIS claimed responsibility for both attacks, which had mainly killed Western tourists (Quamar 2015). After the attacks in Sousse, President Essebsi declared a state of emergency for one month. In November 2015, a car bomb killed twelve members of the Presidential Guard on one of the main roads of the Tunisian capital. As a consequence, Essebsi imposed another state of emergency which has been in place ever since and would be adapted by President Kais Saied six years later and used to systematically dismantle Tunisia's hard-earned democratic institutions (Ben Hamadi 2021).

In March 2016, ISIS carried out a raid on Ben Gardane, a city near the Libyan border. In a suspected attempt to capture the city, militants attacked a military post, killing twelve officers and civilians. The Tunisian military gained control over the situation and killed thirty-six of the attackers (Amara and Markey 2016). Besides security, the government's biggest concern in this phase was the dire economic and social situation of many Tunisians. In July 2016, the parliament voted to dismiss Prime Minister Essid in a vote of no confidence after he had failed to implement major reforms (Al Jazeera 2016b). In the same month, President Essebsi initiated the so-called *Pacte de Carthage*. This brought together nine political parties and three major civil society organisations with the aim of developing a common plan to tackle the country's economic, social and security challenges (HuffPost Tunisie 2016). At the end of August, the president named Youssef Chahed (Nidaa Tounes) head of a new 'National Unity Government', and Ennahda retained one cabinet minister (Al Jazeera 2016c).

Lebanon During and After the Arab Uprisings (2011–16)

While deemed 'notoriously unstable' (Wählisch and Felsch 2016, 1), pertinent indices had classified Lebanon as at least a partly free democracy since 2005,[5] and the country did not witness any uprisings of comparable scope and intensity to the protests in other Arab countries. The dynamics of the events unfolding in Lebanon's neighbourhood reinforced the regional orientation of Hezbollah's discourse, which is, however, mostly an effect of its identity as a transnational resistance. At the same time, the various governments between
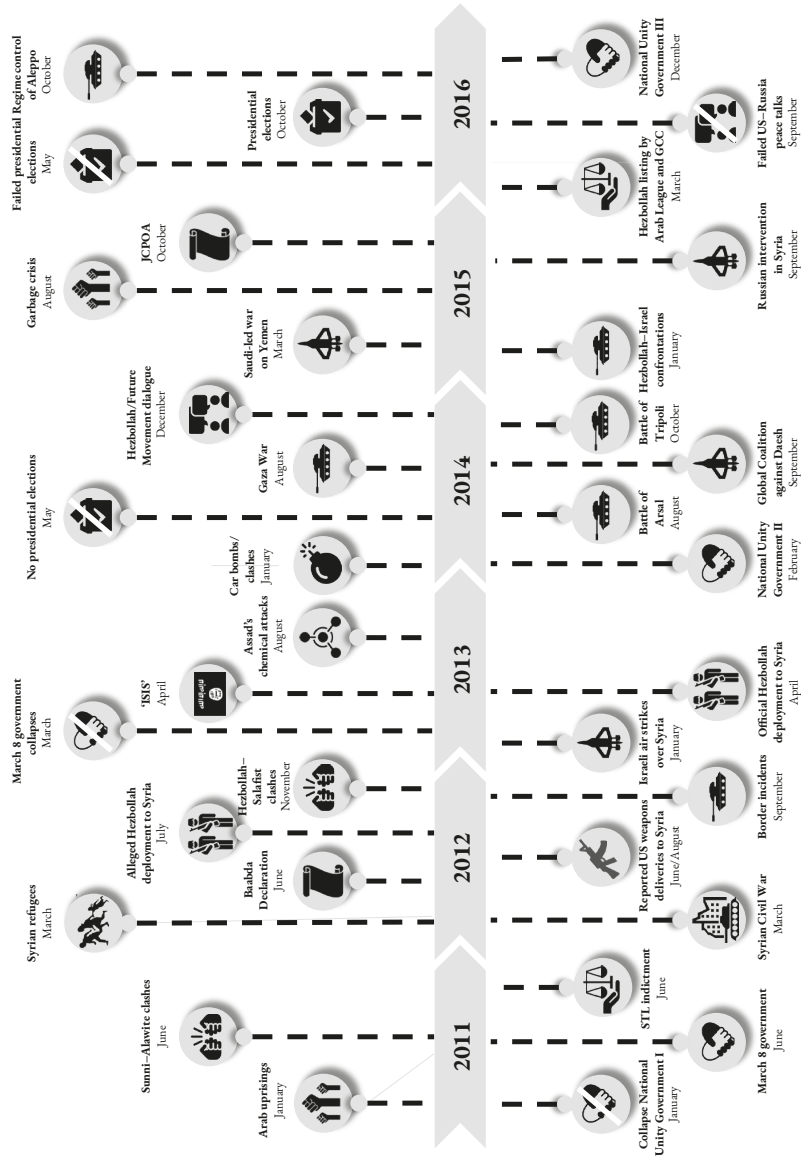
Figure 3.2 Political events in Lebanon and the wider region, 2011–16

2011
Arab uprisings — January
Sunni–Alawite clashes — June
Collapse National Unity Government I — January
March 8 government — June
STL indictment — June

2012
Syrian refugees — March
Alleged Hezbollah deployment to Syria — July
Baabda Declaration — June
Hezbollah–Salafist clashes — November
Syrian Civil War — March
Reported US weapons deliveries to Syria — June/August
Border incidents — September

2013
March 8 government collapses — March
'ISIS' — April
Assad's chemical attacks — August
Car bombs/clashes — January
Israeli air strikes over Syria — January
Official Hezbollah deployment to Syria — April

2014
No presidential elections — May
Hezbollah/Future Movement dialogue — December
Gaza War — August
Battle of Arsal — August
National Unity Government II — February
Global Coalition against Daesh — September
Battle of Tripoli — October

2015
Garbage crisis — August
JCPOA — October
Saudi-led war on Yemen — March
Hezbollah–Israel confrontations — January
Russian intervention in Syria — September

2016
Failed presidential elections — May
Regime control of Aleppo — October
Presidential elections — October
Hezbollah listing by Arab League and GCC — March
Failed US–Russia peace talks — September
National Unity Government III — December

2011 and 2016, all of which Hezbollah was part of, faced several crises and the Arab uprisings took their toll on Lebanese domestic politics.

In January 2011, eleven ministers from the March 8 Alliance resigned from the National Unity Government under Saad al-Hariri's (Future Movement) leadership. The cabinet collapsed and this was followed by a five-month vacuum in government (Fakhoury 2016). At the same time the Arab uprisings started, sparking revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and leading to mass protests in Yemen, Libya, Syria and Bahrain. Due to the close historical connections and geographical proximity of the two countries, Lebanese politics were particularly affected by the events in Syria. As protests there grew stronger, the divide between the March 8 and the March 14 blocs deepened, with the former taking the side of the Assad regime and the latter fervently supporting the popular uprisings. Consequently, in June 2011, a new government formed under the leadership of Najib Mikati from the small Sunni Majd (Glory) Movement and without the participation of any members of the March 14 Alliance.

The formation of the government coincided with an indictment issued by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). The court had been established as stipulated by UN Security Council Resolution 1757 of 2007 and tasked with investigating the Hariri assassination, considered a 'crime of terrorism in times of peace'.[6] While its legitimacy and potentially political and selective nature have been a contentious issue since its inception (Tolbert 2014), the indictment against the four Hezbollah members supposedly implicated in the murder of Hariri and twenty other individuals in 2005 exacerbated an already strained political situation. But the events in Syria at the time were even more important than the legacies of the occupation. In the same month as the indictment, there were violent clashes between Sunnis and 'Alawites in the city of Tripoli – a first sign of spillovers from the Syrian conflict. Armed insurgents had appeared in the Lebanese city, while the Assad regime was responding with violent repression to ongoing protests in several Syrian towns (Fakhoury 2016, Di Peri and Meier 2017). The Syrian question divided Lebanese politicians and the public alike. In order not to exacerbate these domestic tensions, Lebanon's permanent representative to the UN Security Council abstained in the vote on the resolution which condemned the violence in Syria in August 2011 (Wählisch and Felsch 2016).

As violence escalated in 2012, more and more Syrian refugees arrived in Lebanon. In particular, heavy fighting in Homs, a city about 50 kilometres from the Lebanese border, in March 2012 caused an increase in the number of Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon (Van Vliet 2016, 94). The conflict had now become a fully fledged civil war. This was not without consequences for Lebanon. There, too, levels of political violence rose. In May 2012, there were new clashes in the city of Tripoli, again between Assad supporters, mainly 'Alawites, and Sunnis (BBC News 2012). In the same month, a group of Shi'i pilgrims returning from Iran were abducted in Syria by opposition forces (Associated Press 2012). In October, a car bomb killed Wissam al-Hassan in Beirut. Hassan was a close ally of the Hariri family and head of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) intelligence unit. The assassination was supposedly connected to both the ongoing trial at the STL and Hassan's opposition to the Syrian regime. In Saida, the Palestinian refugee camp Ain al-Hilweh increasingly became a 'hotbed for jihadi recruitment' (Zelin 2016, 52) under the influence of cleric Ahmed al-Assir. Violent clashes between Hezbollah supporters and Assir's 'resistance brigades' in November led to a number of deaths among the former. What was more, several border incidents had occurred in autumn 2012, among them the bombing of Lebanese territory by the Syrian regime forces and the penetration of the Lebanese border by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and, allegedly, jihadists who were confronted by the Lebanese army (Wählisch and Felsch 2016).

Realising that the Syrian war would threaten social peace in Lebanon too, the government had already decided to embrace a 'policy of dissociation' in June 2012. The Baabda Declaration stipulated that the Lebanese government would maintain a neutral foreign policy regarding the Syrian and other regional conflicts and commit to non-interference. While the document was claimed to be based on a consensus, Hezbollah stated that it had not agreed to it. Allegedly, just one month after the agreement, Hezbollah started to send advisors and military cadres to Syria to support the Assad regime (Ranstorp 2016). At around the same time, the first reports appeared bringing to light the intelligence and (indirect) arms support that the US had provided for the Syrian opposition (Hosenball 2012, E. Schmitt 2012). The significant financial support and supply of non-lethal and light weapons were channelled through Saudi Arabia and Qatar and, as reports suggested, often reached jihad-

ist rather than secular opposition groups in Syria (Sanger 2012). In December 2012, it became clear that the French financial support for rebels had been used for arms purchases, too (Chulov 2012). Meanwhile, the division over the Syrian conflict and the increasingly 'sectarianised' (Hashemi and Postel 2017) violence in Lebanon caused yet another government to collapse. After Prime Minister Mikati's resignation, the March 8 government was dissolved in March 2013 (Fakhoury 2016, 25, Knudsen 2017, 140).

At this point, the Syrian war was already highly internationalised but the role of external support and intervention would become even more important over the years that followed. In January 2013, the Israeli army conducted its first air strike in Syria's Rif Dimashq governorate, allegedly to stop a weapons delivery sent to Hezbollah via Syrian territory. After renewed strikes in May, Bashar al-Assad declared the Golan Heights a frontline of popular resistance. Public militias, including Palestinian resistance factions, were now officially allowed to fight Israel there. Hezbollah immediately declared solidarity with these operations (MEMRI 2013). The month of April 2013 was of particular importance for the dynamics of the Syrian conflict. First, Hassan Nasrallah publicly admitted having provided military support for the Syrian regime. From then on Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict on the side of the regime became a crucial factor in the civil war. Over the next couple of months, the Syrian army and Hezbollah forces fought against Syrian rebel groups, among them the FSA and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), and 'Hizbullah's involvement and combat role not only deepened but was viewed as an integral part of the overall Syrian military effort' (Ranstorp 2016, 39). Second, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared that the 'Islamic State of Iraq', which had previously fought side by side with JN, would now operate on its own under the name of the 'Islamic State in Iraq and Syria' (ISIS) (Gerges 2016, 16, 180).[7] In the months after its split from JN and al-Qa'ida, ISIS would be able to make substantial territorial gains, controlling an area of 95,000 square kilometres in Iraq and Syria by August 2014 (Bamber-Zryd 2022, 1327). Starting in November 2013, alongside the Syrian regime, Hezbollah conducted military operations in the Syrian Qalamoun region close to the Lebanese border where ISIS and JN had several strongholds (Ranstorp 2016, 40). After the EU had lifted its arms embargo on Syria in June 2013, more Western military aid floated into the country in support of the opposition and rebel groups (Sengupta 2013).[8]

Hezbollah's engagement in Syria heightened the conflicts in Lebanon. Between July 2013 and February 2014, six car bombs were detonated in Hezbollah areas in the Dahieh, 'including a double suicide bombing in front of the Iranian embassy' (Wählisch and Felsch 2016, 6). In December 2013, Hezbollah commander Hassan al-Laqqis became the victim of a targeted killing (Ranstorp 2016, 39). Violence in Saida re-erupted, this time between Assir supporters and both Hezbollah and the Lebanese army, leaving eighteen soldiers dead. By then, Hezbollah was facing criticism for its involvement in the Syrian war from both Shi'i and non-Shi'i groups in Lebanon. In August 2013, the Syrian regime carried out a large-scale chemical weapons attack in Ghouta which killed more than 1,400 of its own citizens, over 400 of whom were children (Blake and Mahmud 2013). Hezbollah was accused of one-sided condemnation of jihadi violence, while remaining silent about the Assad regime's atrocities and continuing to support it (Wieland 2016, 177).

Despite their diametrically opposed positions on the Syrian war, the March 8 and March 14 alliances eventually found a common interest in averting the looming threat of a further destabilisation of the security situation in Lebanon. Both the government and parliament found themselves in a deadlock. The former had continued to prolong its own mandate as it could not decide on how to reform Lebanese electoral law and, therefore, kept postponing elections. As for the latter, it was not until February 2014 that a new National Unity Government under Tammam Salam put an end to ten months of political stalemate. The new government consisted of eight members from the March 14 Alliance, eight from the March 8 Alliance and eight from the centrist bloc (Fakhoury 2016, 25, Wählisch and Felsch 2016, 5). But this did not put an end to the political crisis. In May 2014, the term of President Michel Suleiman officially ended and the Lebanese parliament was supposed to elect a new leader. However, the absence of members from the March 8 Alliance blocked the presidential elections. This meant that, in accordance with the Lebanese constitution, the parliament could no longer act as a legislative body. Until a new president could be found, it would only convene as an electoral assembly.

Even though the government had adopted a security plan to coordinate activities by Hezbollah and the Lebanese military, the Salafi jihadists they both sought to counter increased their attacks (Zelin 2016). In August 2014, the

border city of Arsal was overrun by ISIS and JN-affiliated fighters. They took control of the city, which by then hosted over 100,000 Syrian refugees. JN took members of the Lebanese armed forces hostage, subsequently beheading three of them (A. Barnard 2014). On the other side of the Lebanese–Syrian border, Hezbollah also fought side by side with the Syrian army and regained control over important cities from ISIS and JN (Wieland 2016, Zelin 2016). In October 2014, another fierce battle took place in Tripoli between the Lebanese army and jihadis from both ISIS and JN, killing around forty people including militants, soldiers and civilians (A. Barnard 2014, BBC News 2014). Against the backdrop of these new levels of armed conflict on Lebanese territory, in December 2014, the Future Movement and Hezbollah announced they were going to enter into direct dialogue in order to ease intersectarian tensions in the country (Wählisch and Felsch 2016, 7).

At the same time, the internationalisation of the Syrian war progressed. The ISIS organisation's massive territorial gains and atrocities in Syria and Iraq, staged for a global audience, prompted the creation of the broad Global Coalition against Daesh (GCAD) under US leadership. Its military operation Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve launched its first air strikes against ISIS strongholds in Syria and Iraq in September 2014. Besides the 'usual suspects' from the Western alliance, Arab states also contributed troops and flew sorties, among them Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (McInnis 2016). The strikes over Syria were particularly contentious with regard to their legality, as there was no mandate until a year later and the regime had not invited an intervention (Scharf 2016). Israel's role in the conflict became more complicated, too. Growing evidence suggested that Israel was treating wounded Syrian rebels, including JN members, in its hospitals in the Golan Heights before moving them to the Sheb'a Farms for redeployment in the conflict (Zelin 2016, 58). Moreover, in August 2014, the IDF began a military operation in the Gaza Strip after three Israeli teenagers had been kidnapped and murdered (Crowcroft 2014, Rudoren and Ghazali 2014). More than 2,000 Palestinians and 64 Israeli soldiers lost their lives in the war.

The escalation of the conflict also repaired Hezbollah's relationship with Hamas, which had been tense since 2012. While the former had decided to back Syrian dictator Assad, Hamas sided with the Syrian opposition. The Gaza

war of 2014 provided the opportunity to restore the 'axis of resistance' or the alliance between Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas which had been suspended due to their discord over the Syrian uprising (Darwich 2021a, Meier 2016). These reconfigurations were followed by more direct confrontations between Hezbollah and Israel at several sites. In January 2015, an Israeli air strike in the Golan Heights killed six Hezbollah fighters, including Jihad Mughniyeh, one of its leading commanders, and an Iranian general. Just ten days later, Hezbollah retaliated by attacking an Israeli tank in the Sheb'a Farms, killing two soldiers. Israel fired back into southern Lebanon, leaving a Spanish UNIFIL peacekeeper dead (BBC News 2015). As these events make clear, Lebanon was repeatedly on the verge of being drawn into sustained armed conflict.

The year 2015 would further escalate the regional situation as additional actors became involved in existing conflicts and new wars began. Under Saudi leadership, the 'Arab Coalition' launched a war against Yemen in March 2015. Claiming the military action was legitimate, Saudi Arabia portrayed the campaign as an 'intervention by invitation' to defend the Yemeni government against would-be foreign-backed aggression. These arguments were more than shaky, given that it was far from clear that the government under Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi would emerge from the civil strife as a legitimate and recognised authority (Ruys and Ferro 2016). The Saudi regime further implied that Iran was behind the Houthis' plan to overthrow the government – a suggestion which has since proven to be unfounded (Transfeld 2017, Darwich 2018). Some see the Saudi-led war as being connected to the promising negotiations on and, in October 2015, successful conclusion of the nuclear deal with Iran. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was expected to significantly reconfigure power relations as well as the US strategy in the region. The fear of forfeiting US support, at least in relative terms, and the position of Iran as the common enemy would also increasingly make Saudi and Israeli interests align (Stein 2021, 193–209). In Lebanon, the regional dynamics were mirrored and translated into new tensions between protagonists of the established March 8–March 14 antagonism. The Lebanese Future Movement was quick to express its support for Saudi Arabia and its allies – while Hezbollah immediately and fiercely condemned the coalition's air campaign and subsequently also its ground operations. Meanwhile, the warring parties in Syria gained new sources of external support. After ISIS had captured the Syrian city of Palmyra,

watched by the whole world in May 2015 (Pfeifer and Günther 2021), Hezbollah and the Syrian regimes made significant gains in the Idlib province near the Turkish border. With the support of the Gulf states, however, jihadi groups including JN and Ahrar al-Sham regained territory. The tide turned when, after more than three years of providing various forms of external support, Russia began its military intervention in September 2015 with air strikes in western and northwestern Syria. While it had not initially planned to do so, Russia also deployed ground forces later that year (Souleimanov and Dzutsati 2018). In October, a targeted Israeli air strike killed another senior Hezbollah figure, military leader Samir al-Quntar, on the outskirts of Damascus (Hadid and Barnard 2015).

Besides the effects of regional and international involvement in the wars in Syria and Yemen, Lebanon had to wrestle with the protracted governmental and parliamentary crisis. In summer and autumn 2015, the Lebanese took to the streets as a garbage crisis unfolded and the political class failed to deal with it. The crisis sparked some anti-elite mobilisation, calling for the downfall of the sectarian system (*isqāṭ al-niẓām al-ṭāʾifī*) and an end to the collusion between politicians and private companies (AbiYaghi, Catusse and Younes 2017). Although this did not seem to turn into a sustainable social movement at the time, these events fed into what would become mass protests in 2019 (Pfeifer and Weipert-Fenner 2022). The year ended with the surprising endorsement of Sleiman Frangieh, Maronite leader of the Marada Movement and Assad supporter from the March 8 bloc, as a presidential candidate by Saad al-Hariri from the March 14 bloc in November 2015. However, Michel Aoun had already been nominated by his own March 8 bloc. After talks with Samir Geagea from the Lebanese Forces, a competing Maronite party belonging to the March 14 bloc, Aoun was endorsed as presidential candidate in January 2016. Despite the rare agreement between these antagonists, it took another eleven rounds of presidential elections in parliament for Aoun to finally be elected president in October 2016. The end of the presidential vacuum only came about after intense negotiations between the big parties about power-sharing agreements. In a form of deal package, it was decided that Saad al-Hariri would become prime minister again. At the end of December 2016, he formed a new cabinet in another National Unity Government, bringing together thirty ministers from ten parties (Al Jazeera 2016a, Cambanis 2016).

In the midst of all these political conflicts, Hezbollah faced another challenge from an international initiative to push for it to be classified as a terrorist organisation. Due to Hezbollah's engagement in Syria, the US had issued the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act, signed by President Barack Obama in December 2015. The law aimed at cutting off the flow of financial resources to Hezbollah and its TV station, al-Manar, by denying them access to banks. In addition, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League had decided to list Hezbollah as a terrorist group in March 2016 (Pfeifer 2021). In May 2016, the Lebanese central bank took the decision to apply the US legislation on Hezbollah's financing (Reuters 2016b). In June 2016, a bomb damaged the headquarters of Blom Bank in the Verdun neighbourhood of Beirut. As the bank had closed the accounts of people with alleged ties to Hezbollah, the suspicion was that the militia was behind the attack (Reuters 2016a). The restrictions imposed on Hezbollah did not, however, lead to its withdrawal from Syria. With significant support from Russia and Hezbollah, the Assad regime had managed to win the long battle over Aleppo. Yet, at the end of 2016, the regime had control over less than one-third of Syrian territory (Haid 2016). As negotiations between the US and Russia over how to coordinate a battle plan against ISIS and how to curtail violence in Syria had failed in September 2016, too, there was little hope that the war would come to an end any time soon (Wintour 2016).

Letting Ennahda and Hezbollah Speak: In their Own Context and With their Own Voice

As the accounts of political events in the two countries and the wider region show, Ennahda and Hezbollah faced similar challenges, including Salafi jihadism, civil war and regional order. However, their contexts also differ in important ways. Tunisia was much more self-referential in the period under investigation. While not unaffected by the events in its neighbourhood, including the coup in Egypt, the civil war in Libya and the Syrian war, which attracted Tunisian foreign fighters, the country was preoccupied with domestic affairs and organising a political transition – as well as fighting the struggles related to such a transformation. In Lebanon, by contrast, all regional conflicts seem to manifest themselves and then reappear as a kind of domestic imitation of transnational dynamics. This is not to say that Lebanon's 'homemade'

political crises were marginal. On the contrary, in fact: they included a collective failure of political elites to address concrete social problems, a deep entanglement between private interests and the public sector, and regular instigation of sectarianism only to suppress it again once it had served the interests of the powerful. However, the degree to which Lebanon was affected by and implicated in the reconfigurations of regional order after the Arab uprisings is considerable. It suffered from direct spillovers of political violence from the Syrian war, interference in domestic affairs by global and regional powers, and the translation of war dynamics into instances of violence that recalled the traumas and were embedded in the structural legacies of the Lebanese Civil War.

One caveat is that the readings of Tunisia's and Lebanon's most recent history presented above are geared towards the analysis of Ennahda's and Hezbollah's discourse. This means that other events might have been chosen had other actors been analysed. The events recounted above are intended to provide a context in which the two parties' utterances are rendered comprehensible and meaningful. What is more, the two discourses will be assessed based on diverging materials. This aims to take into account the differences in their organisational structure.

Ennahda is very much shaped by the ideas of its leader, Rached al-Ghannouchi. But it is at the same time structured in a democratic manner, allowing for dissent and deliberation. In order to do justice to its – albeit limited – multivocality, Ennahda's discourse was analysed through a variety of documents: party and election programmes, party and press statements, opinion pieces by and interviews with leading Ennahda figures in the international news outlets and manuscripts of speeches by party leaders. What these documents have in common is that the party itself chose to disseminate them, in English or French, to a (potentially) global audience via its social media channels.

As for Hezbollah, its organisation is much more hierarchical and opaque. This is due to its militant activities, which necessitate an effective command structure and discipline, as well as secrecy and confidentiality. Even among themselves, Hezbollah's cadres are often not aware of each other's exact position and function in the organisation. There are also deliberative spaces among groups in the upper leadership ranks. But from there, decisions are communicated top down (Daher 2016). With regard to Hezbollah's ideology and military

operations, figures such as deputy secretary general Naim Qassem and Mustafa Badreddine, who served as military chief of the Islamic Resistance until his assassination in Damascus in 2016, are influential. However, Hassan Nasrallah is Hezbollah's military and political leader and is perceived as 'uniquely charismatic' (Matar 2014, 153) and rhetorically gifted – so much so that his speeches and appearances are used in rhetoric training in Lebanon (Interview 6). Given that Nasrallah has been living in an underground hideout since 2006, fearing an Israeli attempt to assassinate him, he only appears in public very rarely. When he does – ten times between 2011 and 2016 – his performance is perceived as 'the return of the revered occluded leader' (Matar 2014, 175). In this sense, his speeches – whether live or recorded – are both momentous and programmatic for Hezbollah. He is the 'voice of Hezbollah' (Noe 2007). The following chapters are, therefore, based on an analysis of Nasrallah's speeches translated into English and disseminated via the website of one of Hezbollah's main media outlets, the newspaper *al-Ahed* ('The Promise').⁹

Notes

1. This is also one of the more important reasons why this book upholds the distinction between Islamists and Salafi jihadists, rather than subsuming the latter under the umbrella term of Islamism, as sometimes happens in the study of civil war (Bamber and Svensson 2023, Walter 2017, Nilsson and Svensson 2021). For a critique of the lack of differentiation *among* Salafi-jihadist groups, see, for example, Schwab (2018, 2023) and Stenersen (2020).
2. For the Iranian case, the distinction between state and non-state actors may have become blurrier since 2020, when the US military under the Trump administration killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in a targeted drone strike in Baghdad. Besides being a general in the Iranian military forces, Soleimani was the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's (IRGC's) Quds Force. The Trump administration put the IRGC on the list of terrorist organisations in April 2019 – which legitimised the targeted killing of a member of Iran's official armed forces (Pfeifer 2021).
3. The term refers to the records of the Prophet's and his companions' deeds.
4. Kasbah is the district in Tunis where the government and ministries reside.
5. https://freedomhouse.org/country/lebanon/freedom-net/2016 (accessed 6 November 2023) http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/leb2.htm (accessed 11 October 2023).

6. https://www.stl-tsl.org/images/stories/About/STL_Close-up_EN.pdf (accessed 11 October 2023).

7. The Arabic name *al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī l-ʿIrāq wa-l-Shām* is usually translated in this way even though 'Shām' refers to the historical Islamic Syria, which covers areas in today's Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Turkey.

8. https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/syria_LAS/eu-embargo-on-Syria (accessed 11 October 2023).

9. See https://english.alahednews.com.lb (accessed 11 October 2023). The newspaper was founded in 1984 and launched its website in 1999. Besides global news, it publishes full speeches, reports on speeches and information on Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's secretary general. Although there is also an Arabic version of the *al-Ahed* website, the main Arabic communication platform used to be moqawama.org, which was operational until April 2023. It reported on the subjects of the resistance and Israel, and regional and international politics, especially events in Iran, Yemen and Syria, as well as the martyrs and military successes of Hezbollah. Since May 2023, the website has been seized by the US government 'for sanctions violations and for being controlled by an entity [. . .] designated as a "Specially Designated National"'. See https://moqawama.org and https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/edva-seizes-thirteen-domains-used-lebanese-hizballah-and-its-affiliates (accessed 31 October 2023).

4

SOVEREIGNTY

Ennahda

In his account of a 'genuine intellectual revolution in modern Islamic thought', Andrew March (2019, x) outlines how popular sovereignty entered Sunni Islamic political philosophy. Although some of the most important Islamist thinkers in the twentieth century, Abul A'la Maudidi and Sayyid Qutb, are usually associated with rather strict concepts of divine sovereignty, March argues that they also paved the way for the notion of popular sovereignty to develop and culminate in ideas of Islamic democracy. One of today's foremost intellectuals is also the president of the Tunisian Ennahda party, Rached al-Ghannouchi. Not least due to his dual role as a modern political thinker and politician, his 'influence historically and in the present is undeniable' (March 2019, 153) and reaches far beyond the Tunisian context. Ghannouchi's intellectual work has been analysed from the perspective of the history of ideas and political philosophy (Tamimi 2001, March 2019), and it is remarkable that even when Ennahda was part of the Tunisian government, Ghannouchi still published academic works and essays, as he had done during his years in exile (see, for example, Ghannouchi 1993a, 1993b, 2013, 2016). One of the core concerns he seeks to address in his theoretical work is to solve the tension between divine and popular sovereignty through the invention of an 'Islamic state as a republic of virtue' in which 'the *umma* [is assigned] the

sovereign right not only to control secular rulers but also to determine what it means to "apply the *sharīʿa*"' (March 2019, 199).

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Ghannouchi's ideas have had a significant impact on political discourse and the way in which Ennahda communicates its conceptions of order to a Western and potentially global audience. Indeed, an empirical investigation of Ennahda's discourse on sovereignty – rather than an analysis based on the history of ideas or political theory – reveals similar findings in as much as popular sovereignty is by far the most important concept advanced. In contrast to March's findings on Ghannouchi's political theory, however, divine sovereignty is barely alluded to in Ennahda communications. Rather, the question of Islam's place in politics is negotiated in Ennahda's portrayal of legitimacy, as Chapter 5 will show. I will discuss interpretations of this at the end of the chapter but one preliminary methodological remark is of importance here. As March (2019) shows, sovereignty, legitimacy and authority are closely related concepts, which means that this divergence may be a result of coding rather than a significant and substantial difference. The concluding subsection of this section will argue that there are still good reasons to assume that intellectual and political discourse actually follow different lines of argument.

Popular Sovereignty: Self-determination and Popular Will

The concrete political significance of popular sovereignty for Ennahda can be explained in a rather straightforward way. First, Tunisia's history as a former French colony makes popular sovereignty a core claim of a subjugated people against heteronomy. Second, the notion that the people were able to liberate themselves from a decades-long dictatorship and wrested sovereignty from an unjust state was an obvious and prevalent interpretation of the Tunisian revolution of 2011. Ennahda thus argued for both the self-determination of a people and the realisation of the popular will. Tunisia's history can be read as a story of realising popular sovereignty. In this narrative, the toppling of the Ben Ali regime and the subsequent restructuring of the Tunisian political system, notably reflected in the adoption of a new constitution, are the next steps in the process of the Tunisian people's liberation, which had begun with shaking off French colonial rule and achieving independence in 1956.

That said, it was the immediate temporal and spatial context that was most relevant for Ennahda's articulation of popular sovereignty between 2011 and 2016: the old regime's complete loss of legitimacy and the need to build a new system based on popular sovereignty. In the midst of the protests in early 2011, Rashed al-Ghannouchi called on the 'tyrant to leave the people to manage their own affairs' (Ennahda 2013al). The revolution would restore 'the power of the people – a people that has risen, realised its strength and potential and broken the barrier of fear' (Ennahda 2011f). Far from being a coup or a regime change imposed by one group inside or outside the country, the revolution was a manifestation of the popular will (Ennahda 2011r) and 'reassert[ed] people's sovereignty' (Ennahda 2016h).

Elections are of particular relevance for the realisation of popular sovereignty. Ennahda believes in 'establishing the people's full sovereignty through the ballot box' (Ennahda 2014w). It considers the first free elections for the NCA in 2011 to have been a 'symbol of the achievement of free popular will' (Ennahda 2012ak). Popular sovereignty is a *conditio sine qua non* for state authority (Ennahda 2014z), which is why Ennahda pledges to always respect the will of the people and the peaceful alternation of power (Ennahda 2013f). But even between elections, state power can be considered legitimate only in so far as it expresses the will of the people. Ennahda therefore insists that any political decision-making take place within elected institutions that are directly endorsed by the people (Ennahda 2013ae).

While it mostly discusses popular sovereignty in the Tunisian context, Ennahda also attaches a more general, almost universal significance to the concept. For 'a growing part of humanity is demanding dignity, freedom, justice and the right to self-determination, away from foreign hegemony and internal despotism' (Ennahda 2012a). Popular sovereignty was central to the Arab uprisings and Ennahda supports the demand of all Arab peoples that 'their rights to freedom and dignity' (Ennahda 2012i) be acknowledged. Rather typically for Islamist discourse, Ennahda also addressed the Palestinian cause from the perspective of popular sovereignty and frequently alluded to the Palestinian people's demand that 'its legitimate historical rights' (Ennahda 2012b) be respected. Still suffering from occupation and struggling for its liberation, the Palestinian people are striving to 'establish a state with Jerusalem as its capital' (Ennahda 2013q, 2014o), thereby achieving self-determination.

Popular sovereignty became less prominent in Ennahda's discourse after 2014. This indicates that, mistaken as this may seem in hindsight, Ennahda was rather confident about the stability of achievements made with regard to the realisation of popular sovereignty after the successful conclusion of the second round of free elections in 2014 and considered the danger of the people losing their sovereignty to be contained (Ennahda 2014g). For Ennahda, Tunisian popular sovereignty, it seems, increasingly acquired a taken-for-granted status.

Absolute Sovereignty: The Virtues and Vices of a Strong State

Whereas popular sovereignty is an unambiguous core norm in Ennahda's conception of order, matters are more complicated with regard to absolute sovereignty. Regarding the external side of sovereignty, Ennahda has acted as a consistent advocate of the principle of non-interference and sovereign equality (Ennahda 2011r, 2012aj, 2013f, 2014z). As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, Ennahda considers foreign interference and intervention in domestic affairs to be a central problem and root cause of many political and socio-economic grievances and injustices in Tunisia and, more widely, the Arab world. Claiming state sovereignty in international relations, and reinforcing and recognising the norms associated with it in the world order, is therefore a clear endeavour. It is the internal side of sovereignty that has turned out to be the trickier part of absolute sovereignty for Ennahda. It has had to carefully navigate the issue of (the limits to) the monopoly on the use of legitimate force, emphasising and de-emphasising state power depending on the respective context.

Indeed, the further the new Tunisian system evolved, the more importance absolute sovereignty gained in Ennahda's discourse. In 2011 and 2012, any allusions to a strong state would have been perceived as misplaced, if not suspicious, for they could have been read as a legitimation of the old regime and therefore weakened the demands of the revolutionaries. At the same time, Ennahda also had to be careful not to exaggerate its opposition to the state. Rather, it 'stressed the continuity of the Tunisian state which was not dismantled by the revolution as in other countries' (Ennahda 2011q) and praised Tunisians' commitment to the 'preservation of their state' (Ennahda 2013af) in the post-revolutionary phase. Seeing the descent of societies in Tunisia's neighbourhood into violence and, later, outright civil war, Ennahda was con-

vinced that chaos and state failure needed to be avoided and the work of the administration had to be kept up and running (Ennahda 2012i). Witnessing the failure of the Libyan state, its inability to control its borders and the violent struggle over authority not only posed severe problems to Tunisia as an immediate neighbour, but was also perceived as a warning (Ennahda 2015p). Yet Ennahda was also aware of the tension between preserving state sovereignty, on the one hand, and restoring popular sovereignty, on the other: '[H]ow can we maintain the balance of the public administration, achieve the goals of the revolution and sever ties with the previous system of tyranny and corruption?' it wondered (Ennahda 2014b). The existing institutions of the state were largely perceived as illegitimate and needed to be reformed or even replaced by new ones. Accountable institutions, guided by the rule of law, were indispensable for 'supporting state authority' (Ennahda 2014z).

The more time passed and the longer Ennahda was in government, the more assertively it advocated a strong state and absolute sovereignty. Initially, this mirrors the necessities of running a functioning state which is able to generate outputs and maintain public order, in particular with regard to providing security. Ennahda had faced accusations of not responding adequately to the increase in political violence in 2012 and 2013, especially after the political assassinations of two members of the leftist Front Populaire. It reacted by calling for a strong state and military institutions, while insisting that such a state be democratic.

> *Un État démocratique, c'est un État fort. Il n'y a pas de contradiction à respecter la loi et à utiliser la force dans les limites de la loi face à ceux qui ont profité de la faiblesse des institutions de l'État ou qui ont pensé que l'État est faible.* (Ennahda 2013d)[1]

Ennahda evoked absolute sovereignty and a strong state even more emphatically with the deterioration of the security situation and drastic rise in terrorist attacks in 2015. Ennahda, still in government with one minister at the time, even supported the state of emergency declared by the president after terrorist attacks had occurred in Sousse earlier in the year (Ennahda 2015r). It called upon the 'Tunisian people to rally around state institutions and security and military services' (Ennahda 2015s). The terrorist threat thus triggered similar mechanisms as in Western societies, ranging from a

strengthening of security institutions to the transfer of power from legislative to executive branches.

Shared Sovereignty: Dreams of Regional Integration and Steps towards Decentralisation

Ennahda's support for a strong Tunisian central state has to be further unpacked, though. Over the six years after the revolution, the period under investigation in this book, Ennahda developed two ideas of shared sovereignty, one on an international level and one on a substate level. Regarding the former, Ennahda included demands for reviving the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) as early as 2011 (Ennahda 2011b, 2014z). The AMU had been founded in 1989. Its five member states, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, had set out to pursue the goals of free trade, economic cooperation and political coordination. Due to the conflict between Morocco and Mauritania over Western Sahara, the organisation's activities had stalled. However, the euphoria for the revolutionary moment in various Arab states brought a new vision for the AMU. Ennahda suggested creating 'a joint Maghreb market by activating cooperation and integration among its different countries and considering the potential of expanding it to include Egypt' (Ennahda 2011b), to establish 'free trade zones' (Ennahda 2011b) and to develop common political positions on regional affairs. For instance, Ennahda aimed at concerted support of the Libyan Government of National Accord by the Maghreb states and suggested coordinating policies in order to achieve consensus among different forces in Libya (Ennahda 2016m, 2016n).

However, emphatic as the calls to deepen integration and institutionalise the AMU had been in 2011, over time they became virtually irrelevant. When I addressed this issue in interviews in 2017, Ennahda representatives admitted that the prospects for integration were poor but the idea was still prominent. At the same time, they contended that, in a multipolar world, regions played an increasingly important role. Single countries do not carry enough weight in international negotiations to pursue their interests. Moreover, the representatives cited estimates showing that an integrated market or some other free trade arrangement would increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of the five member countries by 3 per cent (Interviews 1, 2, 4). They compared the Maghreb situation to the early days of the European Economic Community,

which aimed for close economic ties, without, however, imposing a single political model on the six distinctly organised member countries.

Ideas of shared sovereignty on the subnational level were evident in Ennahda's agenda to decentralise the Tunisian system of governance, which demanded more authority for regional and local councils (Ennahda 2011b, 2014z). Tunisia had inherited a strongly centralised system from the French colonisers. The system of *tutelle* or administrative oversight had 'developed into a subnational instrument to enforce the rule of the Ministry of Interior and presidential palace' (Bohn and Vollmann 2021, 82). Elected institutions hardly played a role at the subnational level. According to Ennahda, decentralisation would enhance Tunisia's democratic and participatory culture (Ennahda 2014ah, 2015ab, 2016b) and would 'constitute an important gain for the state of law and division of powers' (Ennahda 2016a).

Indeed, the 2014 constitution dedicated a whole chapter to decentralisation, and foreign donors and foundations quickly declared their support for the decentralisation project, too. An ambitious decentralisation law passed in 2018 stipulates the creation of 'strong democratic institutions on levels between the local and national governments with quasi-regional and governorate councils' (Bohn and Vollmann 2021, 83), which have yet to be established. In fact, the sluggish implementation of the law, particularly the failure to set up regional-level institutions, has created new sources of conflict between the national and the local levels, as well as between the ruling parties. Ennahda had good reason to expect favourable results from the local elections, which it deemed 'a critical moment for consolidating participatory democracy and a genuine step towards redistributing power' (Ennahda 2016a). The party's movement structure implied a firm rootedness in society at the local level and Ennahda was the only party that could count on a sufficient number of party affiliates able to run in local elections at all. In contrast, all other parties feared that they would 'not be able to provide party list coverage for subnational elections' (Bohn and Vollmann 2021, 86). And indeed, Ennahda won 131 of 350 mayorships in the local elections of 2018. Almost as many mayorships went to independent candidates. Its grassroot and movement structures thus give Ennahda a comparative advantage over other parties and explain its firm commitment to shared sovereignty in the form of decentralisation.

Discussion

In Ennahda's discourse, popular sovereignty is the most prominent concept. In line with findings on Ghannouchi's political philosophy (March 2019), the question of how to best assure that the people remain in charge of their own destiny and brace themselves against assaults on their sovereignty from both heteronomy and dictatorship is a concern for Ennahda – as it is for many other political actors in formerly colonised societies. But Ennahda's sovereignty discourse also has a more pragmatic trait. Having been in charge of state affairs for several years and faced several security crises, Ennahda advocated a strong state, including security institutions, and emphasised its monopoly on the legitimate use of force in phases of violence. As the chapter on legitimacy will demonstrate, Ennahda needed to balance these necessities with precautionary measures to counter any impression that it was interested in state capture and was seeking to build a new Islamist dictatorship. The suggestions for shared sovereignty also seem to relativise any suspicion that the party may have been overcommitted to the notion of a strong state. At the same time, the strategic advantage that Ennahda could expect at the subnational level reveals that its advocacy for decentralisation was more than an idealistic agenda to hedge Tunisia's emerging democratic system against authoritarian temptation.

The fact that there was not a single allusion to the notion of divine sovereignty in Ennahda's discourse between 2011 and 2016 can be read as a precautionary measure against conveying 'the wrong message', too. That said, one should not conclude from this that Ennahda was oblivious to the potential tensions between its pursuit of Islamic ideals and its commitment to a popular will which might not always be in line with these ideals. On the contrary, Ennahda negotiated this issue extensively in the process of creating its model of an Islamic democracy. But this was framed as a problem of legitimacy, or how order should be organised, rather than sovereignty, that is, who the subject and object of global order are. Here, Ennahda communicated a clear commitment to popular sovereignty or the notion of self-rule – instituted in the form of a state with unconditional external and, within limits, internal sovereignty. Ennahda commits to a world order of states, inhabited by free peoples.

Ennahda's communications aimed at the international sphere in the discursive field of sovereignty are thus entirely within the space that Western

world order discourse spans. Ennahda not only fully recognises established sovereignty norms but even demands full compliance with them by both its domestic adversaries, especially former regime cadres, and third states in their behaviour towards Tunisia and other countries. As the chapter on *teloi* will further illustrate, the West's lenience when it comes to interventionism is firmly rejected and conditional sovereignty is not a conception that Ennahda could embrace. In fact, comparatively few of Ennahda's communications analysed for this book address the issue of sovereignty at all. This should be interpreted as further evidence in support of the thesis that Ennahda has internalised hegemonic sovereignty norms and does not challenge Western conceptions of order at all, at least as far as sovereignty is concerned. There is no real need to elaborate on this matter, there is tacit consensus about what sovereignty should mean in the world order – Ennahda just highlights dangers to, and the limited realisation of, these ideals.

Hezbollah

One would expect Hezbollah or 'the party of God', with its origins in the Shi'i social movement in Lebanon and the strong influence of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary thought and teachings on its ideological development in the 1980s, to differ significantly from both Western discourse and Ennahda's take on sovereignty. As in the case of Ennahda, one could reconstruct the political theoretical foundations of Hezbollah's sovereignty politics (Pfeifer 2018). The key figure for Hezbollah's political thought, besides Khomeini and Ayatollah Fadlallah, an Iraqi cleric active in Beirut who was known as Hezbollah's spiritual leader until his death in 2010, is Naim Qassem, the party's deputy secretary general. He has written extensively on the question of how *wilāyat al-faqīh* (or the guardianship of the Islamic jurist) is related to political principles and order (Qassem 2010). *A priori*, it seems that the notion of a submission to the jurist-theologian (*wālī al-faqīh*) who is currently the supreme leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, defies the logic of the nation-state, thus creating a tension with absolute sovereignty. Indeed, *wilāyat al-faqīh* might be interpreted as a form of divine sovereignty (Pfeifer 2018). The question for this book, then, would be to what extent this sovereignty conception, which is clearly located outside the Western discursive realm of world order, also plays a role on the level of political practice in how Hezbollah articulates its

interpretation of order towards a global audience. Again, there might be some 'strategic' silence involved, since both divine sovereignty and an overly close connection to Iran, a notorious and recurring problem country in the eyes of the West since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, can be expected to be perceived as alien and suspicious by (significant parts of) the global audience. But that alone may not be enough to deter an actor that has on occasion expressed its indifference towards or even pride in being perceived as a rogue state by the West from articulating dissident ideas on order to the hegemon (Dudouet 2021, 243).

Absolute Sovereignty: Failures of a Weak State

Compared to Ennahda, absolute sovereignty is of greater concern to Hezbollah. Given the Lebanese political context, Hezbollah's emphasis on the right to defend state territory, the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and the need to strengthen the state's capabilities of providing security and stability is not surprising. What makes absolute sovereignty complicated for the Hezbollah case is that the group itself regularly violates these principles and undermines the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Hezbollah legitimises these practices by arguing that, where the state is too weak to exercise its sovereignty, a surrogate must be created in order to maintain external state sovereignty. This surrogate force is the Lebanese resistance.

Hezbollah's articulations of absolute sovereignty have to be viewed primarily in the context of what it understands as the Israeli threat to Lebanon: Israel violates Lebanese borders on a regular basis and, as acknowledged by international law, still occupies parts of Lebanese territory (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011f, 2012c, 2014b). As Lebanese territories and resources are under constant threat through 'the violation of air, land, and sea sovereignty' (Hezbollah 2014a, 2014c, 2015a), the state should switch to a defence mode. However, the Lebanese army is far too weak to tackle these violations by itself:

> All of us want a strong army that can act responsibly and defend the country. But, have the troops been reinforced? Has the army been armed and prepared well enough to deter the enemy from assailing Lebanon? Has the army been made powerful enough in the eyes of our enemy?! No answer. (Hezbollah 2013a)

Hezbollah denounces and despises what it perceives as the naivety of the Lebanese state regarding the Israeli threat. A telling example is its view of the Lebanese state's behaviour concerning the oil and gas reserves off the Lebanese coast. In 2011, Israel had discovered two large undersea gas fields, which saw the dispute over sea borders resurface. The two countries had drawn maps depicting diverging maritime borders, on which the claimed territories over-lapped, and, consequently, both voiced claims to the gas fields – a dispute that would not to be settled for more than a decade.[2] At the time, Hassan Nasrallah ironically commented on the bleak prospects of any decisive action by the Lebanese state in the matter, or of a plan to enforce its legitimate right to exploit these resources should the Israelis decide to insist on their version of the maritime boundaries: 'How should we defend ourselves and our oil and gas? With poetry? Banners? Neckties?' (Hezbollah 2011e).

Nasrallah's sarcastic undertone here is rather typical of his assessments of the Lebanese state's capacity to defend its borders, interests and sovereignty, especially with military means. He sees the experience of several wars with Israel as representative of what to expect from the Lebanese state when it is attacked: despite calls to defend the Lebanese south, 'the state did not respond. That was because the state was somewhere else . . . The political authority has always been in another world' (Hezbollah 2012c). The state does not recognise the magnitude of the threat posed to Lebanon by Israel, nor does it under-stand this enemy and its plans for Lebanon and the region (Hezbollah 2013a). Hezbollah, in contrast, has always been and always will be prepared to defend Lebanese sovereignty.

With the violence in neighbouring Syria escalating into a fully fledged civil war in 2012, Hezbollah identified a second external threat to Lebanon: spillovers from the civil war, especially in the form of what Hezbollah calls 'Takfirist'[3] groups penetrating the border between the two countries. Even though the borders were also violated by the Syrian army, in its discourse, Hezbollah concentrated on ANSAs who entered Lebanese territory or shelled border villages – and on the state's responsibility to address these acts of vio-lence and attacks on Lebanese sovereignty. The army should provide secu-rity on a domestic level and protect the Lebanese from 'Takfirist' attacks, including booby-trapped cars and abductions (Hezbollah 2014c). Besides this internal side to sovereignty, the army is also supposed to defend the state's

borders against foreign aggression and liberate those towns already occupied by 'Takfirist' groups (Hezbollah 2014e, 2015c, 2015k). Hezbollah not only acts as an advocate of a strong army but also promotes its active support by all Lebanese factions, sects and parties, as they all share an interest in 'preserving security, stability [and] national integrity, and defending the state' (Hezbollah 2014g). Hezbollah was careful to both foreground the threat posed by the 'Takfirists' (among other actors that penetrated the border and committed violence) and display it as a national problem which jeopardises Lebanese society as a whole, thereby framing it as an attack on the country's sovereignty (Hezbollah 2014c, 2015d) and, as Chapter 6 will demonstrate in more detail, a danger for the region as a whole.

This was, on the one hand, an attempt to avoid the impression that spillovers from the civil war were in any form attributable to Hezbollah's activities there. This type of argumentation is well known to Hezbollah from the Israeli wars against Lebanon which were blamed on its provocations at the southern border. On the other hand, Hezbollah's argumentation was also part of the construction of ISIS and other Salafi-jihadist groups as the common enemy, irrespective of sectarian belonging. In this way, Hezbollah tried to avoid treating the problem using reasoning based on intersectarian violence. Again, it held the Lebanese state fully responsible for protecting Lebanese civil peace, preventing domestic (sectarian) violence and preserving national unity (Hezbollah 2011a). It thus agrees with the widespread assessment that the Lebanese army is an important, if not the main, unifying force in Lebanon and the only armed actor or even institution that is not clearly affiliated more or less exclusively to one sect or political faction. Lebanese history had 'proven that after the collapse of everything, the disintegration of everything and the loss of everything, this institution would always be the saving rod' (Hezbollah 2011k). This emphatic declaration of support was complemented by the assertion that 'the Lebanese Army and the security systems have access to all Lebanese territories' (Hezbollah 2013d), countering those analyses that consider Hezbollah to have established a 'state within a state' and no-go areas for the state's security institutions. As the discussion of shared sovereignty in Hezbollah's discourse will show – and as anyone who has tried to visit the Lebanese south will know – the notion that Hezbollah does not challenge the Lebanese state's internal sovereignty in any way is mistaken. The insistence on absolute sovereignty

should rather be viewed as a way of immunising Hezbollah against allegations that it enjoyed (or rather, enforced) privileges regarding the use of force and territorial control in Lebanon, aggravated sectarian tensions and caused strife.

For indeed, in the domestic political context, it seems that Hezbollah's goal is to preserve unity in order to, as I will argue later, free up capabilities and extend the room for manoeuvre for its transnational projects. Part of its endeavour to stabilise Lebanese society is also its unequivocal condemnation of third-party interference in domestic affairs. Here, Hezbollah skewers US and French attempts to influence Lebanese politics, which it considers severe breaches of Lebanese sovereignty and independence (Hezbollah 2011j). Importantly, Hezbollah views the Special Tribunal for Lebanon as one of the tools at the disposal of these external forces, pursuing an agenda of changing the Lebanese political game. Again, the Lebanese state had proven to be too weak to prevent the foreign imposition of the tribunal (Hezbollah 2011c). It exhibited the same blind and willing compliance some years later, when the US imposed new sanctions on those affiliated with Hezbollah, freezing their bank accounts, and Lebanese banks, under the leadership of the Lebanese National Bank, followed suit. 'Doesn't this country have any sovereignty? Aren't there any laws? Aren't there courts? Isn't there an authority?' Nasrallah blustered (Hezbollah 2015j, 2016g).

As important as the cases of interference are those relations with third states which are not considered a threat to sovereignty by Hezbollah. While Nasrallah openly admits that Iran and Syria support Hezbollah financially and politically, this is portrayed as unproblematic in so far as the two countries do not ask for anything in return and do not try to pursue their interests by pressuring Hezbollah into a certain kind of behaviour (Hezbollah 2014g). Similarly, Hezbollah's military support of the Syrian regime through active fighting on the ground, which it officially started in 2013, is not considered an infringement of Syrian sovereignty, for it entered the war with 'approval from the Syrian government' (Hezbollah 2014a). This could be read as a confirmation of the intervention-by-invitation norm, which also legitimises the Russian intervention in Syria or the GCAD's Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq – but not, as Nasrallah reminds us, in Syria. Deploying troops to, or launching air campaigns over, foreign territory without the regime's permission violates a country's external sovereignty (Hezbollah 2014a).

Interestingly, though, Hezbollah concedes that there is potential tension between its actions in Syria and Lebanese sovereignty. This question is 'debatable' (Hezbollah 2014a), however, because it is not the Lebanese state but a non-state actor which became involved in the conflict. Nasrallah justifies this in a similar way to many other cases in which Hezbollah could be perceived or portrayed as a threat to Lebanese sovereignty: rather than undermining the state, Hezbollah complements it where it is too weak to act on its own. In the case of the Syrian war, while Hezbollah had admittedly not 'specifically [asked] the state to get the Lebanese Army deployed on the Syrian territories', Nasrallah blamed the state, declaring that 'no political or diplomatic efforts [had] been made!' (Hezbollah 2013d). In this sense, the deployment of Hezbollah fighters in Syrian territories is legitimated as a form of collective self-defence, including the defence of Lebanon against the dangers creeping across the border from Syria.

Shared Sovereignty: The Army–People–Resistance Formula

Indeed, this last line of argumentation can be seen as exemplary of a rather specific notion of shared sovereignty in Hezbollah's discourse: a shared responsibility (and authority) for the Lebanese people and territory between state institutions, the resistance and the Lebanese people. Nasrallah calls this the 'Army–People–Resistance formula' (Hezbollah 2011f, 2011h, 2011j, 2012a, 2015d, 2016e, 2016k), sometimes also the 'tripartite' (Hezbollah 2014a, 2014d) or 'golden equation' (Hezbollah 2014b). This formula is presented as an antidote against hegemonic projects by external powers in Lebanon and the Arab world more generally. Such a comprehensive form of resistance consists of three components: the military, the organised resistance and the popular resistance, sometimes also referred to as 'will of the people' (Hezbollah 2012a). The resistance project will (and can only) be successful if its three components fight side by side in defence of their country and people, as the Lebanese struggle against Israel has proven. As long as the army, Hezbollah and the people stand together, they will succeed in deterring Israel (Hezbollah 2012c, 2013f, 2015d) and other external enemies, such as the 'Takfirists' (Hezbollah 2014c, 2015e, 2015h). 'This is the formula of victory. This is the deterrence formula' (Hezbollah 2015d). Given its promise and proven success, Hezbollah makes the case for the equation to be applied in other contexts as well. More

specifically, Nasrallah names the Iraqi and Yemeni conflicts. The former has proven that 'the army is not enough' to fight against the 'Takfirists', a struggle that needs broad support from resistance by 'the popular masses who must widen to cover everybody including the Sunni and Shia tribes, all the people of Iraq including Kurds and Turkmen, and all the popular forces' (Hezbollah 2015d). As for the latter case, the formula adopted by the Yemenis is 'the Yemeni Army, the popular Yemeni resistance, and the popular Yemeni incubation [who] are standing in face of this (US–Saudi) aggression' (Hezbollah 2015d). As will be explained in Chapter 6, the 'schemes' against which Hezbollah recommends the 'formula' be applied are manifold but, over the period of investigation, were increasingly reduced into one big threat scenario.

Hezbollah uses two main arguments to justify its version of shared sovereignty. First, as the state does not have the effective monopoly on the legitimate use of force and is too weak to take action against external threats, it is dependent on a surrogate power, in the Lebanese case the armed organised resistance. This state of affairs, second, legitimises Hezbollah eluding attempts by the state, or rather its political adversaries who use the state, to stop the organisation from taking the unilateral action it considers necessary, such as deploying fighters to Syria, or to wrest power from Hezbollah in other ways. '[T]hey can't unarm us or confiscate our arms under any resolution!' Nasrallah declared (Hezbollah 2013a). If history is anything to go by,[4] these are not empty words. Hezbollah considers shared sovereignty a necessity or the result of a failure of absolute sovereignty. It deems itself competent and responsible for the external sovereignty of Lebanon. While it does not challenge the monopoly of the state in principle, it does so in practice by undermining Lebanese sovereignty internally in order to preserve the means for assuming the responsibility to defend the state's sovereignty externally – something the military is incapable of doing. In this sense, shared sovereignty is a corollary of the state's failure to perform absolute sovereignty.

Popular Sovereignty: Look Out for Oppressive Schemes

As in Ennahda's discourse, for Hezbollah, too, popular sovereignty carries the biggest normative weight, and the other sovereignty principles derive from and are legitimised by the notion that people have a right to self-determination.

This implies another similarity with the Ennahda case: conceptions of sovereignty are closely linked to considerations of legitimacy. But as Chapter 5 will demonstrate, while insubstantial and abstract allusions of 'the people' or 'popular will' suffice to make the case for self-determination, matters become more complicated when the specific meaning of these terms needs to be spelt out in order to determine the conditions under which authority, order and the resort to violence are justified. Hezbollah defines popular sovereignty *ex negativo*, that is, through what it calls oppressive schemes that infringe upon the self-determination of (Arab) peoples. Such schemes include states of occupation, the (violent) enforcement of an external will on a people and, as in the case of Ennahda, rule by a tyrant who violates the popular will.

For Hezbollah, the most serious violation of popular sovereignty is the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The state of occupation has deprived the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights to self-determination (Hezbollah 2011e, 2015a) and to 'return to their land, decision, homeland and sanctities' (Hezbollah 2011a). This also prevents the eventual establishment of 'an independent Palestinian state . . . on the entire land of Palestine from the Sea to the River' (Hezbollah 2011j), which Nasrallah considers to be the restoration of 'all . . . [the Palestinian] rights' (Hezbollah 2011k). And while he appreciates acts of recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, as he expressed when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) voted to admit Palestine as a full member in 2011,[5] even this scenario is rendered impossible by the Israeli settlement practices in the West Bank, which seize ever more territories from what would be a Palestinian state. Nasrallah interprets these policies as an attempt to Judaise Palestine and change the composition of the population living in this geographical space (Hezbollah 2011g, 2012f, 2013b). Hezbollah does not recognise Israel's right of existence, as Nasrallah has pointed out on various occasions and often using harsh words: '"Israel" is an illegitimate state and . . . it is a cancerous gland which must be eliminated from the map of existence' (Hezbollah 2012f). Achieving Palestinian popular sovereignty is impossible in an Israeli state that self-identifies as Jewish. In an interview with Julian Assange on Russia Today, Nasrallah made a rare comment on what scenario might be realistic in terms of the future of the conflict. He left no doubt that he considers the status quo illegal and what his ideal vision for

Palestine would be. At the same time, however, he proposed a rather unexpected solution which can only be interpreted as a tribute to what he calls 'political realities':

> [T]he only solution is we don't want to kill anyone, we don't want to treat anyone unjustly, we want justice to be restored . . . and the only solution is the establishment of one state – one state on the land [of] Palestine in which the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians live in peace in a democratic state.[6]

This comment somewhat nuances the uncompromising language Nasrallah uses when he talks about Israel – a word which is always put in inverted commas in the transcripts of his speeches.

The call to support the 'Palestinian cause' (Hezbollah 2016i) remains unequivocal and urgent in Hezbollah's discourse. Although it loses importance over time and cedes its role as the main unifying cause to the 'Takfirist' threat, as Chapter 6 will show, fighting for Palestinian rights is a core concern for non-Palestinians, too. For the occupation is a humiliation of all Muslims (Hezbollah 2011h) and a violation of the 'Palestinian, Arab and Islamic right' (Hezbollah 2012f). Hezbollah's take on popular sovereignty extends the 'nation' to the Arab or Muslim people (Hezbollah 2011l), which could be interpreted as having traces of both the concept of the *umma* and pan-Arabism, but may also express attempts at pragmatic alliance-building and mobilisation. The 'people' whose sovereignty is described oscillates between a specific and a more universal understanding of the nation and, in this way, mirrors how Hezbollah characterises the threat scenario at hand: Israeli and international efforts aiming to break the popular Palestinian and Arab will by both dividing the Palestinian people and separating them from other Arab peoples (Hezbollah 2011g, 2011h). While this project needs to be countered at any price (Hezbollah 2011a), the question of establishing a state and drawing its borders is 'a Palestinian affair which is decided upon by our Palestinian people' (Hezbollah 2011j). Support should therefore not be patronising or an attempt to exercise hegemony over the Palestinian people. There is an unresolved tension between the transnational dimension in Hezbollah's discursive construction of popular sovereignty and its insistence on Palestinian self-determination.

This dual sense of popular sovereignty is also evident in Hezbollah's ini-

tial reading of the Arab uprisings as a sign of popular liberation and reconstitution of an encompassing Arab will with the Palestinian cause at its heart – as mistaken as this euphoric interpretation may have turned out to be (Hezbollah 2013b). The mass protests of 2011 and their consequences are the second context in which Hezbollah evokes popular sovereignty. Remarkably, Nasrallah likens the pre-uprising situation of oppression in several countries to the Palestinian experience of occupation, which anticipates the shift to new enemy images that would later be given a similar status to Israel in Hezbollah's world order discourse. Libyan dictator Muammar el Qaddafi was denounced in this way after he began bombing his own people (Hezbollah 2011e). Even more explicitly, Nasrallah compared the Khalifa dynasty's project of replacing the Shi'i population in Bahrain by naturalising Sunni foreigners as

> a scheme similar to the Zionist project; there are settlements, a huge invasion, and an endless rapid-growing act of naturalization . . . Industrious efforts are exerted around the clock to change the identity of the Bahraini people, and a day will come when a people other than the Bahraini people will be residing in Bahrain. (Hezbollah 2015e)

Bahrainis have claimed their 'indisputable legitimate rights' (Hezbollah 2015e) against a regime which in no way respects 'the desires and expectations of this dear people' (Hezbollah 2011g). Similar to this 'popular Intifada' (Hezbollah 2016k) in Bahrain, the Yemeni people's liberation struggle was stopped by the war launched by the so-called Arab Coalition in 2015 under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Hezbollah interprets this as an attempt to 'restore US–Saudi hegemony and guardianship over Yemen after the Yemeni people [had] restored its decision and sovereignty and refused any kind of external hegemony' (Hezbollah 2015l, 2016i). The Saudi regime not only aims at 'breaking the will of the Yemeni people' (Hezbollah 2015l) but generally defies any notion of popular sovereignty, as Nasrallah suggested in an emphatic expression of solidarity for the protesting masses back in 2011:

> There is a problem in the mind which is not recognizing any so-called 'people' – the Tunisian people, the Egyptian people, the Yemeni people, and even the Gulf people, the Saudi people, the Iraqi people, movements of peoples, the will of peoples, and the causes of peoples. So, they might be 'powerful' kings

and rulers; thus, they look to people as their subjects, and consequently, the subjects mustn't have an independent will, an independent cause, nor an independent identity. (Hezbollah 2015i)

Nasrallah comes across as a firm supporter of popular sovereignty, which he describes as 'a divine norm, a natural, divine law' (Hezbollah 2011e). As 'is evident through the history of revolutions, public uprisings, and recent and post resistant acts' (Hezbollah 2011e), eventually it can no longer be suppressed. For Hezbollah, the uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya are 'true, popular revolutions' (Hezbollah 2011e).

But why, then, does Hezbollah support and even fight for the Syrian regime? Nasrallah portrays the Syrian case as fundamentally different. Although he initially still adopted a position of restraint, arguing that the 'Lebanese shouldn't interfere in what is going on in Syria, but rather let the Syrians themselves address their issues as they are able to do that' (Hezbollah 2011l), this changed with Hezbollah's interference in the Syrian war in 2013. Nasrallah declared that Syria was 'no longer a place for a public revolution against a political regime; [it had become a] place for forced implementation of a political US-West-regional puppet regimes-led scheme' (Hezbollah 2013a). This shows that Hezbollah prioritises the defence of peoples against what it identifies as attempts to impose an external will over popular sovereignty interpreted as a republican understanding of democracy or self-determination. For the Lebanese context, too, Hezbollah warns against hegemonic schemes which target the sovereignty of the Lebanese from the outside. Nasrallah denounces the Western hypocrisy manifested in assertions about 'respecting . . . the will of the Lebanese majority' (Hezbollah 2011h), on the one hand, and the meddling in the presidential elections in Lebanon (Hezbollah 2013e) or the composition of the government (Hezbollah 2011l), on the other. His reproach of interference also referred to Saudi Arabia and the pressure it exerted on its ally and the largest Sunni party, the Lebanese Future Movement (Hezbollah 2014g, 2015i). He reminded the other Lebanese parties that '[t]rue sovereignty . . . is when we, the Lebanese people, truly elect a president without receiving a password from any country in the world, whether it is a friendly, regional country, or [an] international country' (Hezbollah 2013e).

Discussion

Compared to Ennahda, more ambivalences and unresolved tensions inhibit Hezbollah's discourse on sovereignty. They arise from either the need to justify applying particular principles in different cases or a divergence of discourse from practice.

While Hezbollah calls for a strong state which performs its sovereignty in external relations and has absolute authority internally, it jeopardises the effectiveness of the state monopoly in both the external and the internal dimension. It assumes responsibility for defending Lebanese borders, as it does not deem the Lebanese state fit to protect its territory. Internally, Hezbollah challenges the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. First, it is the only militia to have kept arms after the civil war. It is also prepared to use them against Lebanese adversaries who threaten the survival of the resistance. Besides regular rhetorical assertions, Hezbollah has also proven that it is willing to make use of its power when deemed necessary, as exemplified by its successful defence against the 2008 attempt by the government to abolish Hezbollah's communications system – which Nasrallah is not shy to evoke in moments when the discourse turns against Hezbollah holding arms.[7] While such events tend to be the exception, Hezbollah also has effective control over some of the Lebanese territories, in particular in the south, the Dahieh and the Bekaa. The need to 'supplement' Lebanese state capacity so as to safeguard Lebanese sovereignty is also the justification for Hezbollah's version of shared sovereignty, the army–people–resistance formula.

Similarly, popular sovereignty is vehemently advocated, particularly in the Palestinian context, but also for the Arab peoples oppressed by their own regimes. However, when it comes to the Syrian case, the real popular will dissipates as a standard of popular sovereignty and is overridden by the need to protect Syria and the region against would-be schemes of division and heteronomy, with the protests against Bashar al-Assad being denounced as foreign instigation, representing a minority (and therefore not the popular will) or infiltrated by 'Takfirists'. While there is some consistency in Nasrallah's rejection of non-intervention and non-interference with regard to Western countries and the Gulf states, the same cannot be said about Iranian influence. For instance, financial support for the Lebanese army by Iran is unproblem-

atic, whereas Lebanese security institutions must maintain their independence from Western states. Another example is Hezbollah's intervention by invitation in Syria, which it does not consider a violation of Syrian sovereignty. But it categorically (and, one might add, with good reason; see Ruys and Ferro 2016) rejects the same argument when used by the Saudi regime to justify its intervention in Yemen. Hezbollah does advocate the principles of non-interference in other states' internal affairs and of Arab-Islamic – rather than strictly national – self-determination. But it mainly addresses these demands to the non-Arab and non-Islamic world, as well as to those who are perceived as puppets of Western interests. It argues that peoples should find their own solutions for problems and their own visions of how to coexist in autonomy. But what counts as external interference and what is accepted as the will of the people remains ambiguous.

The discursive processing of these struggles to legitimise what seems like the application of double standards and a failure to 'walk the talk' is clearly observable. But this should not be mistaken as a rejection of what was introduced as Western discourse on world order or a transgression of the boundaries of that discourse. Rather, it indicates, first, a clear awareness of existing norms and, second, a certain degree of acceptance and socialisation into those norms (similarly Dionigi 2014). In contrast to Ennahda, Hezbollah does not actively articulate its recognition of these categories of world order or seek recognition as a member of the normative community that identifies with this order. Rather, it denounces Western hypocrisy and explains – more or less plausibly – the need to diverge from established principles in certain cases and to prioritise some concepts of sovereignty over others, depending on context.

It is noteworthy that absolute and popular sovereignty seem deeply internalised in Hezbollah's normative system and are depicted as 'natural' standards in its order discourse. Indeed, Nasrallah feels that explanation is necessary when Hezbollah's behaviour appears to fall short of meeting those standards. Still, there is one category that clearly challenges and is meant to challenge concepts of sovereignty in Western discourse: the 'golden formula' is a Hezbollah innovation and transforms the meaning of shared sovereignty that prevails in Western discourse. But this should not be interpreted as amounting to a rejection of Western world order. Not only is the formula still of minor importance compared to absolute and popular sovereignty, its normative value is also

derived from the latter. Moreover, the context of armed conflict in recent history, the immediate neighbourhood and lingering danger in everyday politics needs to be factored into any assessment of how dissident this innovation is. It should therefore be interpreted as an element of resistance in Hezbollah's discourse, which is otherwise marked by recognition of the Western-dominated world order – despite regular assertions to the contrary and a clear rejection of hegemony. For sovereignty, this apparent contradiction is more than plausible – for the principles of absolute and popular sovereignty are by no means exclusively Western concepts. On the contrary, Western discourse connected them to racial hierarchies and is what made them exclusive to the white and male culture for a long time. In this sense, the recognition and confirmation of both sovereignty concepts by Ennahda and Hezbollah should not be seen as surprising. Rather, it reveals that the two groups originate in an Islamist and therefore anti-colonial movement, making absolute and popular sovereignty a tool against heteronomy and hegemony.

Notes

1. 'A democratic state is a strong state. There is no contradiction between respecting the law and using force within legal limits against those who benefited from the weakness of state institutions or who thought that the state was weak.'
2. See BBC News (2011). It was eventually resolved in October 2022 when, with the help of US diplomacy, a deal was struck and a new line drawn to redefine the two exclusive economic zones (Schaer 2022).
3. 'Takfirist' is a term used for those persons or groups who adhere to the concept and practice of *takfir*, by which individuals or groups are defined as *kuffār* (infidels) or *murtaddūn* (apostates). ISIS's conception of *takfir* differs from how other Salafi-jihadist organisations like al-Qaʿida use the concept. While the two organisations 'follow a similar ideology and the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and Qutb have stimulated both' (Kadivar 2020, 265), they differ with regard to whom they prioritise as targets of violence, justified on the basis of *takfir*, and what means they consider legitimate (Kadivar 2020).
4. A telling example is the violence that erupted over the attempt of the Future Moverment-led government to investigate and potentially deprive Hezbollah of its telecommunication system. The latter connects the Lebanese south to the Bekaa valley and the Dahieh and, thus, three Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon. The party considers it the 'most importan[t] weapon in the resistance ever' (Hezbollah

2012b). To what it perceived as a threat to this core technology, Hezbollah reacted by blocking the road to the airport and seizing control of West Beirut. Fearing an internal sectarian split, the Lebanese military forces did not intervene in the conflict. A private militia under Saad al-Hariri and the ISF could not defy Hezbollah and the allied armed groups that supported it.

5. https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/10/393562 (accessed 12 October 2023).

6. This is an extract from an interview with Hassan Nasrallah in the first episode of *The Julian Assange Show*, aired on Russia Today in 2012. The transcript can be found here: https://web.archive.org/web/20120425030505/https:/worldtomorrow.wikileaks.org/static/pdf/Assange%20Nasrallah%20Broadcast%20Interview.pdf (accessed 6 November 2023).

7. See note 4.

5

LEGITIMACY

Ennahda

To the astonishment of observers, Ennahda's president, Rached al-Ghannouchi, declared after the tenth party congress in 2016: '*Il n'y a plus de justification à l'islam politique en Tunisie. On sort de l'islam politique pour entrer dans la démocratie musulmane. Nous sommes des musulmans démocrates qui ne se réclament plus de l'islam politique*' (Ennahda 2016d).[1] As this chapter will show, Ennahda wrestled with the question of political legitimacy and how to build a political order in post-2011 Tunisia to such an extent that it even recast its own identity as an Islamist party and movement, but also renegotiated the relationship between and altered the meanings of democracy and Islam, just as other Islamists in North Africa have (for the Moroccan case, see Khanani 2021). Ennahda's discourse on legitimacy between 2011 and 2016 is extraordinarily sophisticated and complex, and it testifies to the internal and external struggles it endured after the ousting of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. This chapter cannot outline all the nuances in Ennahda's understanding of political legitimacy. Instead, it seeks to give an impression of the distinct ideas and core building blocks of Ennahda's very own take on what legitimate political order in Tunisia and the world should look like: a culturally and religiously imbued, consensus-based democracy which is embedded in peaceful, respectful and economically just interna-

tional relations and a multipolar world marked by the plurality of the orders it embraces.

Another caveat is that Ennahda's legitimacy considerations are introversive in the sense that they focus primarily on the Tunisian context – which is a noteworthy contrast to Hezbollah and telling with regard to differences in the self-conception of the two groups. However, Ennahda is, at the same time, very aware of the necessity to take the global order into account if Tunisia's political system is to have a future – and if Ennahda itself wants to survive. Given the deeply rooted scepticism towards Islamist actors in Western decision-makers' perception of the region, Ennahda has to navigate its suggestions for order as well as its self-representation to the world through international expectations and pressures from its own members and constituency. One normative structure which restrains Ennahda's articulations of order and identity is secularism, which has become a 'standard of recognition of political actors (and orders) as legitimate' (Pfeifer 2019, 479). Ennahda's discourse has to be interpreted with an international 'overhearing audience' (Heritage 1985) in mind which tends to fear and distrust Islamists. This also means that there may be some strategic choices involved when it comes to choosing what (not) to say in statements that are intended to or at least might reach this audience. This might be one explanation for the quantitative importance of certain claims about legitimacy and the relatively low prevalence or absence of others.[2]

In a nutshell, Ennahda attempted to mark a clear break with the old regime while simultaneously avoiding the risk of being banned by secular political forces which had emerged from old cadres; to introduce Islam into the nascent democratic system without nourishing the fear that it, like other Islamists, had a hidden agenda and intended to capture the state (Netterstrøm 2015); to signal and seek consensus and recognition without sacrificing core parts of its platform; and to solicit international support while simultaneously claiming Tunisian autonomy. The following portrayal of Ennahda's legitimacy discourse mirrors these discursive strategies and struggles.

Individual-based Legitimacy: Elections, Institutions, (Women's) Rights

An important part of Ennahda's legitimacy discourse is dedicated to what could be called the fundamental institutions of a democracy which are justified by referring to the individual – if only implicitly, by following an individualist

and aggregative logic of reasoning. These institutions constitute the bones of what Ennahda envisions as a post-Ben Ali political system in Tunisia and were particularly present in Ennahda's discourse from the immediate aftermath of the revolution to the conclusion of the constitutional process in 2014. For Ennahda, elections as well as institutions that are legitimated by elections and follow the logic of the separation of powers, thereby protecting the individual against the state, and equal individual rights and freedoms are at the core of Tunisia's political transition. These institutions fulfil one of the revolutionaries' central demands, the demand for (political) freedom.[3] In this sense, elections, accountable institutions and individual rights and freedoms are priorities for Ennahda, not least because the old regime had provided none of them.

Elections grant immediate legitimacy (Ennahda 2011f) by consolidating individual wills in the will of the people. Elections are seen as a matter of priority because they can bestow legitimacy upon other institutions and are a *conditio sine qua non* for legitimate rule (Ennahda 2011f, 2011o, 2012z, 2012ak). Through competitive elections, people should 'engage positively and go to the ballot box in order to choose those most able, truthful, competent, and trustworthy to represent [them]' (Ennahda 2014e). Moreover, a considerable symbolic power inheres in elections, as they marked the end of dictatorship in 2011 (Ennahda 2011m, 2011n, 2012s) and, with the second legislative and presidential elections in 2014 which put in place the first 'full-term democratically elected government' (Ennahda 2014f), concluded Tunisia's democratic transition (Ennahda 2014p). Although Ennahda initially rigorously rejected participation by successors of the old regime (Ennahda 2012ad), it eventually agreed to letting Nidaa Tounes run in the elections of 2014. The meeting between the two party leaders, Ghannouchi and Essebsi, in Paris seems to have contributed significantly to this decision (Interview 3).

Ennahda foregrounded the normative quality of elections especially when it was attacked for having created an Islamist-dominated cabinet. This was particularly pronounced in the phase of the Ennahda-led Troika governments between 2011 and 2013. The discontent with the Troika culminated in two events. First, in mid-2012, Nidaa Tounes was founded as an umbrella organisation for disillusioned members of the NCA and old regime cadres. As some delegates from the NCA joined the new anti-Islamist party, this led to the peculiar situation that Nidaa Tounes had seats in the NCA, even though it had

not run in the 2011 elections. Second, the pressure of street politics and the increasing escalation of conflicts between the opposition and the government – or rather Ennahda – led NCA president Mustafa Ben Jafar to unilaterally suspend the assembly's activity. The only elected Tunisian body was further sidelined when civil society organisations, in particular the UGTT, pushed for a process of 'national dialogue' and then, in 2013, formed the 'Quartet', a consortium of trade unions and NGOs in the field of human rights and law that mediated between conflicting political parties and moderated the transition process.

Ennahda insisted that elected bodies were the only ones with 'democratic legitimacy' (Ennahda 2014p), thereby initially questioning the initiatives that emerged from society. But the further the transition advanced, the less pronounced Ennahda's references to the legitimising power of elections were. For the majority that a party gains in elections can never produce a sufficient amount of legitimacy in times of transition and laying the foundations of a political system: 'We chose to strengthen the transition by building it on a higher level of legitimacy – one based on consensus, not majority,' the party argued in early 2014 (Ennahda 2014f) – and thus at a time when it still had the clear majority in the NCA and was the dominant party in the government. Ennahda deems elections an indispensable mechanism for 'the peaceful alternation of power' (Ennahda 2011b, 2012aj), but there are limits to the importance it attaches to them, even if it is the winner. After its landslide victory in 2011, for instance, it immediately chose to form a coalition government with two secular parties and made considerable concessions during its time in government. This indicates that Ennahda was aware of the precarious nature of its incumbency and, even more importantly, of its survival as a party should it give an impression of Islamist domination. Ennahda had learnt a painful lesson from the Muslim Brotherhood's fate in Egypt, where the military coup against President Morsi brought an abrupt end to the experiment of Islamists in government. It is in this context that Ennahda re-emphasised that elections are the single most important mechanism to organise a legitimate transition of power (Ennahda 2013s, 2013t, 2013aa). Ennahda also reminded the Western powers of their responsibility to recognise election results, which they had done in 2011 but failed to do on various occasions before that when they had been displeased with the results (Ennahda 2012d, 2016j). The narrative

of the dangerous Islamists who, through winning elections, would capture and monopolise state power and dissolve democratic institutions had often served as an argument against free and fair elections in Middle Eastern countries (Ennahda 2013f).

Besides elections, according to Ennahda, the establishment of accountable institutions is of utmost importance to prevent any backsliding to authoritarianism (Ennahda 2011c). The fear of concentrating too much power in the hands of a single person was behind both Ennahda's calls for nurturing a thriving civil society and its promotion of a parliamentary system, rather than the presidential system favoured by Nidaa Tounes. With regard to its support for a strong civil society, Ennahda explained that a 'balance between state and society' (Ennahda 2011i) can only be achieved through mutual independence: NGOs, unions and other civil society actors must be protected against an invasive state. Conversely, civil society has to accept the primacy of political institutions when it comes to the democratic organisation of public life. Ennahda envisioned the development of 'a new political culture clarifying and distinguishing the roles and functions of all public space stakeholders, in a spirit of cooperation and distinction' (Ennahda 2012y). This included 'professional, credible, constructive, unbiased' media (Ennahda 2012v), Ennahda claimed, though it simultaneously faced allegations of opaque media and funding practices, including '"Qatari-inspired influence" in both private and public broadcasting media' (Kausch 2013, 7). As for the question of the political system, the NCA eventually opted for a semi-presidential system, with a directly elected president and an indirectly elected prime minister, both with significant powers. During the transition phase, Ennahda considered the NCA an exemplary institution. Calls for dissolving it grew louder in 2013, when the security situation deteriorated, two members of the Front Populaire were assassinated and members of the NCA and the government began to withdraw from office. But Ennahda maintained its unflinching commitment 'to the constituent assembly as the cornerstone of [Tunisia's] emerging democracy' in the face of 'anarchist calls for its dissolution' (Ennahda 2013aj).

Ennahda was wary of any demands to suspend or abolish state institutions, attributing them to counterrevolutionary forces. It was of the view that both anarchists and former regime cadres were trying to 'topple democratic legitimacy' (Ennahda 2013k) and imitate the Egyptian military coup (Ennahda

2013a). The party continually praised the Tunisian military for its tradition of neutrality and the civil state as a cornerstone of democracy. Legal institutions gained importance in Ennahda's discourse when political violence escalated in 2012 and 2013. The party was confronted with allegations that it turned a blind eye to the Salafist motivation behind, or was even implicated in, the attacks on the US embassy in September 2012 and the assassination of Chokri Belaïd, the human rights activist and leftist politician of the Front Populaire in February 2013. Being part of the incumbent government, Ennahda was expected to demonstrate that it could handle Tunisia's security problems. At the same time, however, it did not want to alienate its constituency, which at least partly sympathised with the Salafists. In its discourse, this manifested, on the one hand, in strong advocacy for the neutral and rigorous investigation of all incidents of political violence, irrespective of the suspected political background (Ennahda 2012y, 2013f): the 'law applies to anyone violating it, and . . . no one is above the law,' Ennahda asserted (Ennahda 2013f, 2013g). On the other hand, it also invested in discourse to counter a collective demonisation of Tunisian Salafists. No one, Ennahda claimed, should be judged or persecuted for their convictions – but if, and only if, they committed crimes, Salafists were to subject to prosecution like anyone else (Ennahda 2012e, 2013f).

An independent judiciary was also extremely important in the context of the transitional justice process (see also Salehi 2022). The latter involved, among other things, trials against those who committed crimes, in particular human rights violations and the misappropriation of public funds. Ennahda was careful not to create the impression that the trials were politicised and arbitrarily targeting old regime members. At the same time, the population had high expectations that justice would be done, and Ennahda wanted to avoid any forms of vigilantism, revenge or collective punishment (Ennahda 2011a). Again, Ennahda opted for the creation of institutions. Under the Troika government, the Truth and Dignity Commission was established in order to provide 'a judicial process guided by human rights and rule of law to help us turn the page on the past' (Ennahda 2014i) and formally started work in June 2014.

Finally, Ennahda made it an 'utmost priority . . . to guarantee freedoms: personal freedoms, social freedoms, and women's rights' (Ennahda 2011c, 2012c) and declared the realisation of individual liberties and rights for all Tunisians, 'regardless of their religion, sex, or any other consideration'

(Ennahda 2012ag, 2013i, 2014k), as the primary goal of the constitution. Despite this emphasis on equal rights, one group stands out in Ennahda's individualist legitimacy claims: women. What is even more remarkable than the importance of women in Ennahda's discourse is the party's gender quotas compared to other Tunisian parties and Arab (or, for that matter, non-Arab) countries and parties. Of forty-nine female representatives elected to the NCA in 2011, a total of forty-two were from Ennahda. Not only did female Islamists account for 40 per cent of the party's MPs in 2016, Ennahda was also the only party to nominate women to executive and leadership positions, such as Meherzia Labidi as vice president of the NCA (Ennahda 2016g). There are two main explanations for the pronounced role women play for Ennahda. First, women's rights are an important discursive field for delegitimising and marking a break with the old regime. For a long time, the feminist movement in Tunisia had been divided between Islamists and secularists. The latter accused the former that their feminism was a reproduction of Islamic conservatism and that many of them did not really accept women's rights as an integral part of human rights. Conversely, Islamists condemned the closeness of the secularist feminists to the old regime, denouncing it as a form of exclusive and repressive state feminism (Jünemann 2017). One reason for Ennahda's commitment to women's rights is therefore that it is almost a traditional cleavage constituting the Islamist and secular identities in Tunisia. According to Ennahda, the old regime presented itself as a defender of women, while, in fact, the latter remained in a precarious and often marginalised situation, deprived of equal rights (Ennahda 2011j). One example of the authoritarian version of laicism as practised under the Ben Ali regime is the question of the headscarf. The regime had stripped women of their right to wear a headscarf in public institutions (Ennahda 2014c), thereby denying them religious freedom. Women should neither be forced to wear a headscarf nor prevented from doing so, and Ennahda's female politicians are leading by example in this regard (Ennahda 2011r).

Second, however, it was precisely such attempts to reconfigure gender politics that made Tunisian adversaries and international observers distrustful of Ennahda's intentions. In this sense, the overhearing audience determines Ennahda's discursive priorities yet again – and it is probably one of the (Western) clichés about Islamists that they undermine gender equality and

deprive women of their rights. On several occasions, Ennahda actively fought what it perceived as a misrepresentation of its policies and views on women by Western media, asking them to officially apologise and put more effort into their investigations and reporting (Ennahda 2012h, 2014u). It maintained its commitment to the Tunisian Personal Status Code when accused of planning to abolish the very same policy, reintroduce polygamy or force women to wear headscarves (Ennahda 2011r, 2012g). And yet, some of Ennahda's ideas continued to be seen as ambivalent. For instance, it suggested including an article on the complementarity of man and woman in the constitution, arguing that it would 'not contradict the concept of equality, [but rather constitute] a reflection of equality. Complementarity means that women complement men, and men complement women. Because they need one another, they supplement each other' (Ennahda 2013w). Ennahda's critics saw this as a thinly veiled attempt to reintroduce legal inequality through the back door.

As for its take on women's rights, Ennahda not only claimed compatibility between individual rights and Islam but even argued that the former were directly derived from the latter: 'Islam was revealed to establish human rights. This is the very essence of Islam' (Ennahda 2011f, 2011r). At the same time, it was careful to showcase its advocacy for religious freedom and freedom of conscience, for 'people are completely free in their belief . . . and there is a verse in Koran that says there is no compulsion in religion' (Ennahda 2011r, 2012ag). On various occasions, the party has emphasised the need to protect religious minorities, especially the old Jewish community in Tunisia (Ennahda 2012j, 2012ah). Again, Ennahda's discursive commitments did not remain without tensions. When Salafist groups organised – partly violent – demonstrations against films and artworks because of their 'blasphemous' quality in 2011 and 2012, Ennahda issued a statement which advocated the 'freedom of expression and creativity within the values of co-existence' (Ennahda 2012a). The latter refers to the offence potentially taken by believers who perceive media and art as hostile towards Islam. Ennahda was heavily criticised for its stance on the issue by some of its own members and religious authorities such as Houcine Laabidi, the chairman of the Zaytouna Mosque. The latter strongly condemned the artworks as sacrilegious, even 'calling for the death of the artists for their blasphemous work' (Cesari 2014, 250). Ennahda responded by issuing a statement in defence of the Salafists' 'right to freely express their views

and all their rights' (Ennahda 2012f). But this clashed with the expectations of its secular counterparts in government and opposition. They wanted Ennahda to clearly position itself in favour of freedom of expression and to defend it against calls for restrictions based on blasphemy claims. Ennahda's discursive ambivalence remained restricted, which may indicate both that it considered certain matters settled with the adoption of the constitution in 2014 and that it had experience of navigating through the troubled waters of the religion/ politics question. To achieve the former, its politics of consensus was crucial, whereas the latter was the result of its sophisticated conception of Islamic democracy. Both will be discussed in the following two subsections.

Community-based Legitimacy: Islamic Democracy

If what was presented as individualist elements in Ennahda's discourse of legitimacy constitutes the bones of the party's ideas of legitimate authority, its vision of an Islamic democracy puts flesh on those bones. At the same time, it also represents Ennahda's take on community-based legitimacy, which consists of two interdependent dimensions: Islamic/cultural democracy and state neutrality. These are held together by one argument: democracy needs to be adapted to the society for which it is built. There is no single, abstract model of democracy that could serve as a blueprint for all societies. While Ennahda does acknowledge some degree of (global) norm convergence, it still holds that every country, society and world region, each with its own history, deserves its own model of democracy. The quality and detail of the arguments Ennahda presented in its elaborations on Islamic democracy are remarkable, which is a direct result of Ghannouchi's influence as a political theorist. In terms of prevalence, however, the topic is less present in Ennahda's discourse than others. Again, this may be due to not wanting to overemphasise Islam to an international public (and domestic opponents), which in fact culminated in Ennahda's outright renunciation of its Islamist identity in 2016. But there is also a more practical reason for the relatively marginal position of this topic: it may simply be too abstract to guide everyday political action.

Similar to its individual legitimacy claims, Ennahda's story of an Islamic democracy starts, first, with the failures of the old regime which had deprived Tunisia of its cultural heritage and Islamic identity. Ennahda believes in the 'validity of Islam and its heritage as a value and cultural reference and a basis

for [Tunisia's] project of reform and modernisation through *ijtihad* (creative interpretation) [and] *tajdid* (renewal)' (Ennahda 2011b). The new political system should be informed by 'values stemming from the cultural and civilizational heritage and Arab Islamic identity of Tunisian society' (Ennahda 2011b). Ennahda claims that this identity is unequivocal among Tunisians: '*Notre identité ne fait pas débat parmi les Tunisiens. Nous sommes un pays arabo-musulman: c'est un fait partagé par tous*' (Ennahda 2011d).[4] Of course, this glosses over important differences. Besides ignoring religious and ethnic minorities, such as Christians, Jews and Amazigh, this representation downplays the affectively laden quality of both religious and secular identities. In Tunisia, the secular–Islamist divide was probably the most important cleavage in the post-authoritarian era (Pfeifer 2017) and clearly a manifestation of profound identity conflicts. Nevertheless, Ennahda presented the supposed homogeneity of Tunisia's Arab-Muslim society as an asset compared to other transitioning societies in the neighbourhood that had to cope with sectarian and ethnic difference (Ennahda 2012d). As will be discussed in the next subsection on the politics of consensus, Ennahda's assessment that Tunisian identity was non-controversial among political parties turned out to be wrong and led to some surprises during the constitution-making process (Cesari 2014, 243–7).

Second, another known motive is Ennahda's rejection of misrepresentations of Islam. Muslims have often been portrayed 'as unworthy of democracy, or their political culture as rooted in the philosophy of "oriental despotism"' (Ennahda 2014i, 2014ae), and 'Islamic democracy' (Ennahda 2011e) tends to be seen as a contradiction in terms. But Ennahda considers them to be natural allies: 'Democracy thrives with Islam and Islam thrives with democracy. They . . . are intimate and co-existent couples and friends' (Ennahda 2012f). Democratic principles 'reflect the Islamic principles of consultation, justice and accountability' (Ennahda 2011i), of consensus and of the rejection of tyranny (Ennahda 2012aj). In the aftermath of the revolution, Ennahda frequently referenced the Turkish AKP as an exemplary model of a Muslim democratic agenda. Conversely, Ennahda claimed that many Turks were inspired by Ghannouchi's political thought. But with growing political tensions between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his European counterparts, revolving, among others, around state violence in response to the Gezi Park protests

in 2013 and the government reactions to the coup attempt in 2016, the reference lost appeal or even did a disservice to Ennahda, as it seemed to confirm all suspicions about Islamists (Marks 2017).

For Ennahda, the model of Islamic democracy is distinct from the Western model of democracy. The latter is based on individualism and treats 'members of society like separate islands, all living separately with no . . . solidarity between them' (Ennahda 2012g). Moreover, it bears the traces of a specific European history with distinctive problems and responses to them. One of these legacies is secularism (Ennahda 2012ag). The distinct nature of the European experience means that Western secularism cannot simply be transferred to Muslim contexts. 'Islam, since its inception, has always combined religion with politics, religion [with] state' (Ennahda 2012ag). What is more, secular settlements in the West are by no means unitary – and often less secular than they seem. Religion informs politics in the US (Ennahda 2012ac, 2012ag) and the Christian Democratic Union rules in Germany – but 'when we speak of Islam and democracy, it's [considered] blasphemy' (Ennahda 2015ab). Ennahda constructs French laicism or 'comprehensive secularity' (Ennahda 2012ac), with its total exclusion of religion from public life, as a form of secular extremism and the antipode to its own ideas of legitimate order. It hollows politics out and strips it of ethics, giving way to fierce and raw capitalism:

> [The] total stripping of the state from religion would turn the state into a mafia, and the world economic system into an exercise in plundering, and politics into deception and hypocrisy. And this is exactly what happened in the Western experience . . . International politics became the preserve of a few financial brokers owning the biggest share of capital and by extension the media, through which they ultimately control politicians. (Ennahda 2012ag)

Ennahda considers religion to be a fundamental moral source of political life and the state – it is the ethical foundation of politics and gives the state and politics a normative purpose by providing answers to

> the big question[s] . . . those relating to our existence, origins, destiny, and the purpose for which we were created, and [by] provid[ing] us with a system of values and principles that would guide our thinking, behaviour, and the regulations of the state to which we aspire. (Ennahda 2012ag)

The challenge, then, is that Islam is not univocal, nor does it possess an authoritative interpretation or an interpretative authority that could create one, like an equivalent to the church (Ennahda 2012ah). Islam needs to be put into practice through laws made according to 'Islamic values as understood at [a] particular time and place' (Ennahda 2012ag) and through 'the democratic mechanism [as] the best embodiment of the Shura (consultation) value in Islam' (Ennahda 2012ag). In practical terms, in a democracy this implies that deliberation determines what Islamic teachings mean and that the parliament 'translate(s) the Arabic Islamic identity' (Ennahda 2012ah) into laws.

In Ennahda's model of democracy, passing on Islamic values and education more generally occupy a prominent place. Children and migrants should be socialised into 'Arab and Islamic values' (Ennahda 2011b, 2012a, 2014e) and politicians need to be familiarised with the teachings of Islam (Ennahda 2012ag). Ennahda argues that a 'balanced identity provides democracy with the foundations it needs to exist and flourish, and protects society from extremism and radicalism' (Ennahda 2014z). Institutions like the Zaytouna Mosque and its reformist tradition of thought are at the centre of an educational project aimed at attaining such a balanced identity (Ennahda 2012a). Excluding religion from the public sphere, in contrast, only feeds extremism (Ennahda 2014g). It is Ennahda's core belief that '"[d]emocratic Islam" is the antidote and alternative to all forms of terrorism' (Ennahda 2014ae, 2014af, 2016j). Showing that 'prosperity and democracy can emerge and develop within our own culture and are not unattainable nor do they have to be imposed by external intervention' (Ennahda 2011f) is the best argument against terrorism. It demonstrates that the 'apparent choice between Islam and democracy that ISIS insists Muslims must make is just . . . false' (Ennahda 2016h). According to Ennahda, extremism results from a lack of real knowledge about Islam. It presents religion as incompatible with modernity and democracy, thereby destroying Islam's true image (Ennahda 2014aa, 2014af, 2014ah, 2015n). There are, therefore, limits to what Ennahda considers to be reasonable and legitimate interpretations of Islam. While the party rejects state control of mosques and imams in principle, it contends 'that extremists took advantage of the security vacuum [after the revolution] to take over 20 percent of the country's mosques' (Ennahda 2015i). This is why, when it was in government with the Troika coalition, Ennahda tried

to bring 'nearly 1,000 mosques back under the control of moderate clerics' (Ennahda 2015i).

There is a certain tension between these policies and state neutrality, the second pillar of Ennahda's Islamic democracy (see also Donker and Netterstrøm 2017). Whereas state neutrality is associated with the state's independence from the church (Taylor 2011), Ennahda proposes a more comprehensive understanding: the state needs to be protected against both Islamist and secular extremism. The former 'would like to impose [a single] understanding of Islam from above using state tools and apparatuses . . . [whereas the latter] aspires to strip the state, educational curricula, and national culture of all Islamic influences' (Ennahda 2012ag). The state should enforce neither one single model of religion nor strict secularism – this is the lesson to be learnt from the history of Muslim societies, which diverges from the European experience.

> While the problematique in the west revolved around ways of liberating the state from religion and led to destructive wars, in our context the problem is one of liberating religion from the state and preventing it from dominating religion, and keeping the latter in the societal realm . . . (Ennahda 2012ag)

While a separation of religion and politics is alien to the Islamic tradition, according to Ennahda, it has distinguished between the religious and the political since its inception. Ennahda alludes to the *ṣaḥīfa*, sometimes referred to as the Constitution of Medina and implemented after the Prophet Mohamed's *hijra* from Mecca to Yathrib (subsequently known as Medina) in 622 (Arjomand 2009). The document regulated relations between two religious nations, the Muslims and the Jews of Medina, which constituted a political nation (*umma*) under one constitution.[5] According to Ennahda, two spheres can be distinguished: the 'system of transactions/dealings (*Mu'amalat*)' is the 'domain of searching for the general interest' and demands practical reason to interpret Islam's teachings in light of political and societal circumstances (Ennahda 2012ag). In contrast, the system of 'worship (*'Ibadat*)' is 'the domain of constancy and observance' in which 'reason cannot reach the truth' (Ennahda 2012ag). Democratic politics are a method for handling the plurality of interpretations in the first of these two domains (Ennahda 2012ah).

One implication of state neutrality is the realisation of certain individual rights, such as freedom of conscience and religion, which notably includes

the free practice of religion without any restrictions in the name of secular-
ism (Ennahda 2011i, 2011r). But it also proscribes the imposition of a 'single
all-powerful interpretation of Islam' (Ennahda 2011e, 2011f, 2014ah) by
the state. Such a religious state would seriously harm the principle of popu-
lar sovereignty (Ennahda 2012g), as discussed in Chapter 4. In a democracy,
'[w]e don't want a theocracy on top of parliament,' Ennahda affirmed (2013i).
Conversely, the state should leave it to religious scholars to interpret Islam and
it is not supposed to interfere with religious institutions, for example, by train-
ing imams or controlling mosques (Ennahda 2015u).

As the need to react to religious extremism and terrorism shows, how-
ever, Ennahda's principles have sometimes been challenged by the practical
needs of running a country. Besides, Ennahda's version of Islamic democracy
of course also faced principled opposition in Tunisia, and Ennahda had to
walk the line between Islamist identity and the compatibility of its suggestions
with the views of the masses several times, sometimes slipping to one side or
the other. One such glitch occurred briefly after the NCA elections in 2011.
Hamadi Jebali, then designated prime minister, gave a talk in Sousse where he
evoked the notion of a 'sixth caliphate' in Tunisia. This statement unsettled
Tunisians and notably Ennahda's coalition partner at the time, Ettakatol. But
Ennahda was quick to respond to this debate and remove the 'ambiguities'
from Jebali's speech: '[L']allusion à la "khilafa arrachida" visait simplement
à s'inspirer de nos valeurs et notre patrimoine politique et de l'héritage civili-
sationnel de la société tunisienne à laquelle nous sommes fiers d'appartenir,'[6]
it declared (Ennahda 2011o). Ennahda's ideas faced another important test
when the question of whether or not to introduce the shari'a into the constitu-
tion was on the table. Ennahda had officially taken a position against this. But
'after the elections [of 2011], [some] Ennahda leaders voiced different stances
on the issue' (Cesari 2014, 245), partly due to the pressure exerted on the party
by Salafists to adhere to clearly Islamic positions. Again, Ennahda found an
argumentative workaround, stating that 'Tunisian law [was already] largely
based on Sharia. Sharia never left our country – hence it does not need to be
"returned"' (Ennahda 2012ac).

In an attempt both to put an end to what seemed like interminable alle-
gations and distrust against the party and to consolidate the image of being
a firm champion of Tunisian democracy, Ennahda surprised observers at its

tenth party congress in May 2016 when it officially renounced its Islamist identity. From then on, it wanted to be known as a party of Muslim democrats (Ennahda 2016a) or 'a democratic party inspired by an Islamic reference' (Ennahda 2016a). The relabelling went hand in hand with more pronounced advocacy for a stronger separation and differentiation of societal spheres. Drawing a sharper distinction between the state and society would allow for more specialisation and free 'those working [in societal fields such as religion] from obstruction and from dependence on political changes' (Ennahda 2016a), thereby making society as a whole stronger. Religion would then be able to reassume 'its role of unification rather than division' (Ennahda 2016p). In a similar vein, Ennahda itself would specialise in political action as the most important aspect of the party's work (Ennahda 2016c).

What seemed like a drastic change in Ennahda's identity and platform provoked a raft of international reactions. The American news channel Cable News Network (CNN) claimed that Tunisia was 'now in the middle of another historic shift: the separation of Islam and politics' and deemed this a 'dramatic and democratic turn' in Tunisian politics.[7] In an interview, Ghannouchi explained that it was high time for the party to take this step of specialisation within the framework of a modern constitution, but quickly added that no one was asking Muslims to separate their beliefs from politics in their minds. His statement seemed to confirm the impression of a radical break. Yet the above analysis questions the extent to which a change of label is also a change in substance. As Monica Marks argues, Ennahda's public statement that it was changing from an Islamist to a Muslim democratic actor was not a U-turn in the party's history but a logical step in its ideological development: '[Adopting] the term "Muslim democrat" indicates less a shift in how nahdawis see themselves . . . than an effort to help media and outside actors understand the party on its own terms' (Marks 2016, 5–6). Ghannouchi's speech at the party congress in 2016 casts a soupçon of doubt on Marks's assessment that Ennahda leaving political Islam behind adds to a more or less coherent picture of a party coming of age. He ended it very emotionally, crying in front of thousands of Nahdawis gathered for the occasion. As with other instances of Ennahda's discourse, the recasting of its identity could be interpreted as one of the more painful concessions to (transnational) normative structures and sceptics of the party, including Tunisian adversaries and

Western political actors reluctant to interact with Ennahda on an equal footing (Pfeifer 2019). Ennahda was very aware, it seems, that the 'Islamist' label would always associate it with threat images in the Western mind, which tends to lump Islamism, jihadism and terrorism together (see Chapter 1). Giving up political Islam, then, was a bitter pill to swallow for the sake of building consensus in Tunisia, improving the prospects of finding partners outside the country and thereby, not least, securing the party's survival.

Outbidding Deliberative Legitimacy: Politics of Consensus

If Ennahda's method were to be summarised in one phrase, it would be 'consensus-building'. Indeed, while the aforementioned bones and flesh are the substance of its political vision, the politics of consensus became its core strategy for political action and party survival. Behind this method are substantial fears for the fate of Tunisia and Ennahda itself. Ennahda considers transitional phases a very sensitive time for a country and society. The risk of irreconcilable polarisation among different political and societal actors is heightened and, in the worst case, transitional societies might drift into violence. Ennahda's consensus-seeking was particularly pronounced in the run-up to the adoption of the Tunisian constitution in 2014 but also remained its signature move afterwards – and the language became even stronger. While Ennahda had advocated cooperation and dialogue and clarified the need for concessions and reasonable arguments when it led the Troika governments between 2011 and 2013, it shifted to a rhetoric of consensus from 2014 onwards. The 2014 elections relegated the party to second place after Nidaa Tounes, reviving fears of Ennahda being excluded again from the government or, worse still, the entire political system. Ennahda was also aware that, after the conclusion of the political transition, painful processes of economic transformation would have to be tackled next. For this, it considered a broad consensus indispensable.

Ennahda publicly declared its shift towards dialogue and cooperation immediately after the Tunisian elections of 2011, seeking a coalition that would resolutely bridge the dominant cleavage between Islamists and secularists (Ennahda 2011a, 2012l, 2013e). Mere coexistence of the two trends would not be enough. Rather, power-sharing and substantial cooperation were to be sought, and 'Islamists [had] to work with others' (Ennahda 2011a, 2011e, 2013al). In this respect, Ennahda considered the Troika a resounding

success and an 'inspiring example of Islamic–secular co-operation for the greater national interest' (Ennahda 2011i). The only *conditio sine qua non* for any such cooperation was a commitment to breaking with the dictatorship (Ennahda 2012i, 2012o, 2013ad).

The modus operandi for cooperation is dialogue – a form of communication in which Ennahda is particularly skilled due to its internal culture of and profound appreciation for pluralism, difference and self-criticism (Ennahda 2011j, 2011m, 2012a, 2012ab, 2012ai, 2013f, 2013ae, 2016e). Dialogue is the 'language of reason' (Ennahda 2012u), the only civil method of processing conflict (Ennahda 2012t), and has the potential to prevent violent means of dealing with difference (Ennahda 2012v, 2013ad). Ennahda insists that, rather than demonising them, dialogue should be pursued with Salafists, too (Ennahda 2012v, 2013ai). For they can change their convictions and be persuaded to abandon the path of violence (Ennahda 2012d). Ennahda, it seems, firmly believes in 'the unforced force of the better argument' (Habermas 1996, 306), and dialogue can be considered Ennahda's default response to crisis (Ennahda 2013af, 2015z).

The party identifies certain ethical standards of deliberation (Ennahda 2012a) which a dialogue must meet in order to work as a mode of interaction. These standards were evident when the first rounds of national dialogue were initiated in late 2012 and early 2013. First, dialogues must not *a priori* exclude anyone – participation in dialogue should not be premised on the acceptance of certain outcomes (Ennahda 2013j). Second, though, Ennahda itself refused to participate in the first national dialogue because Nidaa Tounes had been invited (Ennahda 2012w) – a party Ennahda initially asserted was the immediate successor organisation of the old regime and suspected of organising a counterrevolution. But even in respect of this opponent, Ennahda eventually yielded and prioritised being 'under the same tent, . . . the tent of national dialogue' (Ennahda 2013e). Third, Ennahda insists that political stances be reasonable (Ennahda 2012a) and claims made be supported by arguments and proof (Ennahda 2012ag). This means that actors must adopt a non-ideological attitude, must refrain from instigation of and provocation with political or partisan motives and must not give in to the temptation of violent means (Ennahda 2011k, 2012n, 2012q, 2012r). In this context, Ennahda accused the UGTT of irresponsible behaviour, blaming it of deliberately pushing for con-

frontation (Ennahda 2012n, 2012y, 2012ae) and concealing political strategy behind would-be advocacy for workers' interests (Ennahda 2013ai). Similarly, it condemned attempts by some parties to exploit political events and terrorist attacks for their own partisan interests (Ennahda 2013g), a behaviour the party considered 'a crime against the country and a service to the aims of terrorists' (Ennahda 2014s).

Besides dialogue, cooperation requires concessions and compromise, as well as a commitment to the democratic transition as a matter of national interest rather than submission to 'narrow partisan or group-specific considerations' (Ennahda 2011k, 2013o) and fantasies of monopolising or clinging to power (Ennahda 2014c). Other parties should follow Ennahda's example. The party had even agreed to step down and be replaced by an independent government for the sake of the national interest (Ennahda 2013e, 2013v). On the occasion of his resignation in 2014, Ali Laarayedh emphatically stated that he was taking this step 'out of love for Tunisia, as a contribution to the success of its revolution, in fulfilment of pledges made, and within the context of affirming our Tunisian model in managing the democratic transition' (Ennahda 2014ab). As the biggest party in the NCA and in government, Ennahda could have '[clung] to the government and confront[ed] the street crowds with bigger street crowds' (Ennahda 2014b). But it chose to adopt an attitude of 'radical moderation' (Ennahda 2016j) and act accordingly, for its sacrifices were a 'small price to pay for national unity' (Ennahda 2014i).

Not all Nahdawis were in favour of this compromise position, however. When facing internal criticism, Ghannouchi complimented his followers for protecting the revolution and thanked them for their readiness to engage in dialogue and embrace an attitude of moderation (Ennahda 2013e). But such praise of the base would certainly not have been enough to preserve party coherence. Rather, 'radical moderation' became a survival strategy for a party that was painfully aware of the fate it might have to face when opting for an overly confident political attitude. The 2013 military putsch against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had shown Ennahda how quickly a position of power could turn into one of weakness and even violent suppression. It knew that it had to avoid giving the impression that it fulfilled the Islamist cliché and aimed to monopolise state power. The value of this strategy became increasingly evident as crises in the rest of the Arab world deepened (Ennahda 2016j).

In contrast to its chaotic neighbourhood, Tunisians had brought about a 'victory of the middle . . . [as the] fruit of an important, but difficult, co-existence between Islamists and secularists in power' (Ennahda 2014ag).

Over the course of the post-revolution years, and especially during the struggle over the constitution and the phases of increased violence, Ennahda's radical moderation slowly transformed into an attitude which dismissed difference, shied away from confrontation and was positively depoliticising. It now promoted a 'model of consensual democracy' (Ennahda 2014f), the 'culture' or 'art of consensus' (Ennahda 2014z) or the 'spirit and methodology of consensus-building' (Ennahda 2012ai, 2014z). A constitution, Ennahda claimed, '*ne peut être bâtie sur une majorité de 51% mais sur le consensus. Elle doit porter des idées claires avec lesquelles tout le monde est d'accord*' (Ennahda 2012e).[8] Consequently, Ennahda agreed to omitting any reference to shari'a in the constitution. 'People don't agree on sharia, so we should leave it out,' it declared succinctly (Ennahda 2013i). Initially, Ennahda had warned against the danger of a consensus that neutralises politics (Ennahda 2013l) but this caveat eventually gave way to the notion of an all-encompassing consensus and radical inclusion of 'all Tunisians – Islamists, secularists, liberals, communists' (Ennahda 2014r), which did not even stop at Nidaa Tounes. Ennahda linked this politics of consensus to Tunisia's transitional justice and reconciliation process. Tunisians should not fall prey to 'a logic of revenge' (Ennahda 2014b, 2014ag). Confronted with the dangers of polarisation, extremism and terrorism, Tunisians should *a fortiori* rely on solidarity and national unity and 'unite their ranks' (Ennahda 2013r). In line with this idea of consensus, inclusion and unity, Ennahda committed itself to the idea of a National Unity Government, which was ultimately installed in February 2015 under the leadership of the 'independent' prime minister Habib Essid.[9] A second incarnation was set up under the leadership of Youssef Chahed from Nidaa Tounes in summer 2016, after terrorist violence had devastated Tunisia in 2015.

Discussion

One could be inclined to claim that Ennahda replaced the old slogan attributed to Islamists, 'Islam is the solution', with 'consensus is the solution'. As we now know (see also Chapter 3), Ennahda's methodology of consensus eventually averted neither Tunisia's authoritarian relapse nor the party's marginalisation

in politics. Indeed, at the time of writing in autumn 2023, the Court of Appeal in Tunis has just sentenced Rached al-Ghannouchi to fifteen months in prison for supporting terrorism and inciting hatred. He had been arrested and jailed ahead of his trial in April 2023, after having appeared before a 'counterterrorism court' several times in the preceding months (Associated Press 2023, Middle East Eye 2023a, 2023b). The 'art of consensus' (Ennahda 2014z) was a tactical move at first but later turned into a strategic choice or 'ideological rationale' (Netterstrøm 2015, 120). It had grown out of Ennahda's decades-long experience of exclusion, imprisonment and state violence. Some argue that it is through exclusion that Ennahda may have learnt to value political freedoms and checks and balances (Cavatorta and Merone 2013), making the party a counterexample to the 'inclusion-moderation hypothesis' (Schwedler 2011). What is certain is that Ennahda sought ways to prevent secularists from capturing the state and (re)gaining a kind of hegemony that could become fatal for the party, knowing that the 'very worst repression of competing identities has often come from actors' struggling to secure their hold over the state, and the state's hold over society' (Dryzek 2005, 226).

Consequently, as I showed in the first section of this chapter, Ennahda initially prioritised the institutional and constitutional process, which the party considered the backbone of a new democratic polity. In order to achieve this in a polarised society, seeking consensus and making major concessions seemed like the only modus operandi that would avert both the danger of a stalled transition and of Ennahda being marginalised again. But, as theorists of agonistic legitimacy warn (Mouffe 2000), the pursuit of consensus may come at a price: attempts to make difference disappear simultaneously kill the political. Before that happens, though, positions of difference which can no longer be channelled through regular political processes find other forms of articulation. In the case of Tunisia and Ennahda, several such instances have been observed. First, post-revolutionary Tunisia experienced a revival of street politics (McCarthy 2019, Merone 2015). Second, Ennahda lost some of its supporters who felt that the party had given up too easily and quickly on cornerstones of an Islamist agenda. Disappointed Nahdawis sometimes turned to Salafist alternatives (Marks 2014). Besides blurring its Islamist platform, Ennahda also contributed to Salafist sidelining and its displacement from the institutional political realm. Although it engaged in a dialogue with Tunisian

Salafists at first and encouraged them to channel their claims through political parties, Ennahda abandoned this mode of interaction when political violence grew and it was expected to improve the security situation. Although Tunisian Salafists had considered the political path after the revolution, this changed after 'the political crackdown of 2013 . . . The combination of state repression and failed strategic choices made the space of contention move from the local to the regional and from political-institutional to confrontational-violent' (Merone 2017, 73). Not only did Salafists start to pursue the (international) jihadist path, Tunisians were overrepresented among the foreign fighters who joined the ISIS organisation. As socio-economically marginalised Tunisians were key supporters, Salafists' disappearance from institutional politics also implied a further exclusion of disenfranchised groups. Ennahda, then, continued on its trajectory to becoming a representative of a moderate middle class (Merone 2015).

In hindsight, what was even more problematic was that Ennahda's strategic choice does not seem to have prevented its marginalisation and even persecution. The politics of consensus went hand in hand with a discursive reiteration, reproduction and reification of the secular–Islamist divide as a core fault line and marker of identity and difference in Tunisian politics – in both Ennahda and the successor parties of the old regime (Boubekeur 2016). While it temporarily froze polarisation and allowed for a '"historic consensus"' (McCarthy 2019, 261) in the form of a new power-sharing agreement and the 2014 constitution, it did not manage to transform the antagonistic relations between Islamists and secularists. The pursuit of consensus also came at the cost of 'a sharp decline in trust towards political institutions' (McCarthy 2019, 261), which manifested in notoriously low levels of trust in the central government, parliament and especially political parties. As for Ennahda, the search for unity aimed to bridge the – certainly significant but also politically rendered – rift between Islamists and secularists and Ennahda's – publicly staged and potentially exaggerated – metamorphosis from a persecuted and repressed Islamist movement to a modern, Muslim democratic party. It consumed a good part of Ennahda's resources between 2011 and 2016 but, from today's perspective, has to be considered a failure.

Some suggest that the struggles framed in terms of identity politics may, at a certain point, also have become a welcome battlefield which could plausibly

be prioritised over but also serve as a distraction from other arguably more pressing questions. Tunisian political elites opted for a conservative transition pathway which avoided 'costly and potentially explosive issues, such as structural economic reform and transitional justice' (Boubekeur 2016, 109). In 2014, the World Bank stated that, while Tunisia acted as a 'role model for other developing countries' until 2010, the revolution had revealed that 'the Tunisian model had serious flaws' (World Bank 2014, 26). Many of Tunisia's economic deficits came to light only after the ousting of the Ben Ali regime. And while the dramatic development of pertinent indicators post-2010 revealed the seriousness of the country's socio-economic situation,[10] this was neglected by political elites in Tunisia (just as it was in other post-Arab-uprising countries), who 'asked for patience, since economic recovery [would] take time and [needed], in particular, political stability' (Weipert-Fenner and Wolff 2015, 1).

Yet it would be too easy to conclude that Ennahda simply ignored social and economic questions. The dire economic situation and social hardship experienced by many Tunisians could, of course, not be glossed over forever and Ennahda was aware of that. During the period under analysis, the party did make proposals for economic policies and social justice but these were mainly confined to the 2011 and 2014 electoral campaigns rather than being systematically integrated into day-to-day politics. The party calls its economic model 'social capitalism' (Ennahda 2014a, 2014e) and, in particular, emphasised the need to strengthen the private sector in order to move away 'from a rentier economy to a genuine competitive economy through a definitive break with nepotism, clientelism and instrumentalisation of political relations in the economic field' (Ennahda 2014z). Moreover, Ennahda tried to position Tunisia as a trade partner in the international arena, placing an emphasis on building trade relations and gaining access to European markets, in particular by achieving the status of a privileged partner with the EU (Ennahda 2011b). Here, it insisted that any 'external relations with friends [must be built] on the basis of partnership and equality to serve the interests of the Tunisian people' (Ennahda 2012s), rejecting the idea of conditional aid and Tunisia's international relations having any kind of postcolonial configuration. It also proposed that Tunisia become a metaphorical bridge between Europe and Africa with all the economic potential that would bring (Ennahda 2011i, 2015i,

Interview 2). However, with an increase in terrorism in Tunisia and Europe and the worsening of the Tunisian socio-economic situation around 2015 and 2016, Ennahda changed its 'pitch' towards the Europeans, asserting that they should have an interest in preserving the Tunisian model as the only remaining democracy in the region through 'greater investment and [economic] support' so as to enable the government to 'address the needs of young people, provide an alternative to ISIS, and build a prosperous society on sustainable foundations that can be a model for the region' (Ennahda 2015e). Thus, the argument was that democracy needed to be nourished by socio-economic development – otherwise, desperate young men would turn to violence.

Besides these (rare) direct allusions to a more just international economic order and the need to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, Ennahda's legitimacy discourse does not make the international order itself its core subject. However, the overhearing global audience does play a significant role for a party that is eager to demonstrate its commitment to democracy and, indeed, liberal values while simultaneously promoting the compatibility of its version of Islamic democracy with widely accepted standards of legitimacy. To put it in a nutshell, Ennahda sought recognition for both the party's identity as Muslim democrats who are 'freedom loving people' (Ennahda 2014t) and the Tunisian model of democracy – and it did so by demonstrating that its ideas on legitimacy were entirely compatible with Western standards of order. For this dual recognition project, first, Ennahda presented itself as a pragmatic and problem-oriented political actor that understood the Tunisian zeitgeist: '*Les gens [veulent] un parti qui parle des problèmes quotidiens, de la vie des familles et des personnes, et non pas un parti qui leur parle du jugement dernier, du paradis, etc.*' (Ennahda 2016d).[11] Accordingly, Ennahda transformed itself from an Islamist movement into a professional party, a Tunisian version of the 'Christian Democrats in Germany[, who] are a good model for us [regarding the question of] how religious values can be the basis of political action without ever becoming an end in themselves' (Ennahda 2016k).[12] Second, Ennahda made abundantly clear that it accepts the universality of certain values. It accepts the framework of international law, including human rights; it holds actors responsible for acting in accordance with these norms, as demonstrated by the party's outspoken support of popular revolutions against dictatorships in its neighbourhood and its public denouncement of

human rights violations (see, for example, Ennahda 2012m, 2013m, 2015q). Beyond these core values and institutions – of both the Tunisian and the world order – there are particularist elements which need to be mirrored in the specific political order a society chooses. Different societies have different histories and consequently cannot be subjected to one normative model of democracy. As such, an Arab Islamic version of a democratic political order needs to be found for Tunisia. In this regard, parts of Ennahda's proposal are surprisingly similar to concepts of a postsecular society as seen in Western discourse (Habermas 2009). Finally, and this is where Ennahda's view converges with agonistic views on international relations (Mouffe 2009, 2013), such a plurality of community-based orders can only exist in a world order which is based on sovereign equality (see Chapter 4), accommodates difference and does not strive towards hegemony (Interview 4). Accordingly, and as Chapter 6 will show, Ennahda's utopia for the world order is a story of liberation not only from dictatorship but also from colonial and postcolonial domination.

Hezbollah

In a speech delivered in March 2016, Hezbollah's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, denounced what he perceived as hypocritical stigmatisation of his organisation. Referring to Hezbollah's military activities to combat the ISIS organisation in Syria, Nasrallah exclaimed: '[W]e are fighting the terrorist organization which is labeled by the world as a terrorist organization. How come we are labeled as terrorists? How come we are condemned? How come our martyrs are condemned?' (Hezbollah 2016k, 2016n). His irritation, it seems, was not only caused by the perceived misrecognition of being classified as a terrorist organisation (Pfeifer 2021) but also by Hezbollah being placed on the same level as ISIS. Nasrallah's words certainly express some indignation at the West's failure to recognise the differences in the resort to violence and its legitimacy. And indeed, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence is the dominating topic in Hezbollah's discourse on legitimacy. This is due not only to the nature of Hezbollah's activities, often referred to as a 'hybrid' between political and military activity (Azani 2013), but also to the context in which Hezbollah operates. It is regularly involved in armed conflict, ranging from military skirmishes on the Lebanese–Israeli border to active

fighting over several years in the Syrian Civil War. The focus on violence is therefore not surprising.

What may be more remarkable is the lack of ideas on political legitimacy and authority, as well as their comprehensive justification, in Hezbollah's discourse – especially since the party was part of all the governments active in the period under investigation in this book (2011–16). From Nasrallah's speeches alone, one would be hard pressed to gain a picture of Hezbollah's plans for designing political order and concrete policies in Lebanon. Indeed, this is one finding of the analysis. It is not a priority for the party to shape domestic policymaking or find solutions to economic, social, environmental and political problems. Rather, Hezbollah's goal is to maintain societal peace in Lebanon's domestic politics, at least to such an extent that domestic politics does not interfere with its core project: resistance. Hezbollah draws a line between the realms of domestic and regional/international politics. The former is a sphere in which peaceful means of solving conflict and organising political and social life have to be found. While Hezbollah proposes some institutional and output-oriented methods of achieving this, this chapter will focus on its ideas on community-based and dialogue-based legitimacy, which are more prominent and important in its discourse. As for regional/international politics, Hezbollah perceives Lebanon's regional and international environment as downright hostile. The logic of conflict which determines these realms dictates the use of violent means within certain limits. In what Hezbollah considers legitimate and illegitimate violence, its self-identification as a resistance and 'jihadist' group plays an important role.[13] This section will focus on what Hezbollah considers legitimate violence, which essentially comprises different versions of resistance. The threat scenarios which make resistance necessary in the first place and, thus, a more detailed account of how Hezbollah characterises the conflictual international environment will be presented in Chapter 6.

Community-based Legitimacy: Form Follows Identity

Hezbollah's version of community-based legitimacy is not a unitary concept but rather illustrates the need to disaggregate the term 'community'. For Hezbollah makes suggestions about legitimate political order to and claims to speak for at least three groups. The audiences the party addresses and communities it purportedly represents correspond to different layers in Hezbollah's

social identity: its Shi'i, Lebanese and Arab-Muslim aspects. What links these three layers is Hezbollah's core identity as a resistance group. Where its legitimacy claims are on the verge of becoming self-contradictory or being traded off against each other, resistance, exalted as a noble cause, serves as the crucial normative criterion for choosing one claim over the other.

Hezbollah's ideas of a legitimate political order for the Lebanese community could be described as a pragmatic concession to the reality and inescapability of religious difference in the country. It considers politics on the basis of sectarianism as counterproductive and seeks to eventually transcend it as the foundation of the Lebanese political system. But it still accepts this status quo of Lebanese political life and deems it necessary to take the fears and interests of every community into account: 'Well we have this mentality . . . [T]his is our country. The people are our people. All the sects are our people whether Shi'a, Sunnites, Druze or Christians in all regions. We are a people who want to live together' (Hezbollah 2011i). It sometimes even seems as if Hezbollah not only recognises but even appreciates religious pluralism. And while it considers the 1989 Taif Agreement, concluded one year before the end of the Lebanese Civil War and regulating the representation of sects in the post-war political order, the product of a suboptimal settlement and in serious need of reform, Hezbollah also acknowledges the risks involved in changing the precarious modus vivendi. It therefore stands behind the agreement (Hezbollah 2011a, 2013c) and only advocates reforms that give due consideration to the fears of sects. One reform Hezbollah supports is the establishment of a proportional electoral system (Hezbollah 2012b, 2013f). At the same time, the party understands why Christians in Lebanon are afraid of losing their influence, given the crimes perpetrated against their fellow believers in the Middle East (Hezbollah 2013c, 2013f), and argues that these fears must be taken into account in any reform.

Sectarianism and the real-life experience thereof thus determine the general condition of the whole country. If relations are good, a culture of cooperation can be developed; if they are bad, 'nothing in this country may move forward properly or be reformed' (Hezbollah 2011i). This is also why religious moderation and interreligious dialogue have to be practised, violence must be condemned irrespective of the sectarian affiliation of the group against which it is directed, and movies, cartoons and books that deliberately offend one religious community are dangerous (Hezbollah 2011g, 2013f, 2014g). The

sectarian composition of society may not be abused for political purposes, sects should not be played off against one another and conflicts should not be declared sectarian in nature when they are about something else. According to Nasrallah, none of the contemporary conflicts and wars are fought due to sectarian difference, but are rather a result of political disagreement or attempts to seize power (Hezbollah 2013d, 2013f, 2014g).

Despite sectarian differences, one of Hezbollah's declared goals is to build a unified Lebanese 'community and . . . a nation as a prelude for building a state for it later on' (Hezbollah 2011h, 2016m). Besides, building a Lebanese nation will also bring about broad solidarity with the resistance (Hezbollah 2013f, 2014a, 2015k, 2016m). This does not mean that everyone has to fight. But the Lebanese should support the resistance morally and make it their own cause (Hezbollah 2013b). Nasrallah proudly reports on the significant amount of solidarity Hezbollah experiences among the families of the martyrs within the Shi'i community (Hezbollah 2016c). Yet, the victories of the resistance were for all the Lebanese people and not just for one sect. They are a national achievement (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011i, 2012c). The resistance should be honoured in a similar way to the Lebanese army, for both consist of 'men of our Lebanese nation and patriotic culture' (Hezbollah 2013a) and both make sacrifices for all the people of Lebanon, irrespective of their sect (Hezbollah 2011b, 2014b, 2014g). And indeed, the majority of the Lebanese population support the resistance in spite of all the wicked attempts to break it (Hezbollah 2011i, 2011j) – or so Hezbollah claims. While, following the 2006 July War, support for the resistance was very high among the non-Shi'i Lebanese, this has fallen since Hezbollah became involved in the Syrian conflict.

When speaking to his fellow Lebanese citizens, Nasrallah gives his assurance that Hezbollah no longer has an interest in building an Islamic state in Lebanon. 'True in our early days back in 1982 and 1983, there were a group of brethrens [*sic*] . . . who made speeches and talked about the choice of the Islamic Republic in Lebanon . . . Now [these] young men in Hizbullah are a bit [grey]-haired,' Nasrallah has explained, reassuring his audience that Hezbollah has now 'entered deeper into the Lebanese status quo' (Hezbollah 2011h). However, the party still accepts the authority of *wālī al-faqīh*, the supreme jurist or jurist-theologian, and 'clerical custodianship' (Qassem 2010, 119). In Nasrallah's speeches, the topic is hardly evoked. The only context in

which this allegiance plays a role is when Nasrallah refers to fatwas Hezbollah had requested from clerics in Iran or Iraq on specific matters, for example regarding the use of weapons (Hezbollah 2013g). Besides, Nasrallah states that he seeks legal authorisation for basic political decisions. For instance, Hezbollah would not have taken the decision to participate in democratic elections without 'the religious and legitimate justification from the senior scholars' (Hezbollah 2011h). But this does not mean, Nasrallah assures his audience, that Hezbollah has

> no political choice other than establishing an Islamic country in Lebanon . . . In fact, one of the aspects of Islam's greatness, flexibility and vitality as a religion, doctrine and legislation is that any Muslim group in any country with special conditions would enjoy special guidance. Things are not closed at all. (Hezbollah 2011h)

Rather, clerics interpret Islamic principles for the specific context in which Hezbollah operates and formulate their guidance accordingly. This is also why Nasrallah categorically rejects the notion that Iran seeks hegemony over Lebanon or forces others to make certain decisions (Hezbollah 2015i).

That said, Nasrallah still has a lot of praise for the Islamic Republic of Iran as an example from which others can learn. It is a 'modern state which joins originality and modernity' (Hezbollah 2012e) and which is 'based on the views and the will of this people besides the civilization, culture and religion of this people' (Hezbollah 2011a). In this sense, it is also the right system for Iranian society, according to Hezbollah. While the supreme jurist is qualified for his position by virtue of his merits as a 'first-class man of law' (Hezbollah 2011a), as determined by an elected group of expert scholars, 'all the primary authorities in Iran are subject to popular elections' (Hezbollah 2011a). It is therefore beyond doubt that the Iranian political regime acknowledges the Iranian popular will – and in a much more reliable way than is the case in Lebanon. Hezbollah 'hopes that similar democratic events (as in Iran) would happen in the Arab and Muslim worlds' (Hezbollah 2013g). However biased Nasrallah's assessment of the Iranian political system may be, it demonstrates that he needs to justify the system's worth by referring to its democratic qualities and suitability for the Iranian people rather than to religious principles and doctrine.

Finally, Nasrallah elaborates on legitimate orders for the region and the Arab and Muslim people living in it. In his view, two resistance projects are necessary to build a legitimate political order. The first is the Palestinian cause. Nasrallah believes 'that every Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and Christian has a national, popular, religious, convictional and ethical responsibility towards al-Quds and its future, identity and destiny' (Hezbollah 2012f). Arabs and Muslims cannot accept 'that Palestine is "Jewish"' (Hezbollah 2013b) and they have to refrain from a naturalisation of Palestinian refugees in third countries and from any acts of recognition or normalisation towards the Israeli state (Hezbollah 2012f, 2016k). No situation 'justifies giving in to the enemy, recognizing the legitimacy of the enemy, accepting the enemy, and agreeing to give the land to the enemy, besides . . . making commercial, diplomatic, and security relations with this enemy' (Hezbollah 2016l). Negotiations are no longer an adequate means of interaction. For past experience has shown that Israeli promises of talks were accompanied by actions to the contrary, such as the building of new settlements (Hezbollah 2011j, 2014e). Moreover, Israel has made the status of Jerusalem a non-negotiable item, which renders further talks futile (Hezbollah 2011l, 2012f). Any so-called peace agreement would actually be a settlement according to conditions laid down by the Israelis, especially when negotiated with the help of supposedly neutral mediators, such as US presidents or the UN, both of whom Hezbollah considers clearly biased (Hezbollah 2012c, 2013b, 2013c, 2014c).

This makes resistance the only remaining legitimate choice for Arab and Muslim peoples and countries. Any action must be evaluated according to its contribution to the Palestinian cause, the 'ruling norm in this time' (Hezbollah 2012d). The only countries that have credibly committed to this cause, by showing solidarity with the transnational resistance, providing unconditional and generous (financial) support and delivering weapons, are Iran and Syria (Hezbollah 2011h, 2012b, 2012c, 2013b, 2013c, 2014d, 2014e, 2015i, 2016c). Their contribution was critical to the success of the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine. Those Arabs and Muslims who are not capable of providing the resistance with active support and fulfilling their 'direct jihadi obligations' (Hezbollah 2011j) should stand by the Palestinians financially and morally (Hezbollah 2011j, 2012b, 2014d, 2015b). In reality, however, many Arab states acted like 'submissive tails' (Hezbollah 2011e) of the US and Israel

instead and sold out the Palestinian cause for their own advantage, thereby destroying the nation's hope of ever triumphing over Israel (Hezbollah 2012d, 2014d, 2015i, 2016l). The Gulf states in particular traded US support for their regimes and 'the guarantee for [their] thrones . . . [for] defending "Israel", protecting "Israel", and not harming the existence of "Israel", the entity of "Israel", and the persistence of "Israel"' (Hezbollah 2016k). They did not even try to hide their relations with Israel anymore (Hezbollah 2016c), offering 'gains . . . for free to the "Israelis"' (Hezbollah 2016e). Here, Nasrallah was referring to instances of alignment between Israeli and Saudi positions which started in 2015 with their common opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA) and continued throughout 2016 with the visit of a Saudi delegation to the Israeli foreign minister and Knesset members in Jerusalem. These rapprochements between Saudi Arabia and its allies and Israel anticipated the 2020 Abraham Accords signed by Israel, Bahrain and the UAE, as well as Morocco and Sudan, and backed by the Saudis.

The second resistance project is that of the Arab peoples against their rulers as manifested in the mass protests and revolutions in the context of the Arab uprisings. It is important to note that this project is secondary to the people's duties towards Palestine. When judging a political regime, there are

> two angles. The first angle is the stance of that Arab regime [on] . . . the Arab–'Israeli' conflict . . . The second angle is the absence of any hope for reform at the domestic level – when the regime is closed to all doors, windows or even small gaps for reform for the benefit of the peoples of these countries. (Hezbollah 2011l, 2012d, 2015e)

Only if a regime neither supported the Palestinian cause nor showed a willingness to make concessions to the protesting masses did Hezbollah consider a revolution legitimate. And indeed, it welcomed the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Libya, calling for solidarity with the people in the streets and descrying a window of opportunity to free the region from a number of regimes that were submissive to Israel and the US (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011j). While cautioning against attempts by foreign powers to 'confiscate' these revolutions, Nasrallah considered them genuinely popular rebellions that might work in favour of the resistance and help 'Iran and Syria . . . gain new allies, advocates and members in [the] axis [of resistance]' (Hezbollah 2011k). After

the initial euphoria faded, Hezbollah realised with regret that the issue was of little relevance to the new and resurgent old regimes (Hezbollah 2013b). Even worse, some societies in the region were dragged into civil war. '[W]hat we are experiencing today as a nation and as an *Ummah* is the most dangerous situation ever since the occupation of Palestine due to the systematic destruction that took place in our region,' Nasrallah wearily announced (Hezbollah 2014d).

With all the enthusiastic support given to the protesting masses in virtually every country except Syria, how did Hezbollah legitimise its intervention on the side of the Assad regime? In 2011 and 2012, Nasrallah conceded that the Syrian system was in need of reform and that a political dialogue among different groups had to be initiated – a position which, he claimed, Hezbollah shared with the Assad regime (Hezbollah 2011h, 2011l, 2012d, 2013a). Yet, he continued, the constellation of international interests had rendered both impossible. A Western–Israeli-led and Gulf-supported coalition had decided to try and topple the Syrian regime. In such a situation of threat to the incumbent regime, negotiations were no longer an option and, thus, war was imposed on the Syrians (Hezbollah 2011l, 2012d, 2013a, 2014a). According to Nasrallah, the outbreak of the war only strengthened the popular support for the regime which had always existed (Hezbollah 2011h, 2014c, 2014h). What had initially seemed like an opposition camp in a divided society (Hezbollah 2013g) turned out to be militant groups which did not represent the people (Hezbollah 2011h, 2012b). Further, Hezbollah's support for the Assad regime relied on the assertion of Assad's merits with regard to the Palestinian cause: 'Syria has been the cherisher of the Resistance, so the Resistance can't stand still while that cherisher is being ruined' (Hezbollah 2013a, 2013b). Syria was of strategic importance to Palestine and consequently also to the 'Arab nation' (Hezbollah 2011l, 2013a, 2014c).

As can be seen from this discussion, Hezbollah's gold standard for evaluating the legitimacy of rule and political action is whether or not it advances the cause of resistance. But the regional conflict dynamics brought a change in Hezbollah's priorities, as Chapter 6 will elaborate in more detail. Nasrallah now tried to rally Arabs and Muslims of the region around the common fight against 'Takfirism', which, according to Hezbollah, dominated the Syrian opposition by 2014 at the latest (Hezbollah 2014a). But the reaction of the

neighbouring regimes was yet another blow to what Hezbollah perceived as the project of building an Arab and Muslim nation, instilling the community with solidarity (Hezbollah 2014e, 2015c, 2015f) and uniting it against the 'Takfirists' and their backers. 'It is time for Muslims, Arabs, and the Islamic world to tell the Arab Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: That's enough, and enough is enough,' Nasrallah canvassed (Hezbollah 2015l). For the 'region has one destiny, one history, one future, and one present. Our children, our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren will remain living in suffering if we [do] not assume [this] responsibility' (Hezbollah 2015d, 2015g). The fact that so many did not follow his calls to offer help in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Yemen was a sign of their cowardice and showed that they had 'nothing to do with Arabs, Arab identity, Arab chivalry, and Arab dignity' (Hezbollah 2016k).

Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence: The Heart of the Matter

It is remarkable how strongly Nasrallah links legitimacy to the resort to violence, even when he is not explicitly dealing with the question of legitimate violence. Where he does address this issue, however, a complex normative structure becomes visible, which makes a clear distinction between necessary and unacceptable forms of violence and sometimes resembles the ethics of just-war theory (Kızılkaya 2017). The overrepresentation of claims to (il)legitimate violence in Hezbollah's discourse are, on the one hand, indicative of the intensity of the regional transformations the 'Middle East' witnessed after the Arab uprisings. This was a phase which consisted of changing alliances among states and non-state actors (Darwich 2021a), as well as the internationalisation and military escalation of conflicts in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Ahram 2020). As Hezbollah considered its core interests to be jeopardised by some of the developments during this period, and notably anticipated further damage to the 'axis of resistance' (see Chapter 6), the delegitimation of some forms of violence and simultaneous legitimation of others was part of offering, or trying to discursively impose, a 'compass' of interpretation for the political developments in the region to a regional audience. On the other hand, it also specifically addressed the Shi'i community in Lebanon. Here, it was not only about Hezbollah selling its own version of the story and safeguarding abstract support. Rather, the party had to make it palatable to its constituency that families should still send their fathers, husbands and sons to fight for the

'Islamic resistance' – which used to be a militant project against Israel and for the liberation of Palestine (Malmvig 2021). How, then, did it transpire that Lebanese fighters were now being deployed to Syria to engage in combat against fellow Muslims and Arabs, rather than Israelis?

Hezbollah regularly alludes to its foundation and military victories against Israel in an almost mythological fashion (Hezbollah 2011i, 2011k, 2014e), claiming legitimacy for its resort to force against an external enemy to defend the Lebanese people – a task which neither the Lebanese army nor UNIFIL had proven capable of in the past (Hezbollah 2012c, 2014e). Hezbollah sometimes emphasises the Islamic resistance in this context, especially when denouncing the Christian collaborators who had formed a militia (the South Lebanon Army) to support the Israeli occupation of Lebanon during and after the civil war (Hezbollah 2014b). And even though there is a multiconfessional brigade within the Lebanese resistance (Alagha 2011, 160, 188–9), foregrounding the Islamic character of the resistance provides Hezbollah with additional religious sources of legitimation. Becoming a martyr when standing up to oppression is not only an honour but a religious duty. Living under a system of injustice or in a state of oppression is unacceptable and leaves only two options: 'either victory or martyrdom' (Hezbollah 2011g).

It is here that Shi'i history and symbolism come to bear in Hezbollah's discourse. The most important reference is to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali at the Battle of Karbala, which is commemorated every year on 'Ashura' Day, the tenth night of Muharram, which is the first month of the Islamic calendar. At the Battle of Karbala in Iraq in 680, Husayn and his followers fought the caliph Yazid. The latter had been appointed caliph by his father Mu'awiya, the first caliph after the four *rāshidūn* or 'rightly guided' caliphs. However, Hassan – grandson of the prophet and son of 'Ali, the fourth caliph, as well as Husayn's brother – had claimed succession to 'Ali. He eventually agreed with Mu'awiya that the latter would not appoint a new caliph but let the Muslim world choose one. As he considered this treaty to have been broken and, therefore, the rule of Yazid to be illegitimate, Husayn refused to pledge allegiance to the newly appointed caliph. For him and his followers, only descent from the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*, followers of the House of the Prophet) qualified a person to be the rightful successor and guide for the people. In reaction to this opposition, Yazid attacked Husayn's caravan, killing him and his companions.

This incident was more than just murder (Jafri 2000, 130–222). 'It was also an ideological battle between a group of principled individuals and a militarily powerful political administration, making Husayn the ultimate tragic hero figure' (A. J. Hussain 2005, 79).

The story of Husayn and his family plays an important role in Hezbollah's idea of legitimate violence. Husayn's words and actions are emphatically cited whenever steadfastness and commitment to the resistance are demanded from Hezbollah's constituency, its fighters and their families. For instance, Nasrallah quotes Husayn's words when facing Yazid:

> 'The bastard son of a bastard has put us before two choices: war or humili-ation. Humiliation, how remote! Allah does not accept that to befall us, neither his Prophet, the believers nor the zealous and haughty souls. They don't accept that we favor the obedience of the ignoble to the death of the noble.' (Hezbollah 2011g, 2012d, 2014f)

Resistance is a jihadi duty (Hezbollah 2015f, 2016a, 2016m) and is described not as a project of war but an attempt to bring calm to Lebanon and the region (Hezbollah 2011f, 2014a, 2015a). It is a project of self-defence. Of course, in order to understand what it is that should be resisted, the state of injustice and those who orchestrate it have to be identified first. Similarly, the community being defended also has to be specified. Indeed, several hegemonic schemes were all devised for the region at the same time, schemes which, however, turned out over time to be manifestations of one big plan – at least that is how Nasrallah reconstructed the events over the course of the years, as Chapter 6 will demonstrate. The corresponding resistance projects are legitimate – as long as they follow certain norms.

A first and second norm could be described as the proportionality and rationality of violence. 'Everything is being tackled relatively and in a propor-tional way. The resistance has courage, capability, and wisdom, too. It consid-ers precisely what it can do to prevent this status quo that the enemy seeks to consolidate at the border' (Hezbollah 2014b, 2014e). The resistance thus needs to adapt to the respective context and adopt different forms depending on the (stage of) conflict. With regard to relations with Israel in the 2010s, such a rational use of force consisted in maintaining a balance of power or mutual deterrence in southern Lebanon (Hezbollah 2015a). While Hezbollah claims

that it has a right to retaliation, not every provocation calls for a reaction. Where they are necessary, acts of retaliation have to be measured and precise operations with specific goals. An example of this is the counterattack against the Israelis in the Sheb'a Farms after they had targeted a Hezbollah vehicle in the Golan in January 2015 (Hezbollah 2015a). Furthermore, retaliation has to follow the principle of 'paying back in kind'. For example, Hezbollah claims that it would never kill a civilian, diplomat or recruit in revenge for the death of one of its fighters (Hezbollah 2012d, 2015j, 2016h). This could be seen as alluding to another norm, the protection of civilians. That said, whereas Hezbollah's commitment to this norm on a discursive and practical level has existed since 1996 (Dionigi 2014, 111, 157), upholding it, even rhetorically, proved difficult in the context of the cruelty and atrocities committed against civilians by the Assad regime.

The question of civilian protection was not the problem when it came to Hezbollah's military involvement in the Syrian conflict. When Hezbollah resorted to acts of retaliation, the aim was to show Israel that the armed group's power and vigilance with respect to 'the enemy' had not been diminished by its activities in the Syrian war. At the same time, such a demonstration of force had to be measured so that it would not provoke acts of Israeli revenge and endanger the Lebanese people. Indeed, Hezbollah tried to avert two military constellations. First, it was wary of miscalculations similar to the one that had occurred in the 2006 July War, when Israel reacted to a Hezbollah attack on a border patrol by launching large-scale operations (Norton 2014, 136). Second, it wanted to avoid actually getting caught up in a two-front war in Syria and against Israel (Ranstorp 2016, 46) – while maintaining the credibility of its deterrents vis-à-vis Israel and reassuring its constituency, in particular the southern Lebanese, that any Israeli attack would be prioritised. This balancing act rendered the relative calm between Israel and Hezbollah precarious, at some moments more than at others (Noe 2017).

It also entailed complicated rhetorical manoeuvres on the part of Hezbollah's leadership, which tried to convince the Lebanese Shi'i community that the group's engagement in Syria, too, was an act of self-defence – and that it would not only not harm but rather constituted a core part of the resistance project. This proved particularly difficult at the start of Hezbollah's activities in Syria in 2013, when neither the 'Takfirist' threat nor Israeli involvement

had become significant enough to dominate the regional and global public debate. While the international concern about Salafi-jihadist groups only started growing with ISIS's significant territorial gains and its active dissemination of media coverage depicting the atrocities it committed (Pfeifer and Günther 2021), Hezbollah cited the 'Takfirist' threat as the reason for its military engagement in Syria from the beginning: 'Obviously, the Takfiri current is dominant among the Syrian opposition,' Nasrallah declared in May 2013 (Hezbollah 2013a). It may, therefore, not be a coincidence that Hezbollah officially announced its military support for Assad when ISIS split from Jabhat al-Nusra in spring 2013, which indicated a diversification of the Salafi-jihadist spectrum and could be read as anticipating a potential radicalisation and escalation of violence. But other evidence suggests that the decision to deploy fighters was related to other events in 2013: rebel attacks on Lebanese Shi'i villages in Syria, the extension of fighting to the area of Sayyida Zeynab's shrine[14] in Rif Dimashq governorate and an assault on an armed Hezbollah convoy (Hashem 2013).

In its public discourse, Hezbollah legitimised its military engagement in Syria by means of several arguments, combining the right to self-defence with the resistance culture and, later on, the religious duty to fight 'Takfirism'. It seems that this last argument on its own was simply not enough to convince the Lebanese audience. It was therefore linked to the construction of an imminent double threat to Lebanon and all Lebanese people, irrespective of their sect, posed by Israel and the 'Takfirists' (Hezbollah 2013a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014e, 2015b, 2016l, see also Chapter 4): 'Yes, we have engaged in combat to defend Syria and Lebanon's people, territories, and economy,' Nasrallah elaborated (Hezbollah 2013g). Fighting in Israeli-occupied Golan was already very much in keeping with the resistance narrative (Hezbollah 2013b). But Hezbollah went further: 'The battle over Syria must be understood not as a battle of existence for us as Hizbullah only, but also a battle of existence for Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, the Palestinian cause, and the entire resistance project in the region' (Hezbollah 2013e). Defending the Syrian regime became an imperative for the resistance project 'because if Syria [were to be] lost, Palestine would be lost too' (Hezbollah 2015b). While this line of argumentation may only have convinced the hard core of Hezbollah's supporters, the party could also reference several violent incidents at the Lebanese–Syrian border to make the

case that Lebanese sovereignty was jeopardised (Hezbollah 2014e, 2015a). 'It is our right and the right of the people of Bekaa and especially Baalbeck-Hermel to look for a day in which our barren areas, borders, and the gates of our villages and towns do not have terrorist groups,' Nasrallah declared (Hezbollah 2015h).

Hezbollah's critics, however, told a different story. Their view was that it was Hezbollah's activities that had provoked the attacks by Salafi jihadists in the first place. Politicians from different parties were angry and asserted, almost regretfully, that the resistance, once so dear to any Lebanese citizen and accepted by all parties, had lost all credibility since Hezbollah started fighting in the Syrian war (Wieland 2016, 176–7, Zelin 2016, 54–6). Nasrallah attempted to frame Hezbollah's mission as being an act of collective self-defence against a 'Takfirist' project that threatened the whole region and the *umma*: 'Fighting in defense of Aleppo is fighting in defense of the rest of Syria and in defense of Damascus. It is also fighting in defense of Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan' (Hezbollah 2016g, 2016h). The religious line of Nasrallah's argumentation gained importance when the Shi'i religious authorities in Najaf issued a fatwa which 'called for defensive Jihad and for confronting Daesh' (Hezbollah 2015g) in mid-2015, encouraging every Muslim to fight 'Takfirism' with or without arms and calling for the protection of the Muslim *umma* and its symbols (Hezbollah 2015c, 2016k). This is when Hezbollah self-reportedly decided to extend its operations to Iraq and support the country's government in its struggle against ISIS, too (Hezbollah 2016k). It called upon Arab countries and the Muslim *umma* to assume their responsibility and join Hezbollah in the battles in Syria and Iraq. For the 'Takfirist' project would have disastrous consequences for the region (Hezbollah 2015c, 2015d, 2015h). Nasrallah even went so far as to predict that 'Takfirism' would create 'a new Nakba which is greater and more dangerous [than the first one]' (Hezbollah 2015g, 2015h).[15] Referencing the foundation of the state of Israel and the mass displacement of Palestinians, and, thus, what Hezbollah considers the root cause of the resistance project, illustrates how vigorously the party tried to mobilise support for its actions in Syria.

Besides presenting the fight against ISIS and similar Salafi-jihadist groups as a necessity, the party also never tired of emphasising that it did not seek war but rather considered it as a last resort, which is the third norm of legiti-

mate violence (Hezbollah 2013g). The best proof of this, Hezbollah claimed, was that it assumed a responsibility that actually lay with the Arab states and their militaries even though its core project was the resistance against Israel (Hezbollah 2015d, 2015f). The norm of last resort is closely connected to proportionality and rationality: Hezbollah did not take the decision lightly to become involved in Syria but evaluated the situation carefully, in particular with regard to the identities of the rebels, collected evidence and made a rational choice (Hezbollah 2013e, 2013g, 2014a, 2014b, 2016k). Having taken a political stance on the Syrian situation, Hezbollah saw, at some point, that dialogue was not leading anywhere and political solutions were no longer an option (Hezbollah 2013a, 2016g, 2016k), which meant that non-violent means had been exhausted. Upon the invitation of the Syrian regime, it began its engagement in the civil war. Hezbollah then reacted to developments on the ground. It started with a limited intervention, adapted its goals and strategies, and only slowly increased its activities according to the needs of the battlefield (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014a). 'We got engaged in the battle pursuant to a clear diagnosis which never did change; it was rather asserted by daily evidences,' Nasrallah explained (Hezbollah 2015d, 2015g). Hezbollah's insistence that it had been asked first by the Assad regime (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014a) and then, later, by the Iraqi government to join forces with the former points to another norm: the resort to the use of force needs to be sanctioned by the consent of the respective incumbent regime. This is also why the Turkish invasion of Syria, Israeli operations in Syria and the US-led war in Iraq launched in 2003 are considered illegitimate – they were not interventions by invitation (Hezbollah 2013b, 2014a).

Indeed, Hezbollah's normative compass is completed by those forms of violence that it considers illegitimate. A war can be illegitimate because its cause is unjust or because it resorts to illegitimate means, such as targeting civilians, using certain kinds of weapon or engaging certain types of fighters. Nasrallah's verbal condemnations usually refer to wars waged by Israel, with the support of the US and other Western states, against Arab states and peoples. He accuses Israel of illegal border violations, wars of aggression in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008–9 and 2014, which sometimes had no other goal than to make people submit to the Israeli will, the lack of proportionality in its use of violence, the targeting of civilians and the commission of war crimes

(Hezbollah 2011d, 2011f, 2011k, 2012b, 2012c, 2013e, 2014a, 2014b, 2014d, 2014e, 2016l). The virtually exclusive focus on Israel almost entirely disappears from Hezbollah's discourse in 2015, when the Saudi war against Yemen, launched in that year, begins to dominate Nasrallah's normative reflections on state conduct in war. He considers the war on Yemen, launched by a Saudi-led coalition and supported by the US, to be an act of aggression (Hezbollah 2015f, 2015g, 2015h, 2015i, 2015l).

While the Saudis attempt to legitimise their intervention, initially executed through an air campaign and only later followed by ground operations, the reasons given are fabricated, according to Nasrallah. First, the Saudis cannot provide any proof of their claim that their intervention was a pre-emptive war made necessary by the emergence of a new security threat in Yemen (Hezbollah 2015i). Nasrallah emphasised that not only were the Yemenis a very poor people, but their military capabilities were also severely limited (Hezbollah 2015i), making the war a very unequal confrontation between the Saudis with 'more tanks than soldiers . . . and barefoot Yemenis' (Hezbollah 2016n). According to Hezbollah, it was obvious that there was no threat. The second argument presented by Saudi Arabia was that it wanted to restore the rule of the 'legitimate' president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. To start with, Hezbollah did not consider Hadi the legitimate president of Yemen (Hezbollah 2015i), and indeed this is also a contested question among scholars of international law (Ruys and Ferro 2016). But even if he were, Nasrallah continued to argue, waging a war to restore the power of a president was simply not proportionate (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l). Finally, the Saudis tried to cast doubt on the 'Arabism' of the Yemeni people, suggesting that Iran secretly held sway over Yemen (Hezbollah 2015l). They even questioned the Islamic identity of the Yemenis, claiming that they were a threat to the holy shrines in Mecca (Hezbollah 2015l, 2016f). To Nasrallah, these allegations were the most ridiculous of all the justifications presented by the Saudis. Not only were Yemenis 'pure Arabs' (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l), Nasrallah also considered the Saudi challenge to the Muslimness of Yemenis – or rather, the Shi'i minority in Yemen – as an attempt to divert from their own questionable belief: 'The Yemenis do not need a testimony . . . of their Islam. I further say: Those who are aggressing against the Yemeni people are the ones who must search for evidence of their Islam and their Arabism' (Hezbollah 2015l).

Like Israel's wars in its neighbourhood, the Saudi war in Yemen aimed at restoring the kingdom's hegemony and breaking the will of the Yemeni people (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l, 2016k). These goals already rendered the war illegitimate, but what was more, they could never be achieved through violent means, let alone just a military air campaign (Hezbollah 2015l, 2016n). The war was also not a means of last resort, for there had been no serious attempts at political dialogue and achieving the goals through dialogue (Hezbollah 2016c, 2016g). When Saudi Arabia and its allies realised that they were not making any progress with their air campaign, they launched their ground operations as a mission of revenge (Hezbollah 2015b, 2016i). 'This is not a war for political targets,' Nasrallah concluded. 'This is a war of grudge – the Saudi-Wahhabi grudge' (Hezbollah 2016a). These words were only one instance in what must be considered an escalation of rhetoric towards what Nasrallah ironically called the 'Kingdom of "Benevolence"' (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l) and especially Mohamad bin Salman, freshly appointed minister of defence and deputy crown prince in 2015 but effectively controlling the Saudi government, as his father, King Salman, had been sick since his enthronement in the same year. He further denounced Saudi cowardice when the kingdom requested troops from other Arab countries (Hezbollah 2015g, 2015i) and called upon governments of the region to

> [l]isten to your consciences, religion, mind, and interests. Do you accept that your son's blood be shed for the sake of a self-indulgent prince who lives in luxury to restore his power and control over a prideful, poor, oppressed, struggling and striving people? (Hezbollah 2015i)

The spinelessness of the Saudis also manifested itself in the deliberate targeting of civilians (Hezbollah 2015g, 2015h, 2015l). Besides acts of lethal violence, as happened in 2016 when the coalition bombarded a funeral which left more than 140 Yemenis dead (Hezbollah 2016n), the Saudi aggressors cut off civilians' access to food, water and medical supplies, shelled ports and airports and even blocked humanitarian aid (Hezbollah 2015g, 2015l). Nasrallah claimed that the Saudis were leading a war of total destruction, targeting the same places over and over again and using cluster bombs and other prohibited weapons (Hezbollah 2015g, 2015l, 2016n). Hezbollah considered this war not only to be an immediate catastrophe for the Yemeni population, but also to imply

an unprecedented lowering of moral standards with disastrous consequences for future practices in the region and their acceptability (Hezbollah 2015h). 'Yemen is today's version of Karbala. It is a scene of tragedy and sacrifice. It is a scene where chopped bodies of children, women, and men mingle with rubble . . . in Sanaa, and all over Yemeni cities, villages, and neighborhoods' (Hezbollah 2016a). The amount and intensity of Saudi atrocities led Nasrallah to conclude that the kingdom constituted a greater evil even than Israel (Hezbollah 2015h).

In this sense, Saudi Arabia's direct support for 'Takfirist' groups in the armed conflicts of the region was just the peak of what Hezbollah considered repugnant behaviour and, according to the party, should come as no surprise – even less so because groups such as ISIS and JN were children of Wahhabi ideology. Referring to terrorist attacks in Europe, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, Nasrallah addressed the Saudis, stating that

> the whole world now knows that this is your Wahhabi culture, and that these are [products of] your schools, and . . . [of] your educational curriculums, and your sheikhs, your media, and your television channels, all of which do Takfiri (label others as infidels and kill them)! (Hezbollah 2016e)

According to Hezbollah, 'Takfirism', or the 'intellect which labels as an unbeliever everyone other than themselves' (Hezbollah 2014e), is in itself an illegitimate practice which is irreconcilable with Islam, even in its Sunni version (Hezbollah 2014e, 2016k). It is 'a mentality that you can never communicate with through dialogue. They know nothing [of] "being flexible", "setting priorities", or "finding common things"' (Hezbollah 2013a, 2014b, 2014h, 2016d, 2016l). 'Takfirists' consider violence justified against anyone who is different or does not share their exact convictions (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014e). They are therefore not simply a conflict party, but rather a terrorist group committing 'a massacre on the human, cultural, intellectual, moral, psychological, and moral levels' (Hezbollah 2014e, 2015d, 2016d). It does not stop at any form of crime. It 'sheds blood, demolishes, kills, rapes, take[s] women as prisoners, slaughters' (Hezbollah 2013g, 2015d, 2016d, 2016k).

While Nasrallah persistently decried Saudi Arabia's conduct in Yemen, more and more war crimes committed by the Syrian regime came to light, including the use of chemical weapons. The regime was also responsible for

by far the highest number of civilian casualties. While the exact numbers are contested, several observation centres found that, between 2011 and 2016, the Assad regime was responsible for between 87 and 93 per cent of civilian casualties, amounting to an estimated 94,000–190,000 civilian deaths at the hands of the rulers in this period (SNHR 2016, VDC 2016). Nothing in Nasrallah's speeches gives any indication of these atrocities. Instead, it seems he tried to exaggerate the danger posed by 'Takfirism' to a point where almost any means of defeating it seemed legitimate. In this sense, the creation of a larger-than-life enemy in the form of ISIS also served the purpose of resolving the tensions evident in Hezbollah's normative framework of legitimate violence.

Less than Deliberative Legitimacy: Keeping Lebanon Calm

As belligerent and steeped in violence as Hezbollah's discourse appears with respect to what it deems legitimate behaviour towards the conflict-torn Lebanese environment, it is calm and dialogue oriented when it comes to Lebanese domestic politics. While Hezbollah is far from embracing a Habermasian-style notion of deliberative legitimacy as developed in Chapter 2, its discourse does contain traces of discourse ethics. At the domestic level, authority in Lebanon can only arise from a peaceful and dialogue-oriented interaction between different religious sects, and this interaction must be guided by certain rules and norms. The heavily moralised discourse with which Hezbollah addresses its allies and adversaries in Lebanon can be interpreted as the party's attempt to keep domestic politics as calm as possible, so as to free the party's resources for its actual *raison d'être*: the transnational resistance project (Interview 6). To a considerable degree and in contrast to Ennahda, then, Hezbollah is a transnational actor whose priorities lie in regional and international rather than domestic affairs. This does not imply, however, that Hezbollah is not a Lebanese actor or that it is 'foreign' to Lebanese society – a claim that the party regularly perceives as an act of misrecognition and an attempt by its adversaries to delegitimise its claims (Pfeifer 2021).

Calls for dialogue and cooperation serve Hezbollah's self-presentation as a national Lebanese actor, rather than a sectarian Shi'i group (Matar 2014, 173). It is therefore no coincidence that these calls were particularly pronounced between early 2012 and early 2014, when terrorist attacks hit Lebanon and Hezbollah sought to counter intersectarian tensions and violence with its

discourse. It was extremely important for Nasrallah to avoid giving the impression that Hezbollah's judgements were guided by sectarianism. This was made very difficult by what could easily be interpreted as systematic interference in favour of the Shi'a in regional conflicts. 'Alawites, the religious community to which Bashar al-Assad and his family belong, are often considered a Shi'i minority.[16] In contrast, the overwhelming majority of the victims of the Syrian war, including those who died at the hands of the Assad regime and its allies, are Sunnis. Hezbollah also clearly positioned itself on the side of the (majority Shi'i) Bahraini people in their protests against a regime run by a Sunni minority. Finally, although Hezbollah, with good reason (Darwich 2018), worked against this framing, the Saudi-led war on Yemen was also read as an attempt to prevent Iranian hegemony and a victory of the Houthis. The latter also identify as Shi'a – albeit as Zaidis, and therefore following a different tradition again to Iran and Hezbollah. But in spite of this, and even though the Iranian influence on the Houthis tends to be overestimated (Asseburg, Lacher and Transfeld 2018, 49), Hezbollah's supporting the Houthis and positioning itself against the Saudis added to the impression that the party's actions were driven by sectarian considerations (Matar 2014, 178–9).

As a consequence, it became all the more important for Hezbollah to prevent the 'sectarianisation' (Hashemi and Postel 2017) of regional conflicts and politics from spilling over to Lebanon. As in the case of Ennahda, there is a certain ambiguity to Nasrallah's anti-sectarian discourse, for his messages simultaneously reject and reproduce sectarianism as the main dividing line of Lebanese politics (Khatib and Matar 2014, 187). Sectarian discourse played a major role in recruitment strategies for the Syrian war, even though it seems that Hezbollah rejected the kind of overly simplistic sectarian framing pursued by Iranian forces, 'stressing that it was working with militia members of all sects' (Leenders and Giustozzi 2022, 625). With regard to the domestic context, how to manage sectarian identities and avoid civil strife in Lebanon is one of the main issues in Hezbollah's discourse. According to Hezbollah's argumentation, Lebanon's political system and societal composition make political dialogue inevitable. It is the only means by which sectarian conflicts can be eased, relations with other parties developed and differences overcome, especially in the repeated government crises between 2011 and 2016 (Hezbollah 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011k, 2012e, 2013f, 2015c). In times of

regional chaos, dialogue needs to sought, even with adversaries, so as to safe-guard domestic stability and the 'civil peace' in Lebanon (Hezbollah 2013f, 2014b). Hezbollah cites the dialogue with the Future Movement in early 2015 as an example (Hezbollah 2015e). Against the backdrop of both a tense security situation due to a spike in attacks by Salafi jihadists on Lebanese soil and the presidential crisis, dialogue allowed the situation to be assuaged and eventually led to the surprising endorsement of presidential candidate Sleiman Frangieh from the March 8 bloc by Saad al-Hariri, then prime minister and leader of the adversarial March 14 bloc. To seek dialogue is both the duty and the responsibility of any political party – and also implies behaving like a rational actor in decision-making processes (Hezbollah 2011a, 2011g, 2014b): 'We work according to what we agree on, and we organize what we disagree on, postpone it, or find a mechanism to continue a dialogue in it. This is what logic and the mind says. Religion, morals, and national interest say so' (Hezbollah 2015e).

This language of virtues and vices is rather typical of Nasrallah's speeches. With regard to what he considers the appropriate mode of Lebanese domestic politics, they are consolidated into his very own version of discourse ethics and, thus, guidelines for legitimate decision-making. Dialogue must, first, be guided by rationality, as well as 'transparency and clarity among those who sit on the table or will sit on the table' (Hezbollah 2011e, 2012d). Second, it should be open in two regards: participation must not be subjected to conditions and there must not be any predetermined outcomes (Hezbollah 2012d). Third, power may not be exerted in ongoing dialogue, for example by imposing choices or opinions on participants (Hezbollah 2012b). Fourth, an actor's decision (not) to participate in a given dialogue may not be used against them or their allies in the form of blackmail or similar practices (Hezbollah 2015f). Finally, dialogue should be a direct and immediate encounter, rather than taking the form of a media battle (Hezbollah 2014g). If these standards are met, Hezbollah is 'open for any discussion that might lead anywhere' (Hezbollah 2013a) – including on the contentious issue of its participation in the Syrian Civil War; at least this is what its secretary general claims (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014e). The only topic which Nasrallah excludes from any agenda is Hezbollah's resistance activity, which includes the party's insistence on keeping its arms (Hezbollah 2013c).

It is noteworthy that Nasrallah's call for dialogue is also addressed to con-flicting parties in the region (Hezbollah 2012a), be they Iran and Saudi Arabia (Hezbollah 2015l, 2016e), Bahrain and Yemen (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011g, 2012a, 2015d, 2015g, 2015i, 2016c, 2016k), or the warring parties in Syria (Hezbollah 2011g, 2011l, 2012b, 2012c). For 'anyone who pushes for dialogue instead of violence . . . is a friend' (Hezbollah 2011j). But as shown above, in the contexts of the international realm and regional conflicts, the conditions under which dialogue makes sense and can lead to results are far less likely to be met. *A priori* excluding a party from the negotiation table or setting conditions (like Assad's resignation from power) prior to talks makes them futile (Hezbollah 2013a, 2014a). Hezbollah does, however, exempt one actor from any dialogical solution. In view of the war in the neighbouring country, with Syrians tired of fighting and without any prospect of a military solution (Hezbollah 2015b, 2015i), Nasrallah appealed:

> Be realistic in viewing the status quo in Syria. Open the gate for a political solution. Allow the opposition to partake in a settlement. Here, I do not mean the Takfiri opposition which is not allowed to partake in a settlement. (Hezbollah 2015c)

Similarly, Hezbollah claimed in 2016 that, after what the party considered var-ious missed opportunities for dialogue, Saudi Arabia had ruined and under-mined any attempts at finding a political solution to the conflicts in Bahrain, Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Hezbollah 2016c, 2016e) – which disqualified them from becoming a dialogue partner. In this sense, dialogue is the counterpart to legitimate violence as discussed in the previous section. Where the former leads nowhere or is intentionally undermined to prevent a conflict being settled by peaceful means, the use of violent means becomes necessary as a last resort in circumstances of war or oppression.

Besides normative standards for dialogue, Hezbollah also defines the virtues and qualities a political actor must have: truthfulness and rationality. Opinions should always be based on facts and information (Hezbollah 2011h). These facts should always be verified and not simply taken for granted, in par-ticular in the context of false media reports and the spread of misinformation in a digital age (Hezbollah 2011h, 2013b). Claims should always follow the methodology and rules of logic and objectivity (Hezbollah 2011h, 2012d). As

the truth is often hidden, it needs to be exposed through careful argumentation and the search for the bigger picture (Hezbollah 2013d, 2015g). If new facts emerge, there is no shame in reconsidering an earlier stance (Hezbollah 2014e). However, it is equally important to keep one's word and honour one's commitments (Hezbollah 2016m). Besides being a religious duty, telling the truth is important for credible deterrence of the enemy (Hezbollah 2013b, 2016h). For 'those who make false claims and exaggerate are normally exposed by the enemy. So once the enemy finds out that any medium is lying, what kind of psychological war does that become? It turns into nonsense!' (Hezbollah 2013b).

Rationality and cool-headedness are also an 'ethical stance' (Hezbollah 2013c) but play an important role in preventing conflict, too: 'How does strife usually begin? People face their guns at others when they decide to stop thinking logically and allow their temper or anger to control them. That's when they turn crazy and start killing each other' (Hezbollah 2013d). Provocations and accusations should be avoided; actions and reactions should be considerate and only carried out after contemplation and careful evaluation of the situation (Hezbollah 2013e, 2014e, 2015h). The composition of Lebanon is like a powder keg which can easily be detonated by sectarian rhetoric and incitement (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011i, 2012a, 2013d, 2014e) – which 'the other camp' or the March 14 bloc all too often employs for personal and political gains (Hezbollah 2011e, 2012c, 2013d, 2013e). Those who want to rule strive to divide people, alienating Sunnis from Shiʿa and Arabs from Persians (Hezbollah 2011h). Among the more cunning and dangerous lies that Hezbollah regularly takes a stand against in its discourse is the claim that it was a puppet of the Iranian government, which tried to exercise hegemony over Lebanon, interfere with elections and install a regime under its patronage (Hezbollah 2014c, 2015i, 2016f, 2016m). This goes hand in hand with the typical allegation made against Islamists, as seen in the Ennahda case, according to which Hezbollah was intent on seizing power and unilateral control over the state – and would not hesitate to use its arms for the achievement of its goals (Hezbollah 2011b, 2011l, 2013c, 2016d).

To counter these vicious tactics employed by political opponents, Nasrallah presents an image of righteousness and wisdom. He is widely perceived as a man who has good arguments, follows a line of reasoning and keeps

his word (Interview 6). Nasrallah is not shy of publicly showcasing what he considers his own and the party's ethical qualities, which, besides truthfulness and rationality, include empathy and a willingness to try to understand the positions and, even more importantly, fears of others (Hezbollah 2012b, 2013c). From such a stance, it follows that Hezbollah embraces a cooperative attitude, refrains from pushing its own interests and offers concessions (Hezbollah 2012a, 2013c). While some try to frame this as a weakness, Nasrallah considers Hezbollah's principles a strength: '[O]ur allies realize our ethics. Personally, I'm absolutely ready to offer anything I can. So is this shameful?!' (Hezbollah 2013c). If all Lebanese political parties were to follow the example set by Hezbollah and refrain from '[e]xchanging accusations[, which] is something very largely widespread in Lebanon' (Hezbollah 2014b), the country would be better equipped to face regional and domestic challenges, and also to ward off attempts by external forces to mislead public opinion through psychological warfare and meddle in Lebanese politics (Hezbollah 2011f, 2011i, 2013a, 2013e).

Discussion

As Chapter 6 will show, Hezbollah sees itself, and indeed Lebanon as whole, as caught in the middle of a global fight between good and evil – and this general understanding of its position in the world order determines Hezbollah's ideas on legitimacy. In the background of what can only be called a very belligerent worldview hovers the positive idea of community-based legitimacy. A political order should be adapted to the people for which it is designed and respond to society-specific characteristics and problems. As a consequence, Hezbollah considers an Islamic state according to the Iranian model to be unsuited to Lebanon, despite recognising its virtues. It is noteworthy that, in its discourse, Hezbollah praises the democratic qualities of this system more than its Islamic principles. This already points to a certain discursive inescapability of global standards of legitimacy. Today, it seems, no one can argue against democracy – however far removed it may be from actual political practice. Similarly, Hezbollah's take on international institutions and law affirms their norms and procedures in principle but criticises the hypocrisy practised regarding human rights and other (democratic) norms (Hezbollah 2011b, 2011e, 2016i, 2016n), the partiality of certain bodies like the UN (Hezbollah 2015l) and the politi-

cisation of institutions like the STL (Hezbollah 2011c, 2011i, 2011j). This confirms earlier findings that in its discourse, Hezbollah embraces and, to a certain degree and for some time, has empirically complied with international norms (Dionigi 2014) – at least until its involvement in the Syrian Civil War. Similarly, Hezbollah's normative standards of dialogue resonate well with discourse ethics and deliberative legitimacy (Habermas 1996), even if they are not integrated in a refined and sophisticated broader model of democratic politics. At least with regard to certain normative principles, Hezbollah is not as resistant as the term *al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* suggests – or as it would like to see itself and be seen (Dudouet 2021, 243). There is a high degree of convergence between Hezbollah's and Western discourse when it comes to the legitimacy claims Hezbollah formulates for the Lebanese context.

What is undeniably resistant, however, is the party's self-positioning in regional conflicts and how it resorts to violent means according to its own assessment of which actions are necessary in these violent conditions. But even here, its resistant stance is limited. To put it simply, in the view of the West, Hezbollah positions itself on the 'wrong' side of the conflict yet it undermines very few principles of the Western world order, other than the use of force and intervention in conflicts as a non-state actor. In a sense, then, Hezbollah is resistant primarily because it is not a state – and because Western world order concepts are geared towards the nation-state based on the Westphalian ideal (Pfeifer forthcoming). Indeed, international law still normatively privileges states (Chiu 2019, 193–233) and international relations are often still imagined and studied as a practice of states, thereby ignoring the empirical reality that (armed) non-state actors are an important part of international politics and conflicts (Clément, Geis and Pfeifer 2021, Darwich 2021b, see also Chapter 6). Thus, Hezbollah's practice and discourse are provocative – or resistant – to the Western world order, because they extend its norms to a militant non-state actor – and because the party sides with countries that have been labelled 'rogue states' and enemies of the West, while engaging in violent conflict with Israel, not only one of the most important allies of the West in the region but the relationship with which is of high moral value for many states (Gardner Feldman 1999, Marsden 2009). In this sense, Hezbollah's ideas on legitimate violence challenge sovereignty more than legitimacy norms (see Chapter 4).

Turning to the articulation of the normative principles that should guide behaviour in situations of conflict and restrict violence, Hezbollah's discourse is based on the assumption of a permanent state of conflict in which Lebanon and the region are caught up. The only way of countering oppression, unjust rule and illegitimate war is self-defence or, in Hezbollah's words, resistance. Nasrallah's moral assessment of conflict behaviours is reminiscent of just-war theory (Walzer 1977) with the addition of the Muslim, or rather Shi'i, duty to oppose certain forms of violence (Kızılkaya 2017). There is an obvious tension between the standards articulated by the party, on the one hand, and, on the other, the brutality of the Hezbollah-supported Assad regime, whose methods include targeting civilians, long-term sieges and food deprivation as well as the use of chemical weapons banned by international law, to name just a few. These crimes and excessive use of violence by Assad and his allies constitute a glaring void in Hezbollah's discourse. It was thus all the more important for Hezbollah to construct a mighty 'Takfirist' threat and enemy image that could still legitimise its choice of sides in the Syrian war. The analysis also shows that Hezbollah struggles to demonstrate by means of its discourse that it does commit to normative standards – even more so than the hypocritical West. The latter uses a rhetoric of liberal norms and institutions and 'gives lectures . . . on civilization, democracy and the will of the majority' (Hezbollah 2011b), while devising self-interested plans and intervening when a regime that does not serve its interests is in power. By emphasising its ethics in the use of violence and its confirmation of norms (Dionigi 2014), Hezbollah also hopes to gain recognition as being different from actors like ISIS and al-Qa'ida.

Finally, Hezbollah draws a sharp line between the domestic and the international logic of legitimacy. The former requires dialogue and cooperation across sects, Hezbollah claims, presenting itself as a national Lebanese actor and de-emphasising its Shi'i and resistance identity (Matar 2014, 173). Calls to abstain from sectarian instigation were loudest between early 2012 and early 2014, when terrorist attacks hit Lebanon, as a way of easing sectarian tensions. And still, Nasrallah's rhetoric remains ambiguous in this regard, with his messages often at once rejecting and reproducing sectarian categories (Khatib and Matar 2014, 187). The results presented above confirm earlier findings on Nasrallah's ability to design and convey audience-specific messages with a

corresponding rhetoric and style, 'adapting different linguistic, cultural and religious registers' (Matar 2014, 172). For instance, when Hezbollah's secretary general addresses his partisans, he frames jihad in terms of a religious duty and the Israelis as infidels. When he talks to a broader Lebanese audience, he puts an emphasis on the non-sectarian character of resistance which brought freedom to the Lebanese homeland and nation (Harik 2007, 66, 71). His speeches are said to address five audiences: his partisans, the larger Shi'i community, the Lebanese people, the Arab-Islamic world and Israel (Interview 6). A sixth overhearing global audience is clearly taken into account in the design of Nasrallah's speeches and sometimes even explicitly addressed. For the message he wants to convey to the hostile international environment is: Hezbollah can see right through the schemes devised for the region. As Chapter 6 will show, the party believes that hegemonic plans that would result in the submission, domination and oppression of Arabs and Muslims are underway. And to counter such plans, resistance and self-defence are not merely legitimate – they are a duty.

Notes

1. 'There is no longer a justification for political Islam in Tunisia. We are leaving political Islam to enter Muslim democracy. We are democratic Muslims who no longer rely on political Islam.'
2. Indeed, two legitimacy categories were of significant quantitative importance in the empirical material but will only be briefly touched upon at the end of this chapter: the illegitimacy of the old regime and output legitimacy. The former gives an idea of legitimacy *ex negativo*, through the distancing from practices and institutions of the old regime, but does not necessarily provide clues about Ennahda's specific conception of legitimacy. Output legitimacy, on the other hand, concerns the socio-economic conditions of democratic legitimacy and central questions of economic development and social justice. However, given the focus placed on input legitimacy in Chapter 2 and because output legitimacy can be achieved via non-democratic means, it will be de-emphasised here as well.
3. The other core demand, for (economic) dignity, is something that needs to be restored through the socio-economic transformation of Tunisian society and will briefly be touched upon in the discussion of output legitimacy.
4. 'Our identity is not a cause of debate among Tunisians. We are an Arab-Muslim country: this is a fact accepted by everyone.'

5. According to Saïd Amir Arjomand (2009, 571), the term *umma* originally desig-
   nated 'the unified political community of Medina' and only later came to mean
   'community of believers', which allowed a distinction to be drawn between 'the
   ummas of Moses and Jesus . . . [which] were now excluded from the *umma* of
   Muhammad'.

6. 'Evoking the "khalifa arrachida" only aimed at taking inspiration from our values
   and our political patrimony and the civilisational heritage of Tunisian society to
   which we so proudly belong.'

7. http://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2016/05/23/intv-amanpour-rached-ghanno
   uchi-tunisia-ennahda-islam.cnn (accessed 12 October 2023).

8. 'A constitution cannot be built on a majority of 51 per cent, but [must be built]
   on consensus. It should contain clear ideas on which everyone can agree.'

9. He does not formally belong to a party, but is considered as being close to Nidaa
   Tounes.

10. https://data.worldbank.org/country/tunisia (accessed 13 October 2023).

11. 'The people want a party that talks about their everyday problems, about the
    lives of families and individuals, and not a party that tells them about the Last
    Judgment, paradise etc.'

12. '*Die Christdemokraten in Deutschland sind ein gutes Vorbild für uns, wie
    religiöse Werte zwar Grundlage politischen Handelns sein können, aber nie zum
    Selbstzweck werden.*'

13. Hezbollah's interpretation of jihadism differs from the one introduced in
    Chapter 1. When Nasrallah calls Hezbollah a jihadist group he refers to jihad as a
    noble cause. The Salafi jihadism used in this book refers to groups such as ISIS or
    al-Qa'ida, which Nasrallah refers to as 'Takfiris'. Finally, by 'Islamists' Nasrallah
    exclusively means Sunni groups. To avoid terminological confusion, Hezbollah's
    use of the terms will be flagged through the use of inverted commas.

14. Zeynab is not only the Prophet's granddaughter and Imam Ali's daughter, but
    also the sister of Husayn and Hassan and an important figure in the Shi'i tradi-
    tion. Nasrallah refers to her in several speeches as a role model of courage and
    steadfastness.

15. *Nakba* (catastrophe) is the term used in the Arab and Muslim world to refer to
    the foundation of the state of Israel. In particular, it refers to the forced displace-
    ment of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians from their land (Allan 2005, 47).

16. This is a reasonable attribution. Even if one were to support it, however,
    Hezbollah, like Iran, adheres to Twelver Shi'ism, which 'Alawites do not. The
    theological similarity is therefore highly contestable (Balanche 2018, 3).

6

TELOI

Ennahda

At the time of writing, the euphoria of the early 2010s about what seemed to be a fundamental transformation of politics in North Africa and the 'Middle East' seems very remote. What Souad Abdelrahim, an Ennahda member and since 2018 Tunis's first female mayor, formulated in an opinion piece in 2011 mirrors the Tunisian zeitgeist and is reminiscent of the widespread spirit of optimism at the time:

> Tunisia has already led the way in the region in showing how brutal dictatorship can be brought to an end through peaceful means. We hope we can now lead the way in building a genuine democratic, pluralistic and fair society that can provide a model for the entire region. (Ennahda 2011j)

For a long time, Tunisia was seen as the first and then the last remaining country to have turned the legacies of the Arab uprisings into a (more) democratic future. Since a series of terrorist attacks committed in 2015, however, a state of emergency has been in place. In July 2021, the president of Tunisia, Kais Saied, issued yet another extension of the state of emergency and announced the enforcement of Article 80 of the Tunisian Constitution according to his own interpretation (Ben Hamadi 2021). Since then, all democratic institutions have slowly but surely been dismantled (Weipert-Fenner 2022). Indeed,

Ennahda had anticipated these very developments in what was one of various dystopic trajectories the party had dreaded between 2011 and 2016. The danger of authoritarian relapse hanging over Tunisia since the ousting of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali became more concrete with the military coup in Egypt in 2013. It was briefly eclipsed by the successful conclusion of the constitutional process and the adoption of a democratic Tunisian constitution in 2014, but started to reappear when President Beji Caid Essebsi, in response to the wave of terrorist attacks and with the reluctant support of Ennahda, declared a state of emergency in 2015.

Ennahda was very aware of the precarious nature of the nascent Tunisian democracy, and the various domestic, regional and global threats it faced. Still, as present as dystopian elements of its discourse were, the party consistently and enthusiastically presented what it saw as a utopia for Tunisia and the region: the Tunisian people taking another step towards Arab and Islamic liberation. As the people had now 'tasted freedom', they would 'not go backward' and, eventually, there would be 'no escape from democratisation' (Ennahda 2015d). Ennahda sees Tunisia as a shining example of a region that was bound to democratise and liberate itself at some point. And, as a result of its own transformation, it now considers itself not only as a facilitator and a mirror of Tunisia's development, but also as a role model for other Islamist movements in the region who want to play a conducive role in processes of democratic transition. Figure 6.1 displays Ennahda's utopia on three levels: regional history, Tunisian politics and the evolution of the Islamic movement in Tunisia. This teleology leads to a region in the 'Middle East' and North Africa in which democracies peacefully coexist and are at eye level with other states in a multipolar world. The other side of the story, however, are the manifold threats and obstacles that stand in the way of the utopia becoming reality. Besides authoritarian persistence and resurgence, these threats comprise polarisation and civil war, anarchy and state failure, terrorism but also the demonisation of Islamists and, finally, external intervention. Ennahda's utopia must be protected from these threats – an ambition that, as we now know, Ennahda was unable to fulfil.
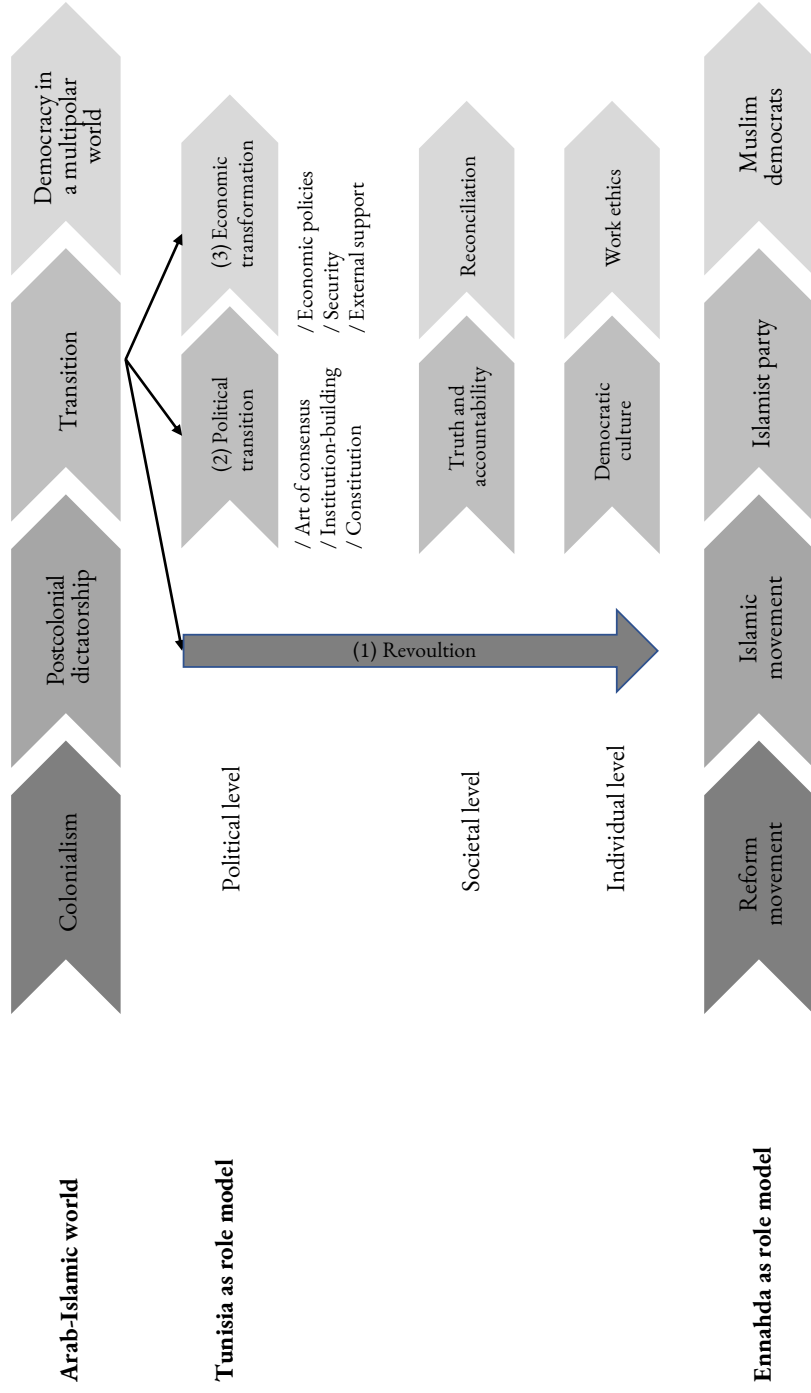
Arab-Islamic world

Colonialism | Postcolonial dictatorship | Transition | Democracy in a multipolar world

Tunisia as role model

Political level

(2) Political transition | (3) Economic transformation

/ Art of consensus
/ Institution-building
/ Constitution

/ Economic policies
/ Security
/ External support

(1) Revolution

Societal level

Truth and accountability | Reconciliation

Individual level

Democratic culture | Work ethics

Ennahda as role model

Reform movement | Islamic movement | Islamist party | Muslim democrats

Figure 6.1 Ennahda's utopia

Utopia: A Story of Regional Liberation Following the Tunisian Model

In full awareness of the 'civilisational and strategic depth to which our country belongs at the Maghreb, Arab and Islamic levels' (Ennahda 2011a), Ennahda views Tunisia's future as inextricably intertwined with the fate of the neighbourhood with which it shares 'values and history' (Ennahda 2012ah) and with Islam as both a religion and a civilisation (Ennahda 2012ag). The region also has a common history of oppression. Colonial rule had prevented it from developing its own model of (Islamic) democracy and destroyed the local political culture (Ennahda 2012af, 2013c, 2013f). After the people achieved liberation, postcolonial authoritarian rule was established across the region (Ennahda 2011r). These dictators pursued a 'forced westernisation hostile to Arab-Muslim identity' (Ennahda 2014ac) and fuelled 'economic, political, and social exclusion and inequality' (Ennahda 2016h). In the 2010s, the region stood 'at a crossroads: between going forward towards democracy, development and progress, and going towards chaos and terrorism, civil war and sectarianism' (Ennahda 2014ae).

In 2011 and 2012, Ennahda's discourse seemed optimistic about the post-revolutionary future of the region. 'Arab regimes face implosion from within and change from without. This . . . [is] a natural outgrowth of decades of oppression and misrule. There is a similar set of socio-economic and political conditions in all the Arab countries and the dynamic of change appears unstoppable,' the party declared (Ennahda 2011e). The geographical proximity, shared language and culture and intellectual traditions of Arab reformism (Ennahda 2013l) allowed for the spread of the revolution and would ultimately put 'an end to the old doctrine of "Arab exceptionalism" and support for authoritarian regimes' (Ennahda 2013l). After the 2013 coup in Egypt and with the war in Syria escalating, Ennahda called for the people to remain steadfast. For what looked like victories of old or new dictators was only 'temporary and superficial – the Arab Spring is irreversible' (Ennahda 2014ad). Change does not happen overnight, and, as in other regions, including Europe, processes of democratisation would take time.

> The whole world is heading to democracy at different speeds, and the Arab
> world is part of the world. Democracy was delayed in this region for many

reasons . . . The other Arab countries are also headed toward democracy but at a different pace. (Ennahda 2012d)

But with violence escalating in Libya, Syria and Yemen, and the new Egyptian dictatorship consolidating, Ennahda explicitly referred to a utopia of regional liberation less and less often. Instead, it opted for leading by example. Tunisia's revolution had not only 'amazed the world' (Ennahda 2011i) and 'initiated a major Arab will for emancipation and liberation' (Ennahda 2011b), thereby sparking 'the flame of the Arab Spring' and opening a 'horizon of hope' (Ennahda 2014f). It also demonstrated how a revolution can be achieved with peaceful means (Ennahda 2011j) and set an 'an inspiring example of Islamic–secular co-operation for the greater national interest' (Ennahda 2011i, 2011j, 2013l) for the difficult task of transitioning to democracy, establishing its own 'brand of radical political moderation' (Ennahda 2016j). Tunisia thus became the '[f]irst Arab democracy' (Ennahda 2013e) and with it a 'light house or an example to the rest of the Muslim world' (Ennahda 2012g). As circumstances were similar in other Arab countries (Ennahda 2015d), Tunisia would be able to export its model of transition (Ennahda 2013i) and its experience of liberation.

Tunisia's liberation is built on the back of 'generations of women and men of diverse political and intellectual persuasions against despotism and for freedom, equality and dignity' (Ennahda 2011i) and can be told as a story of three generations of martyrs. First, after a long history of struggles and sacrifices, the brave Tunisian people had freed themselves from French colonial rule in their 'glorious revolution' (Ennahda 2013n) in 1956.[1] The next generation of Tunisians achieved the second step of liberation in 2010, after 'martyr Mohamed Bouazizi [had sparked] the beginning of the revolution of freedom and dignity' (Ennahda 2013ab) or the 'blessed revolution' (Ennahda 2011b). The final step that Ennahda projects to the future and integrates seamlessly into the teleology is Tunisia's liberation from terrorism. At the end of the process, Tunisia will emerge as a full, secure democracy in a multipolar world (see Chapter 5): 'Our vision . . . remembers with pride all the country's martyrs: those who struggled against occupation, those who struggled against dictatorship and injustice and those who lost their lives fighting terrorism' (Ennahda 2014z). '[T]hey are the third generation of martyrs, after the martyrs

for independence and the martyrs of the struggle against dictatorship, these fell as martyrs for the defense of the revolutions of freedom, dignity and democracy' (Ennahda 2013ad). Ennahda came to perceive terrorism as the greatest threat to Tunisian democracy (see also next section), believing it would only be defeated by the conclusion of Tunisia's transition model.

Looking at this model more closely, a sequence of three phases can be determined: (1) revolution, (2) political transition and (3) economic transformation (see Figure 6.1).[2] All three need to occur on the levels of politics, society and the individual. The first phase put an end to dictatorship and culminated in the first democratic elections in 2011 (Ennahda 2014q). The second and third phases achieve two of the revolution's goals: (political) freedom and (economic) dignity (Ennahda 2014w). The political transition or second phase comprises restoring political freedom by building a democratic system of governance (Ennahda 2012a). This phase ended with the adoption of the constitution in 2014 and the second free elections, which 'crown[ed] . . . the transition phase' (Ennahda 2014y). The 'peaceful alternation of power' (Ennahda 2015l) marked the end of the transition phase in the narrow sense and took the 'country . . . into the phase of stability within a democratic pluralistic state' (Ennahda 2012u, 2014y). In this third phase of consolidation (Ennahda 2014y, 2016a), the priority shifts to economic transformation. 'Tunisia is today on the verge of a new phase in fulfilling its dreams of economic and social development and consolidating its pioneering position: prosperity and dignity for all its citizens,' Ennahda declared in 2014 (2014z). It would bring with it 'major economic and social reforms' (Ennahda 2015y) – and, thus, a difficult task requiring broad support and consensus among political and social partners (Ennahda 2016i). The *Pacte de Carthage* of 2016 could be considered a key document of this third phase. Several parties, civil society organisations – except for the UGTT – and 'national figures' had participated in setting up its agenda (Ennahda 2016o), which included, among other things, combatting terrorism, fighting unemployment and fostering development.

The political transition and economic transformation go hand in hand with changes on the societal and individual levels. Ennahda wanted to combine 'the principles of accountability and transitional justice with a spirit of reconciliation' (Ennahda 2011b). The first step, and Ennahda's priority, was account-

ability and the prosecution of perpetrators (Ennahda 2011l, 2012k, 2012ah). This was reflected in the establishment of the Ministry for Transitional Justice and Human Rights under the Troika government (Ennahda 2012ah), which was later replaced by the Truth and Dignity Commission (Ennahda 2014z). But Ennahda's efforts in 2011 and 2012 were perceived as a politicisation of the transitional justice process, as it pushed for the exclusion of old regime figures from the political system. At the same time, however, it secretly negotiated with RCD cadres and Rached al-Ghannouchi eventually even withdrew a bill called the Law for the Protection of the Revolution. This sparked a lot of criticism among Nahdawis, especially among those who had been political prisoners (Marks 2014). What is more, Ennahda relied on the business and security networks the old regime had left behind, which confirmed the impression that the party was only reluctantly starting to work through the past. It was very slow to initiate actual trials and truth-seeking processes and these only targeted low-ranking RCD members. And finally, as a way of making its constituency happy, Ennahda also prioritised securing compensation for victims among its own ranks (Boubekeur 2016).

Ennahda itself admitted that the Troika government had 'indeed fallen short on some of the revolution's goals, beginning with corruption, the dismantling of the tyrannical system, rehabilitating the victims of dictatorship, and transitional justice' (Ennahda 2013f, 2013ad), which can be interpreted as a concession to its base. But from 2013 onwards, the party officially started changing its policy, adopting a more accommodating stance towards old regime cadres, thus entering the phase of reconciliation. Tunisia now needed an 'approach [that would] enable our country to address the wounds of the past in a manner that allows us to move forward without planting seeds of animosity among our younger generations' (Ennahda 2014c). In 2015, Ennahda eventually even supported and garnered support for President Essebsi's contentious Reconciliation Law (Ennahda 2015u), which aimed to 'protect public servants and businessmen from prosecutions, even if they were involved in corruption and embezzlement of public funds' (Andrieu 2016, 290). Ennahda did propose some amendments to the first draft, but generally affirmed that it was also in favour of 'economic reconciliation' (Salehi and Weipert-Fenner 2017) – which is another manifestation of the priorities it set for the third phase of transition.

Finally, on an individual level, Ennahda pursued a twofold citizen education project. Tunisians would have to learn, first, to engage in democratic politics and, second, to develop a work ethic. Democracy must be institutionalised but also lived and experienced, in order to establish it as a new 'political culture' (Ennahda 2012y). Ennahda sought 'to promote and strengthen the values of moderation, balance, tolerance and openness' (Ennahda 2014z) among Tunisians. This would pave the way for the second step, learning 'to value the culture of work, action, initiative' (Ennahda 2014m). Such a work ethic had been crippled under the old regime, where '[s]uccess [was] usually achieved through illegal means or nepotism, not through hard work' (Ennahda 2014m). The call for individual virtues was simultaneously an attack on the UGTT, which had contributed to establishing a 'culture of strikes' after the revolution at the expense of a much-needed 'culture of work . . . – meaning appreciating the value and importance of work' (Ennahda 2015b). Again, this demonstrates Ennahda's apprehension vis-à-vis an economic situation that would simply not improve.

Dystopic Fragments: Multiple Threats to Tunisian Exceptionalism

While Ennahda may have hoped and believed that Tunisia would eventually be located in a free, peaceful and democratic neighbourhood, there was also a clear awareness of the dangers the surrounding countries faced and posed to Tunisia. Accordingly, the party regularly promoted and showcased Tunisian exceptionalism in metaphoric and emphatic language, almost as if it were trying to place a protective spell around its country and people so as to avert any harm from outside. While Ennahda emphasised Tunisia's particularism immediately after the revolution as a way of reassuring neighbours such as Algeria that no one intended to try to impose their revolution on them (Ennahda 2011r, 2013h, 2014d), the dire fate of the Arab Spring societies made the Tunisian path an incantation. Just a few years after the Arab uprisings of 2010 and 2011, Tunisia had become 'the last remaining candle of the Arab Spring over coups, terrorism, and internal and external conspiracies' (Ennahda 2013e, 2014b, 2014ae), 'despite all the winds that are blowing at it' (Ennahda 2013i); the 'sole peaceful island in a turbulent region' (Ennahda 2014g) and the 'sole success of the Arab Spring' (Ennahda 2015g); it remained the 'shining light of the region' (Ennahda 2016j) and the

only 'alternative to the terrifying images of terror and tyranny here and there' (Ennahda 2014z).

And while Ennahda always also had an eye on the region as a whole, it sensed that the actual dangers to Tunisian democracy came from inside. Besides the lack of economic success, which was a necessary condition for democratic consolidation, Ennahda identified several specific dangers to the young Tunisian democracy. These threat scenarios in or dystopian elements of Ennahda's discourse emerge and begin to dominate in line with actual events. Immediately after the revolution, Ennahda was worried about external inter-ference in Tunisian affairs and about becoming demonised as Islamists – or, put differently, that the results of the 2011 elections would not be accepted at home and abroad should Ennahda emerge as the winning party. The fear of an authoritarian backlash became particularly pronounced after the coup in Egypt in 2013 but lost importance after the adoption of the constitution in 2014. In 2015 and 2016, the party dedicated a large share of its discursive resources to the topic of terrorism.

Ennahda's fear of being stigmatised as dangerous Islamists was a legacy of the party's persecution under Ben Ali. The regime '*[avait] utilisé les islam-istes comme un épouvantail, pour faire peur aux progressistes, aux femmes et à l'Occident, et pour faire taire tous ceux qui s'élevaient contre lui*' (Ennahda 2011d).[3] After the revolution, some of Ennahda's opponents continued the old regime's discourse and practices, urging citizens 'not to vote for Ennahda, as well as defaming the latter and spreading falsehoods against it' (Ennahda 2011p). They used clichés about Ennahda's supposed Islamist agenda and claimed it wanted to reintroduce polygamy, force the veil upon Tunisian women and take over state power for good (Ennahda 2011h, 2011i, 2011j, 2011p). When it was founded in 2012, Nidaa Tounes, the party that would become Ennahda's fiercest competitor and that provided a home for former RCD politicians, 'specialised in hostility' towards Ennahda. Some of its party leaders called 'for eliminating Al-Nahda from the scene . . . in a neo-Nazi exclusionist language' (Ennahda 2013e). It was only after the success of the Quartet roadmap and the reconciliation with Nidaa Tounes that Ennahda's fear of demonisation subsided.

Ennahda also condemned Western media reports in this phase, for instance when they suggested that the party planned to establish an Islamic

state that would suppress women and that it received funding from Qatar. Ennahda regularly wrote open letters to Western media outlets that had distorted its image, correcting what the party perceived as false information and even filing a law suit against one international newspaper (Ennahda 2012f, 2012h, 2012aa, 2014u, 2014x). 'Some are presenting me as a Khomeini who will return to Tunisia – I am no Khomeini,' Ghannouchi indignantly clarified (Ennahda 2016e). Worried about a refusal by the international community to accept the results of the first free and fair Tunisian elections – which had not been without precedent in the region – Ennahda reminded Western politicians that they were obliged to respect the results of the elections even if they were nervous 'about the victory of democratic Islamic parties like Ennahda, mistakenly grouping them with radical extremists' (Ennahda 2014i). Ennahda responded to these allegations of closeness to the Salafist scene by pursuing two strategies. First, it claimed that any engagement with Salafists was aimed at persuading them 'to commit to legal and civic activism and peaceful coexistence' (Ennahda 2012x). Second, Ennahda insisted that the distinction between violent fundamentalists and political strands be maintained. 'Salafists are part of the Tunisian people, enjoying the same rights and bound by [the] same duties. We defend their right to freely express their views and all their rights, but they should abide by the law,' the party declared (Ennahda 2012f). Finally, as a former victim of demonisation, Ennahda knew that such stigmatisation would not prevent Salafists from playing a political role in the future: '*Si nous voulons diaboliser les salafistes, dans dix ou quinze ans, ce seront eux qui seront au pouvoir*' (Ennahda 2012e).[4]

Toning down aggressive discourse towards Salafists was also important with regard to a second scenario Ennahda dreaded: the escalation of polarisation into a civil war-like state of affairs. Ennahda had tried to avoid any societal tensions along the secular–Islamist line by forming a coalition government with the two secular parties Ettakatol and the CPR so as to make sure 'that the debate is not between Islamist and non-Islamist or Islamist and secular' (Ennahda 2011r). Ennahda described this phase between 2012 and 2013 as one of 'extreme polarisation' (Ennahda 2015h) and as '*une période de crise où la société a été divisée en deux parties*' (Ennahda 2015w)[5] in which '[t]wo trains were heading into an inevitable crash' (Ennahda 2015h). The political assassination of two leftist politicians, Chokri Belaïd and Mohamed Brahmi,

constituted the sad culmination of this conflict which pitted government and opposition, Islamists and secularists, Ennahda and UGTT against one another and led to 'a loss of trust between many parties of the political class' (Ennahda 2013a). Ennahda suspected that polarisation was not a result of societal and political dynamics, though, and reminded Tunisians: '[I]deological polarisation and remaining in the cycle of traditional conflicts between the two sides [is what] the dictatorships benefitted from, and [what] the counter-revolution forces tried to revive and feed' (Ennahda 2013f). Ennahda sought to counter a simplistic polarisation between Islamists and secularists in its discourse and also wanted the resignation of Hamadi Jebali after Belaïd's murder to be interpreted as contributing to this: 'We sacrificed our government to avoid civil war' (Ennahda 2014ah).

Other societies had been less successful in taming violence and managing difference. Ennahda was worried about polarisation before the coup in Egypt (Ennahda 2013s). After Mohamed Morsi, Muslim Brother and Egyptian president (2012–13), was removed from power, Ennahda warned against 'zero-sum conflicts that rule out the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation between political rivals' (Ennahda 2015o) and violent escalation between conflicting factions (Ennahda 2013h). As for Syria, Ennahda considered sectarian division among those who confronted the regime to be the core problem (Ennahda 2014j, 2015t). Similarly, Yemen had 'sunk into a cycle of tribal and sectarian conflicts . . . and a rise in the dangers of division between north and south' (Ennahda 2014j), and Iraq had 'tapped into Sunni resentment over Shiite sectarian repression' (Ennahda 2016h). On an interstate level, Ennahda was also worried about increasing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the dangers an escalation would hold for the whole region (Ennahda 2016l). On a global level, Ennahda warned against the threat of a 'clash of civilizations' (Ennahda 2012q, 2014ae) rhetoric, which was prone to reifying and worsening the 'Islamists vs. secularists division' (Ennahda 2014i). In particular, the medial presence of and global focus on the ISIS organisation and the fight against it increased the risk of 'conflating Islam and terrorism[, which] can only benefit terrorists themselves who misuse religion and oppose democracy as unislamic' (Ennahda 2014ae).

Indeed, the terrorist threat became the most important dystopian element of Ennahda's discourse. In 2011, the party had still assumed that the

jihadi trend involved a negligible minority among Salafists and claimed that it enjoyed no popularity among Tunisians (Ennahda 2011e, 2011r). Ennahda also did not mention 'terrorists' at the time, referring instead to perpetrators of specific instances of violence as 'jihadi Salafists' (Ennahda 2011e), 'groups of delinquents' (Ennahda 2012p), '(violent) extremists' (Ennahda 2012c, 2012ad) or 'conspiring parties' (Ennahda 2013ac). However, this changed in 2013. There were violent clashes between the police and the Salafi-jihadist group Ansar al-Sharia in Kairouan in May; the number of attacks by violent groups in Jebel ech Chambi, a mountain close to the city of Kasserine near the Algerian border, increased over the summer; and Mohamed Brahmi was assassinated in July – an event which Ennahda initially called a crime (Ennahda 2013u, 2013ak), but later condemned as a terrorist act (Ennahda 2013k). In response, the party took a tougher line towards violent groups. It asserted that there was no place for extremism and terrorism in Tunisia (Ennahda 2013p). Ennahda would not seek dialogue with terrorists, nor grant them immunity (Ennahda 2013f, 2013ag), thereby confirming a taboo typical of Western discourse (Toros 2008, Pfeifer, Geis and Clément 2022). According to Ennahda's retrospective view, the government's 'war against terrorism' (Ennahda 2014ae) had begun immediately after Brahmi's assassination and also taken a toll on the party itself. For 'terrorists [had been] the principal cause of toppling the two Ennahdha-led Troika governments in Tunisia' (Ennahda 2014ae) in 2013 and 2014. The issue of terrorism and how to combat it became prevalent in Ennahda's discourse and the 2014 election programme alone contained ten references to countering terrorism (Ennahda 2014z).

From the second half of 2013 until the beginning of 2015, Tunisia witnessed a series of terrorist attacks, most of which were not covered in detail by the international press. This included, for example, attacks in Sidi Ali Ben Aoun and Menzel Bourguiba (Ennahda 2013y) and attempted attacks in Sousse in October 2013 (Ennahda 2013z), attacks in Jendouba in February 2014 (Ennahda 2014l), an assault on the military in Jebel ech Chambi in July 2014, and attacks in Kasserine in February 2015 (Ennahda 2015m). But terrorism reached a new level with the attacks on the Bardo Museum in Tunis in March 2015 which claimed twenty-four casualties. As the Bardo neighbourhood is home not only to the important national museum but also to the Tunisian Assembly of the Representatives of the People, this was interpreted as

an 'attempt to destroy our young and successful democracy' (Ennahda 2015a, 2015f, 2015g, 2015n). In June 2015, a young man shot and killed thirty-eight people on a beach and in a hotel in Port El Kantaoui. Again, Ennahda framed this incident as a deliberate targeting of 'the revolution, Tunisians' freedom and the economy – whose pillar is tourism' (Ennahda 2015aa). President Essebsi declared a state of emergency and despite reservations (Ennahda 2015c), Ennahda supported his decision (Ennahda 2015r, 2015s). In November 2015, twelve members of the Presidential Guard died in a bus explosion in the heart of Tunis (Ennahda 2015v). Another state of emergency was declared and has remained in place ever since. In March 2016, the Tunisian military defeated an ISIS-led attack on the city of Ben Gardane, close to the Libyan border. The militants had tried to seize the city and more than eighty people, among them fighters, soldiers and civilians, lost their lives (Ennahda 2016f).

Ennahda pointed out that a wave of violence committed by the 'enemies of democracy' (Ennahda 2016h) always seemed to hit Tunisia whenever important political events were imminent (Ennahda 2014m, 2014q, 2014v). It explained that the roots of terrorism can be found in the era of dictatorship (Ennahda 2012d). At the time, moderate Islamic movements had been suppressed, which created a religious vacuum to be filled by extremists (Ennahda 2011r, 2012d, 2012v). People learnt that, in the absence of legitimate channels, change could only occur through violence (Ennahda 2011r). Terrorism is fed by economic hardship and social injustice, which, after the revolution, remained unaddressed for too many for too long (Ennahda 2012d, 2012e, 2014aa, 2014ah):

> Violent extremism is a multi-dimensional problem that has been decades in the making. We need to take urgent action to address the needs of young people who find themselves on the margins, who grew up in the shadow of repression and now are trying to cope with the painful transition period. We must offer them the promise of hope to ensure they have something to work for, not something to work against. (Ennahda 2015g)

Ennahda insisted that terrorism could be combatted more effectively with more, not less, freedom (Ennahda 2014g). Moreover, countering terrorism must not be reduced to the security dimension. Rather, the dialogue option must be kept open (Ennahda 2013f, 2015f) and alternative interpretations

of Islam by eminent Muslim scholars who 'champion Islamic moderation and refute extremism in the name of Islam' (Ennahda 2015i, 2016i, 2016p) must be offered (see also Chapter 5). Not untypically for government representatives dealing with groups adhering to Salafi jihadism (Toros and Sabogal 2021), Ennahda claimed that this ideology was alien to Tunisian society and an import 'from the Gulf . . . due to the absence of a moderate school [t]here' (Ennahda 2012d).

The reason terrorist groups like the ISIS organisation were so successful, Ennahda claimed, was because 'the region offer[ed] few other models that succeed in providing economic security, social and political inclusion, and respect for human dignity' (Ennahda 2016h). Especially young Arabs therefore sometimes gained the impression that their only choice was between joining an armed group or living under authoritarianism (Ennahda 2016i). Ironically, we now know that combatting terrorism contributed significantly to the trajectory of authoritarian backsliding by legitimising exceptional measures. 'The virus of terrorism spreads in weak states and ill societies, but Tunisia is healthy and will defeat this virus,' Ghannouchi stated in 2015 (Ennahda 2015x). This was the year in which the state of emergency was introduced as an antidote to terrorism, a move which would turn out to be fatal for Tunisian democracy. Renewed year after year, its extension under Saied in 2021 and 2022 eventually justified and became a basis for the incremental abolition of Tunisia's democratic institutions.

Ennahda had always feared such a relapse into authoritarianism. Between the inception of Nidaa Tounes in 2012 and the conciliatory meeting between Ghannouchi and Essebsi in Paris in 2013, Ennahda had watched with concern as old RCD members came back together under new auspices but constituting no more than a 'recycling of the RCD against which the revolution [had taken] place' (Ennahda 2012ad). Having witnessed the Egyptian coup in 2013, Ennahda also called upon military institutions to keep the 'civil nature of the state' (Ennahda 2013e, 2013x, 2013ah), warning 'that some people want[ed] to import one of the most brutal and violent military coups in history to Tunisia' (Ennahda 2013b). The 'terrifying nightmare' (Ennahda 2013e) Egypt went through after the ousting of Morsi was accompanied by massive state violence committed by the newly installed military regime under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Ennahda 2013h, 2014n, 2015j). The coup reintroduced

the narrative 'that that the best option for the region is dictatorship in order to preserve peace. Just as [the Tunisian] people are told that they can only enjoy security, prosperity and progress under despotic regimes' (Ennahda 2014ae). Ennahda rejected an imposed 'choice between security and freedom' (Ennahda 2016i). Tunisia, the party claimed, had chosen the right way of sharing power and seeking consensus (Ennahda 2013h). In 2016, Ghannouchi still believed that

> Tunisia's ship was the exception. It was able to overcome the storms of the counter-revolution, chaos and destruction, thanks to Tunisians adopting the principle of dialogue, acceptance of the other, and avoidance of exclusion and revenge. We were able, by God's grace, to bring Tunisia to the shores of safety. (Ennahda 2016p)

Discussion

Ennahda had always appealed to European states and the EU to provide economic support to the young Tunisian democracy, showcasing the Tunisian model's 'immense potential as a democratic beacon in the Arab region, and as a gateway between Europe, Africa and the Middle East' (Ennahda 2013aj, 2014ae, 2014ah, 2015i). Tunisia could become Africa's bridge 'to EU countries and the rest of the world' (Ennahda 2014z). These appeals and ideas express Ennahda's awareness that, if Tunisian democracy was to survive, an economic transformation would have to occur and bring tangible changes to the everyday life of the Tunisian people. Over time, the pride in having 'exported revolution' to the region and the hope of eventually 'export[ing] . . . a working democratic model' (Ennahda 2013i) to the rest of the Arab world, showing that there was an alternative to both dictatorship and terrorism, gave way to sober realism. Ennahda saw that the existential and material threats posed by terrorism and socio-economic precarity would deprive the post-revolutionary Tunisian system of its foundation. And it was painfully aware that Tunisia's fate was closely connected to a region that was disintegrating before its eyes.

Ennahda's discourse oscillates between, on the one hand, the utopia of an Arab and Muslim world, liberated from colonialism, postcolonial dictatorship and terrorism, having established thriving societies and states as equals in a

cooperative world order – and a whole variety of threat scenarios, on the other. The latter constitute dystopic fragments in its discourse rather than a coherent narrative or negative teleology. They are intrusions of realism into what was initially a regional and then became an increasingly distinctive Tunisian success story that Ennahda clung onto at least until late 2016, the end of the period under investigation in this book. Six years later, the Tunisian state appears to have slid back into authoritarianism and, at the time of writing in October 2023, it seems increasingly improbable that 'Tunisia will return to a democratic path' (Yerkes 2022) in the near future.

Ennahda's *teloi* and interpretations of the past and future fall entirely within the range of Western world order discourse. The party's utopia contains ideas of liberal convergence and a teleological view of political and economic transition. Its specific transition model is reminiscent of established ideas in the Western-dominated global order and even closely resembles ideal-typical models of transition (critically Carothers 2002). Nevertheless, as with its conception of legitimacy (see Chapter 5), Ennahda's projection of Tunisia's future and its international environment is built on the conviction that MENA cultural specificities and identity traits must be enshrined in the regional or global order. Because there is no universal model of domestic order, the world order must recognise diversity and be organised in a way that can accommodate plural forms of order – while assuring exchange and negotiation on equal footing. As for the dystopic elements, these sometimes echo the Western 'war on terror' discourse but also the tensions between security and freedom that have been debated within this framework. Importantly, there is also clear criticism of Western hegemony. In Ennahda's discourse, it serves as an amplifier of many threat scenarios but also as a mini-dystopia in its own right.

The past has proven that Western interference in the region is extremely harmful. Colonial rule prevented the region from developing its own model of (Islamic) democracy and destroyed the local political culture (Ennahda 2012af, 2013c, 2013f), suggesting that the Arabs were not capable of establishing order without tutelage and imposition (Ennahda 2011f). In the postcolonial authoritarian phase, the West repeatedly took the side of the ruling dictators against the people, intervening on their behalf and preventing democratic change (Ennahda 2011e, 2011g, 2012i, 2014g, 2014j, 2014ae, 2015b, 2016i). They refused to recognise the results of elections if these did not correspond to

their interests (Ennahda 2015j) and looked for pretexts not to support democratic change (Ennahda 2012j). Beyond the direct harm this caused, Western hypocrisy also made Arabs lose faith in democracy (Ennahda 2015k) and perpetuated an image of the Arab region as having no hope of democratisation and peace (Ennahda 2014ae, 2014af). Western states created the illusion that, when it came to the Arab world, there was only a choice between stability and freedom (Ennahda 2014i, 2015e, 2015g) – and formulated their foreign policies accordingly. But these choices backfired through transnational terrorism. Western states' cooperation with Arab dictators proved unable to prevent and indeed actually exacerbated the problem of terrorism in the long run (Ennahda 2011r, 2014ag, 2016e). Consequently, Soumaya al-Ghannouchi, the party head's daughter, offered a 'small word of advice to western politicians and army of commentators and "experts": trust me, when it comes to democracy in the region, silence is best' (Ennahda 2015k). And yet, Ennahda realises that Tunisia will not be able to implement a functioning and successful democracy without Western support.

This tension between an anti-(post)colonial impetus and simultaneous dependence on foreign aid is a well-known conundrum for Arab states (Abou-El-Fadl 2014). Ennahda repeatedly called upon Western states to provide support for the Tunisian model 'in words and action' (Ennahda 2014i, 2014af, 2015d) – while simultaneously rejecting any form of interventionism. '[L]ocal governments . . . must take the lead role in designing solutions, with strong support from the international community,' Ennahda insisted (2016h). The parallel Ennahda drew between Tunisia's liberation and its own evolution is mirrored in a double quest for recognition: Tunisia must be recognised as a state with equal rights (see Chapter 4) and Ennahda as a Muslim democratic party. Indeed, the party feared that interventionism in Tunisia would go hand in hand with its own demonisation and a reinforcement of the global clash-of-civilisations frame between Islam and the West, and Islamism and secularism. Confronted with those who did not recognise 'democratic Islamic parties like Ennahda, mistakenly grouping them with radical extremists' (Ennahda 2014h), or the 'lumpers' as it were (Lynch 2017), Rached al-Ghannouchi warned that

> putting all Islamists in the same bucket, or linking Islam itself to violence, only serves the aims of terrorists who consider democracy to be un-Islamic.

In the past, such an Islamists vs. secularists division was propagated by authoritarian regimes to distract from their own suppression of pluralism and all forms of opposition. (Ennahda 2014h)

Ennahda promoted itself as North Africa's equivalent of the German Christian Democrats (Ennahda 2016k) and as a role model for other Islamists, and Tunisia as a model democracy in the region. Its strategy could be described as gaining recognition by embracing a role conception ('Muslim democrats') deemed familiar and acceptable to a Western audience, and recognising the principles underlying the global order under Western hegemony. At the same time, it denounced the West's hypocrisy and failure to meet its own normative standards. Ennahda offers good reasons for, and wants to lead by example in the hope of, transforming the patterns of perception in the West. In this sense, and contrary to the obvious conclusion that might be drawn, Ennahda actually challenges the principles of ordering and constructions of identity and difference as can be observed in the Western hegemonic practice since the GWOT (see Chapter 1). In this sense, Ennahda therefore offers a trajectory into a possible alternative future.

Hezbollah

In contrast to Ennahda's 'recognition through recognition' strategy, Hezbollah's approach could be described as the performance of resistance on the stage of an eternally recurring play: the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, portrayed by different actors over the course of history. While Ennahda generally has a utopian view of Tunisia as a model for Arab-Islamic liberation which needs to be protected from specific threat scenarios and obstacles, the opposite is true for Hezbollah. On a general level, it holds a dystopian worldview according to which an eternal struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed prevails. Only very specific utopian elements can be found in its discourse, and they do not seem to stand a chance of changing the fundamental conflict structure of the world. They are intrusions of hope and optimism into an otherwise gloomy but realistic narrative of inescapable struggles in the here and now. Indeed, Hezbollah's Shi'i legacy is the most tangible in its teleology. Counterintuitively, its discursive resistance to the Western world order actually reproduces and reifies the categories of identity

Form of eternal struggle

Oppressed

Palestinians Bahrainis

Arabs Yemenis

subjugates/humiliates

resists

Oppressors

Israel

Saudis/Gulf

US/West

'Takfirists'

Concrete manifestation (2010s)

Axis of resistance

Hamas Hezbollah Iran Syria

supports

fights

Gulf Scheme

Takfirism

Israeli threat

Western hegemony/colonialism
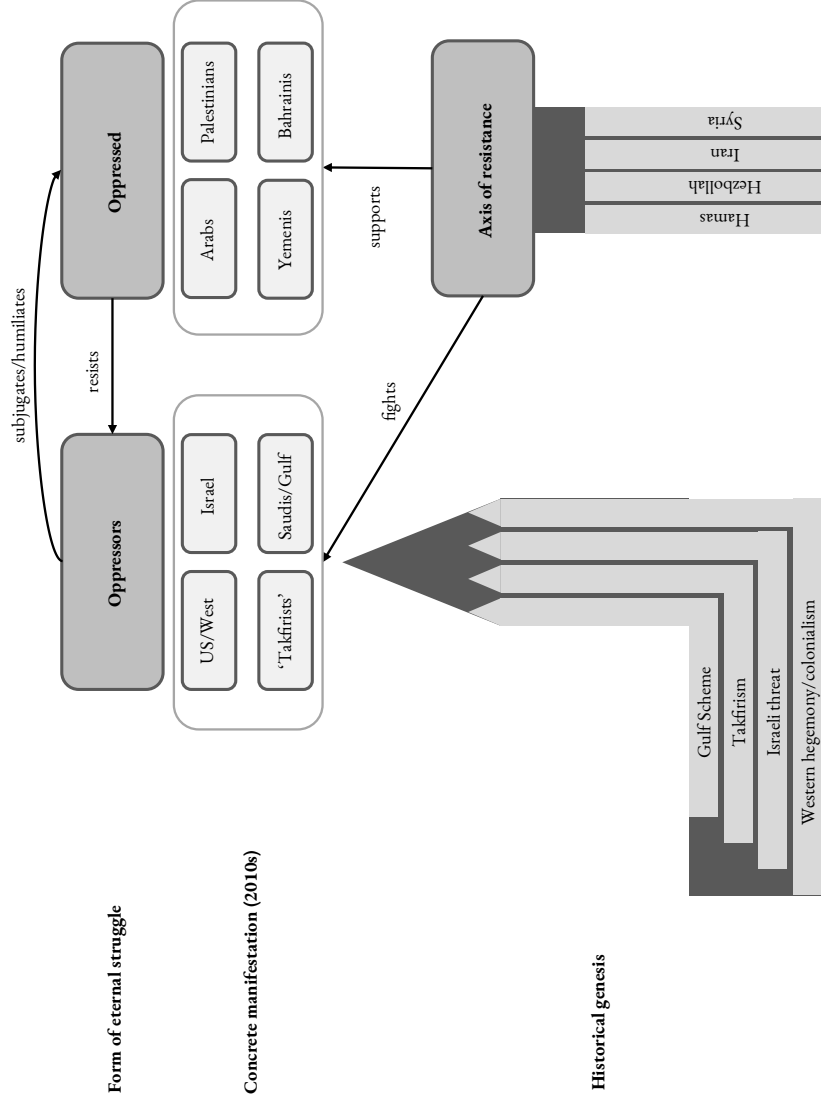
Historical genesis

Figure 6.2 Hezbollah's dystopia

and difference, as well as patterns of conflict, that have come to prevail in the Western-dominated world order over the last two decades. When it comes to *teloi*, Hezbollah's discourse can thus be considered resistant on the surface. But on a practical level, it actually affirms rather than challenges Western ordering.

Similar to Ennahda and as a corollary of its community-based conceptions of legitimacy (see Chapter 5), Hezbollah understands Lebanon's and its own destiny as inextricably linked to the future of the region. In Nasrallah's words, 'the fate of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen, among other countries, is made in the region as a region. No fate is made in one country alone' (Hezbollah 2015c). Lebanon is 'most vulnerable' (Hezbollah 2015c) to the events that take place in and are imposed on the 'Arab and Islamic world' (Hezbollah 2011e, 2012a, 2013f, 2015h, 2016i), 'nation' (Hezbollah 2011c, 2011l, 2012c), 'peoples' (Hezbollah 2011b) or 'states' (Hezbollah 2015g). Besides Arab Muslims, framing collective identities in this way serves the inclusion of non-Arab Muslims and non-Muslim Arabs, too. While North Africa also plays a role in Hezbollah's discourse, Nasrallah's analyses concentrate on the Mashreq, the Gulf and Iran. But in his view, 'the globe – the entire globe – is influenced by what is taking place in the region' (Hezbollah 2015c). It is subjected to a cunning 'New Middle East scheme' (Hezbollah 2011f, 2011l, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2016j).

Dystopia: Eternal Struggle between the Oppressors and the Oppressed

Hezbollah has developed a Shi'i version of a Manichaean worldview according to which history unfolds as an eternal struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors, 'righteousness and falsehood, between faithfulness and treachery and between justice and oppression' (Hezbollah 2011b). The key reference narrative is the story of the martyrdom of Husayn and the subsequent treatment of his family and followers by the tyrant Yazid (see Chapter 5). Hezbollah repeatedly reaffirms its 'pledge of allegiance' to Husayn and his heritage: 'the values of Karbala, the significance of Karbala, the morals of Karbala, the spirituality of Karbala, and the loyalty of Karbala' (Hezbollah 2014g). According to Karbala's promise, resistance is the 'path to dignity, honor, liberation and victory' (Hezbollah 2012f) and those who follow it will be under divine protection (Hezbollah 2015d, 2015i, 2016i, 2016l). The resistance does not fear death, for there is no higher honour than dying as a martyr in a noble

struggle and it will be rewarded in the afterlife (Hezbollah 2011k). Martyrdom is a virtuous and heroic act that is celebrated on various regularly recurring occasions: 'Ashura' Day, Arbaeen Day, which commemorates the fortieth day after Husayn's martyrdom, the Day of the Wounded Fighters of the Islamic Resistance, and the Leader Martyrs' Day. The historical role model for martyrs is 'Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin, Husayn's son and the fourth imam. He had not been able to fight in the Battle of Karbala because of his poor health. As he stood in front of 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, the general who had killed his father, he said: 'O son of the freed! Are you threatening us with death? Killing is a habit to us and our dignity from Allah is martyrdom' (Hezbollah 2011g, 2015a). Moreover, the story of al-'Abbas ibn 'Ali, Husayn's half-brother, is told as a reference for the virtue of steadfastness:

> [H]is right arm was amputated, but he still went on. His left arm was amputated, too, but he went on, disregarding these harsh amputations . . . After that, an arrow hit him in the eye, but he still carried on until he was martyred and his soul ascended to the Heaven of Allah the Almighty. (Hezbollah 2013g)

Finally, there is also a central female figure whose heroism is regularly commemorated: Husayn's sister Zeynab, who is celebrated for her 'bravery and courage' (Hezbollah 2015a). When she was dragged before 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, who mocked the death of her brother and, in an attempt to humiliate her even further, asked her how she felt about what she had seen, she responded: 'I did not find but beauty. I did not see but beauty. These men were fated to be killed. They only had to show up for their death . . . May your mother mourn you, Ibn Marjana' (Hezbollah 2015a).[6]

Martyrdom, steadfastness and courage are the core virtues that are instilled in Hezbollah members, adherents, fighters and their families through the life stories of these Shi'i icons. These narratives are also invoked when martyrs are commemorated. Their life stories are told, their convictions and virtues are praised, and their deeds serve as a parable that teaches moral lessons about honourable behaviour among the oppressed (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014h, 2015a, 2015f, 2015j, 2016e, 2016g, 2016k). These ceremonies serve as opportunities for the self-reassurance and toughening of the resistance, the Shi'i community and especially the martyrs' families, who are thanked for their perseverance

and sacrifice (Hezbollah 2015a). The readiness to become a martyr or bear the martyrdom of a loved one is presented as both commendable and self-evident. While martyrs' 'rewards, status, and dignity are continuously being upgraded by Allah Almighty' (Hezbollah 2016b), jihad is also a religious duty (Hezbollah 2015f, 2016a, 2016m). 'Whoever sits at home dies on his deathbed . . . In the Hereafter, Allah will call us all to account,' Nasrallah reminded his followers (Hezbollah 2016h).

Promoting the readiness to make sacrifices and die in battle as both virtuous and honourable became a particularly important part of Hezbollah's discursive strategy when it started its military engagement in Syria. This war could not easily be showcased as a resistance project. Hezbollah's discursive strategy to legitimise its engagement and continuously mobilise fighters involved making the case that the Arab-Islamic world found itself faced with a Husayn-like choice: 'war or disgrace' (Hezbollah 2014f). Nasrallah eventually claimed that this choice was imposed by 'the Americans, the "Israelis", the Takfiris, and tyrant[s]' in the Gulf (Hezbollah 2016a, 2016n). This was made possible by applying the Husayn legend, in both senses of the term, to the present. It was used as a prism through which to view schemes of oppression (legend as reading aid) and also moral lessons were drawn from it (legend as religious-historical narrative). On the one side of the conflict are the oppressed and those who defend them: the axis of resistance, consisting of Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah. And on the other side are a group of states and their proxies, which constitute the oppressors attempting to break the resistance. The latter grew out of the Western colonial project, transformed into a US–Israeli-led hegemonic project which was at first supported but now increasingly jointly run by submissive Arab regimes. What were four separate dystopian threads in the beginning of the post-Arab-uprisings era became interwoven until a cunning master plan came to light.

The first thread was the project of Western hegemony, which was already well known. Today, it is led by the US as the 'greatest devil' (Hezbollah 2015h), the 'head of occupation, tyranny and hegemony in the world' (Hezbollah 2011l), but it dates back to before the foundation of the Israeli state. While its concrete manifestations have changed over time, its core interests have remained the same: exerting power and establishing hegemony in the Middle East 'for hundreds of years to come' (Hezbollah 2016j). The project of Western

hegemony began with colonialism, followed by the mandate period and the reorganisation of the region by and among the British and French. The Sykes–Picot Agreement divided the region with the intent to make Arabs 'remain [p]reoccupied with [their] wars . . . until [they] get exhausted' (Hezbollah 2014b). Next was the moment of the Balfour Declaration 'when he who [did] not possess land [the British] gave [to him] who does not own land [the Jewish community]' (Hezbollah 2016f). According to Hezbollah, the mandate power allowed the Zionist movement to come to Palestine and establish

> an advanced, military, security barrack in the heart of our region in order to distort our region, to destroy it, and to waste all chances for human and economic development as well as all choices of unity and of developing the Arab and Islamic region. (Hezbollah 2014b)[7]

The US started to replace the old powers and the shift towards American hegemony coincided with the end of the Soviet empire, when the US 'became the only great power above all powers' (Hezbollah 2011d). Finally, the War in Afghanistan launched in 2001 foreshadowed an 'era of hegemony and control' (Hezbollah 2011d) at the peak of American power (Hezbollah 2014e). The invasion of Iraq in 2003, the July War in Lebanon in 2006 and the Gaza war of 2008–9 were soon to follow – the latter two being waged by the US proxy Israel. These instances served the plan to realise a 'Neo Middle East' (Hezbollah 2011d) as devised by George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice. Its goals included breaking the axis of resistance and 'adjoin[ing] Lebanon and the whole region to the US–"Israeli"-yielding Arabs axis project' (Hezbollah 2012b, 2016j). While Hezbollah averted this danger for Lebanon, thereby thwarting the plan, the victory was only temporary – the scheme remained the same and was merely adapted (Hezbollah 2014b).

The US continued to pursue its interests: oil (Hezbollah 2011j, 2014e), protecting Israel's security (Hezbollah 2012d), 'liquidating the Palestinian cause' (Hezbollah 2014e), and turning Arabs into 'singers and dancers' (Hezbollah 2011g) rather than a respected and independent people. But the means had to be adapted after the US lost its puppet regimes following the Arab uprisings. They now aimed at 'spreading chaos, demolishing the region [and] igniting sectarian, factional, national, racial, and tribal conflicts' (Hezbollah 2012a, 2014b) so as to be able to reinstall compliant regimes in the region (Hezbollah

2011b, 2011d, 2011e, 2011k, 2011l). As Nasrallah explains, self-determination jeopardises US interests:

> When the peoples of our region revolt and call for unity, cooperation, coalition and putting all conflicts and struggles aside, that means that these peoples have set on the path of resorting their decision making, sovereignty, independence, oil, markets and future and this is not allowed by the tyrants and the gigantic companies that have control on decision making in the world. (Hezbollah 2011h)

The US also actively tried to overthrow the Assad regime and, thus, a core element of the axis of resistance. If one were to 'search for the "Israeli" and the American hand' (Hezbollah 2012d) in the Syrian war, one would find that it was just a new 'battlefield' (Hezbollah 2014b) for the US project. To achieve their goal, the US employed new means that went beyond the familiar trick of 'toppling regimes and establishing alternative authorities' (Hezbollah 2014e). Rather, they now tried to 'destroy, crush, and ruin everything' (Hezbollah 2014e) using proxies on the ground to reintroduce themselves as heroes and liberators who can restore order (Hezbollah 2015d, 2016j). This would be the moment to draw a new map of the region (Hezbollah 2014e).

The second thread concerns the enmity with Israel. While Israel is also a part of the Western hegemony project, it also constitutes a more concrete, aggressive danger. Nasrallah's descriptions of Israel, which is always put in inverted commas, are framed in a hostile language. He often refers to the country simply as 'the enemy', the 'Zionist' or the 'usurping entity' (Hezbollah 2012c, 2013f, 2014b), the 'Zionist hegemonic project' (Hezbollah 2016o) that 'longs to engulf [Arab] territories and wealth' (Hezbollah 2016l). More dramatically, Nasrallah also frames Israel as a 'cancerous gland, a terrorist state, an aggressive entity, a corruptive germ, and a title for tyranny and arrogance' (Hezbollah 2015a). The country has 'one of the strongest armies of the world' (Hezbollah 2015i) at its disposal. It is a 'waylaying' (Hezbollah 2011c) threat to its neighbours and attacks can happen at any time and without pretext (Hezbollah 2013c, 2013d, 2014c, 2016i). It is also an unjust enemy that conducts wars of destruction, attacks civilians, aims at annihilating populations (Hezbollah 2012b, 2014a, 2014c) and is 'aggressive in nature' (Hezbollah 2012c). No change in government would transform its character as an eternal

enemy (Hezbollah 2011k, 2012a): 'Whether the parties are made of right-ists, extreme rightists, leftists, extreme leftists, moderates, or whoever, they all threaten the regional governments and peoples' (Hezbollah 2013f). Its greed transcends the Palestinian territories and goes beyond the Sinai, Golan and Lebanon: it is a danger to 'all the states . . . and the Arab and Islamic peoples in the region' (Hezbollah 2014c). Like the US, the Israelis have an interest in regional chaos. Arab distraction allows them to enforce a settlement on their terms on Palestinians (Hezbollah 2011f, 2013b, 2014c) and expedite their 'Judaisation' project (Hezbollah 2011e, 2011g, 2012d, 2012f, 2014f). Nasrallah holds that 'any ordeal must be judged against [the] background of [the] Zionist project; we must search for the "Israeli" hands behind the chaos spread in our region' (Hezbollah 2012a). This image of an unchange-able, omnipresent and omnipotent enemy clearly resonates with antisemitic stereotypes, even though Hezbollah distinguishes between Jews and Zionists in its discourse (Alagha 2011, 19).

The third thread evolved during the period between 2011 and 2016 and changed significantly in this time: the Saudi–Gulf scheme. Hezbollah was critical of the Gulf monarchies even before the Arab uprisings. But in the first years after the mass protests, its rhetoric was still indirect and constrained. Nasrallah talked about 'moderation countries' (Hezbollah 2011h), 'yielding Arabs' (Hezbollah 2012b) or 'oil-producing Arab states' (Hezbollah 2013a). An exception was the Khalifa dynasty in Bahrain, which Nasrallah openly shamed for its massive crackdown on the protestors in 2011 (Hezbollah 2011e, 2012a, 2013b). After the so-called Arab Coalition started its war on Yemen, Nasrallah's framing of the Saudis became more hostile. Nasrallah refers to Saudi Arabia sarcastically as the 'Kingdom of "Benevolence"' (Hezbollah 2015l) where '[w]hoever talks is beheaded, and whoever objects is beheaded' (Hezbollah 2016i), or the 'killing machine that is . . . allied with other worldly devils' (Hezbollah 2016a). Eventually, he even perceives the Saudis as 'more "Israeli" than the "Israelis"' (Hezbollah 2015e, 2015h, 2016h).

According to Hezbollah, the Saudi–Gulf scheme's goal is twofold. First, it aims at establishing US–Saudi hegemony in the region by eliminating any challenge to the Gulf monarchies' power. Second, the Saudis try to disseminate the 'Takfirist' mindset and teachings, which, in the end, are indistinguish-able from Wahhabi ideology. Hezbollah alleged early on that Saudi Arabia

had financed and planned the 'Takfirist' scheme in Syria and Iraq, as well as supporting al-Qaʿida and ISIS in Yemen (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l, 2016e). Nasrallah mysteriously uttered his suspicions:

> [W]e always took pains not to talk overtly despite the information we had on what is taking place in Syria during the past four [years] . . . We knew everything that used to take place in Iraq since 2003, but we did not talk overtly. (Hezbollah 2015l)

This caution should be seen as a tribute to the close relations that exist between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia through the Hariri family, on the one hand, and the Lebanese living and working in Saudi exile, on the other.

But Hezbollah abandoned its caution once the Yemen war started in 2015 – and Nasrallah then no longer minced his words. He claimed that Saudi activities dated back decades before the regional crises that began in 2011. According to Nasrallah, the kingdom had supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq in attacking Iran, the US in ruining Iraq and different Lebanese Civil War parties in fighting each other (Hezbollah 2015i, 2015l). With their behaviour after the Arab uprisings, however, the Saudis reached an unprecedented 'degree of inferiority and moral deterioration' (Hezbollah 2016i). This manifested itself in not only the ruthless war waged in Yemen but also the other wars of the region in which 'they acted by proxy', such as in Syria and Iraq, where 'the financing is Saudi, the instigation is Saudi, the management is Saudi' (Hezbollah 2015l). Those who deemed Saudi Arabia a reliable ally eventually woke up and grasped the role the kingdom was playing in the spread of 'Takfirism': 'The entire world is now . . . well aware that all the terrorism in this world and in any corner in the world is due to the intellect and money of the [Saudis]' (Hezbollah 2016n).

The fourth thread, thus, initially seems rather similar to the third one: the threat posed by Salafi jihadism in the ISIS or al-Qaʿida version. In Nasrallah's language, they are dubbed terrorists and 'Takfirists' rather than jihadists – a term which has positive connotations in Hezbollah's discursive universe. Nasrallah rejects any attempt to differentiate between strands of 'Takfirism' or 'the good "Daesh" and the bad "Daesh", because they are both "Daesh"' (Hezbollah 2015c) at the end of the day. There is only one 'Takfirist' mindset because 'they learn from the same religious educational books' (Hezbollah 2016i), irrespective of whether the individual groups call themselves al-Qaʿida,

ISIS, JN or Boko Haram. According to Hezbollah, 'Takfirism' grew to become an existential menace to the whole region, its peoples and 'their civilization, their history, their diversity, their right to live a dignified peaceful life, their right to partnership, and their right of free expression' (Hezbollah 2013g, 2014c, 2014e, 2015c, 2015d, 2015f). 'Takfirists' also threaten Islam itself as they commit atrocities in its name, which is the 'worst deformation in human history for a divine religion' (Hezbollah 2015c). No one should see themselves as exempt from the danger posed by ISIS, not even those who support it today as they will be its victims tomorrow. If left unchallenged, this 'Nakba' (Hezbollah 2015h) will make 'the entire region . . . see [its] worst days ever' (Hezbollah 2013a).

In the course of the events that unfolded between 2011 and 2016, Nasrallah slowly but surely connected these four threads of oppression to eventually create one overarching dystopia which he described as the 'US, "Israeli", Takfiri, Saudi scheme that wants to practice hegemony and control' (Hezbollah 2016h). As early as 2012, Nasrallah hinted at a 'deep penetration into . . . Takfiri fighting groups by US and "Israeli" intelligence' (Hezbollah 2012a). In 2013, Nasrallah considered the possibility that the US had brought 'Takfirist' groups to Syria and provided them with money and other assistance in order to overthrow the Assad regime (Hezbollah 2013a). But he still articulated a degree of uncertainty, admitting that the only trustworthy information he had was 'that the Americans kept a blind eye on that, offered facilitations, and opened the gates to exploit this phenomenon [of "Takfirism"]' (Hezbollah 2014e) – ISIS and similar groups offered themselves as a 'natural ally' (Hezbollah 2015a) to the US and Israel. The Saudi funding of 'Takfirist' projects made their project even easier, Nasrallah claimed: ISIS, as the 'new savage black army with its arms, ensures [the achievement of] all the US–"Israeli" goals in the region while the Americans and the "Israelis" watch without paying any penny' (Hezbollah 2016h, 2016j).

Nasrallah's final assessment of the situation seems to be that the US deliberately counted on chaos to spread and conflicts to deteriorate without the need for direct engagement. His argument is that the US is responsible at least in so far as it cannot have failed to notice the growth of 'Takfirism', how the 'Takfirists' were financed and armed, and that its regional allies were behind these groups ideologically, financially and logistically (Hezbollah 2016j). The

Western and Israeli goal in the Middle East was to make Arabs fight Arabs and Muslims fight Muslims so as to impede the creation of a unified popular will and so that they would develop and pursue their own independent interests. In particular, this was implemented by inflaming a global fight against the axis of resistance in which more and more regional actors became involved. Aspects of this fight included a demonisation of Iran, which served as a pretext for the Saudi-led war on Yemen (Hezbollah 2015i), attempts by Turkey and the Gulf states to establish a more 'friendly' government in Syria (Hezbollah 2015i), and the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist actor by the GCC and the Arab League (Hezbollah 2016c, 2016k). Eventually, 'the truth which [was] being revealed day after day' (Hezbollah 2016o) was that all conflicts in the region were working towards the same goal: putting an end to the resistance. As the Arab uprisings had yielded a 'peak of the resistance project' (Hezbollah 2016l), at least according to Hezbollah, the US, Western, Israeli and Arab allies did everything to quash it. 'The true supporters of the resistance are being fought and killed around the world, whether in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Nigeria, and other countries in the world where people demonstrate in the hundreds of thousands for Palestine and for Al Quds' (Hezbollah 2016o). The cunning twist in the scheme, according to Nasrallah, is that the escalation of violence would eventually serve as a pretext for the US to legitimise the renewed presence of military bases and troops in the region: 'they will present themselves to the peoples of the region as fake protectors and defenders' (Hezbollah 2016h, 2016n).

Utopian Fragment(s): Victory of the Resistance (and Peaceful Coexistence in Difference)

The comprehensiveness and complexity of Hezbollah's dystopia is contrasted with a flat and tentative utopian outlook: the victory of the oppressed and the resistance. The axis 'made great accomplishments and victories' (Hezbollah 2013c) in the face of a variety of oppressive schemes and managed to remain 'intact' (Hezbollah 2014b) in spite of all efforts to destroy it. Its new challenges and battles made the resistance 'emerge firmer and stronger' (Hezbollah 2016l, 2016o). But this glimpse of utopia is relativised by the predictable recurrence of Husayn's choice, the inescapability of the conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed.

Serving as a mobilising narrative, the prospect of victory builds on the past track record of the resistance and Shi'i accomplishments. For Hezbollah, the era of victory began with the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. With the ousting of the Shah, the US lost an important ally, which reconfigured the regional political game (Hezbollah 2016l). The second event was the development of the resistance in southern Lebanon and the invention of new tactics to counter the Israeli invasion (Hezbollah 2011k, 2012c). Over the years of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, Hezbollah successfully resisted attempts to reduce its room for manoeuvre and stop its military activities against the IDF and Israeli territory (Hezbollah 2011i, 2016h). Then came the liberation of Lebanon in May 2000, which Hezbollah celebrates as 'the fruit of the accumulation of all sacrifices since 1948 until today offered by all factions, groups and parties which remained steadfast' (Hezbollah 2011l) in their resistance. The Israeli withdrawal in 'humiliation and defeat' (Hezbollah 2011i) constituted yet another shift in the regional balance because it 'hammered the last pin in the coffin of Greater "Israel"' (Hezbollah 2012c). While this triumph had to be credited to the resistance, it had to be celebrated as a 'Lebanese-Arab-national-Islamic achievement" (Hezbollah 2014b) and a day of liberation for all Lebanese (Hezbollah 2011i).

The next step in what would become a history of the resistance's victory was the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 (Hezbollah 2011g, 2012f, 2013a). With the July War in southern Lebanon just one year later, Israel had to accept what Hezbollah considers a critical defeat. The fact that 'they flopped and were defeated and broken' (Hezbollah 2015k) caused a severe crisis of confidence and left psychological wounds in Israeli society (Hezbollah 2011f). Israelis no longer trusted the military abilities and capabilities or the strategic abilities of their military and political leaders (Hezbollah 2012d, 2015a, 2016j). At the same time, the victory boosted Arab confidence because the July War had proved that '"Israel" is no more unbeatable in the eyes of Arabs' (Hezbollah 2011l, 2016i). Never before had an Arab army achieved victory against Israel. Hezbollah had thus achieved a long-term victory on the psychological level (Hezbollah 2011f). The next decisive blow to the 'New Middle East' scheme, according to Hezbollah, was the forced US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, for which it credits the resistance of the Iraqi people and the support provided by Iran and Syria (Hezbollah 2011g, 2011k, 2012f).

Since the 2006 victory, Lebanon was successful in deterring Israel through its army–people–resistance formula (Hezbollah 2011j, 2014f, 2015a, 2016a). Resistance 'is a culture' (Hezbollah 2014a) in Lebanon now and this is what grants its victory (see also the 'society of resistance' as discussed in Saade 2016, 29, 138).

The new battles in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain as well as the continued struggle in Palestine demand sacrifices (Hezbollah 2014c). For these conflicts, Hezbollah formulates micro-utopias. In Palestine, the day will come 'when an independent Palestinian state is established on the entire land of Palestine from the Sea to the River' (Hezbollah 2011j). The Yemeni people will never give up defending 'their dignity, existence, land, and honor' (Hezbollah 2015i), which, according to the laws of history and 'Divine Justice' (Hezbollah 2016k), will allow them to emerge victorious. Even the 'Takfirist' scheme can be averted by those who were able to defeat the Zionist projects (Hezbollah 2014c, 2014e, 2016h). The fact that the 'Takfirists' did not manage to take control of the Syrian government should be considered a 'great victory' (Hezbollah 2014f) – brought about by the joint efforts of the Syrian government troops and Hezbollah, as Nasrallah emphasises (Hezbollah 2015h, 2016d).

Beyond martial discourse and the belief that resistance and steadfastness will be rewarded, Hezbollah has little to offer in terms of utopia. One dim vision that shines through its discourse here and there is the idea of Islamic unity and intercivilisational peace. Arab liberation can only manifest itself once religious communities become aware of their commonalities rather than their differences. For instance, as Nasrallah elaborates:

> Muslims might differ on the issue of Imamate, caliphate and the rule after the Prophet of Allah, but they do not differ over their love to those near of kin to the Prophet of Allah and their love to the Household of the Prophet of Allah. (Hezbollah 2011h)

In line with its community-based conception of legitimacy (see Chapter 5), Hezbollah advocates the idea that a Muslim self-understanding as one nation should prevail, common causes and interests be identified, and reconciliation processes be initiated where sects have grown apart (Hezbollah 2011h, 2011l, 2016o). Muslim unity is not, however, a synonym for 'melting the various sects in one sect' (Hezbollah 2011h). In contrast to ISIS's programme of eliminat-

ing difference, Hezbollah foregrounds intra-Islamic pluralism as a value that constitutes Islamic unity (Hezbollah 2015e, 2016d, 2016i, 2016o) – or as one interviewee put it, rephrasing what, according to a hadith, the Prophet said: '*Ikhtilāf ummati raḥma* –differences in my nation are a blessing' (Interview 7). Such appreciation of difference should be extended to Christians, too (Hezbollah 2015c). As Nasrallah formulates it, '[p]eople are one of two groups: either a brother of yours in religion or a fellow of yours in creation' (Hezbollah 2011h). As a faint hope on the horizon, he describes 'a state of harmony between the governments and the peoples' (Hezbollah 2011l) in the Arab and Islamic world. For while 'the slaves of wealth, authority, and this mundane world will court the tyrant', he assures, 'this nation is full of scholars, politicians, leaders, elites, educated men, journalists, peoples, and free men and women' (Hezbollah 2016i).

Discussion

It is in Hezbollah's bleak outlook on a world caught up in eternal conflict that its identity as resistance is most clearly articulated. As new oppressive schemes potentially hide behind every turn of history, Hezbollah and all those who are neither naive nor arrogant have to remain alert (Hezbollah 2014c, 2014e). The party claims that it is a defender not only of Shiʿa in Lebanon or of the Lebanese nation against outside threats but of the poor, marginalised, oppressed and subjugated in a more global sense (Interview 5). While this mission of defence refers to oppressive schemes of any sort and is thus generalised, it stems from a very particular Shiʿi narrative of Husayn's and his followers' resistance in the face of humiliation by an unjust ruler. The potential to mobilise fighters and promote steadfastness among their families is an important function of the celebration of historical and contemporary heroes, the ritualised memory of the fallen in the times of the Prophet and Husayn and of those who gave their lives in the resistance projects designed to fend off plans for a 'New Middle East'. The reference to religious tradition and values is, hence, most affective and pronounced in Hezbollah's dystopian view, which it derives from an understanding of history as a series of struggles.

But the idea of resistance became increasingly hard to sell. The reason why Hezbollah had to engage in the Syrian war was not immediately evident from its previous legitimation of the use of force, nor was it easily reconcilable with

the resistance project. Its deployment of fighters to Syria imposed costs on the Shi'i community in Lebanon, both directly through the loss of fighters in the war and more indirectly through attacks in Shi'a neighbourhoods in Lebanon (Lob 2014, Farida 2020, 122). The amalgamation of the four threat scenarios into one big dystopia has to be seen in this light. It allows the continual production and reproduction of identity and the legitimation of the practice of resistance as resistance. Only if Syria is threatened by a hegemonic scheme can helping the Assad regime be framed as a case in which Husayn's imperative applies. Its intervention was necessary, Hezbollah claimed, because outside powers attempted to break the axis of resistance by hijacking the Arab uprisings and pursuing an agenda of, first, regime change and, when that failed, chaos. Consequently, Hezbollah became a regional intervention force, active first and foremost in Syria, but also in Yemen and Iraq in the name of resisting the 'US, "Israeli", Takfiri, Saudi scheme' (Hezbollah 2016h).

This perpetuation of the resistance narrative in Hezbollah's discourse was aimed at distracting from the very pragmatic reasons Hezbollah had for engaging in Syria, as long-time observers of the party have pointed out (Khatib 2015). Among them are its interest in securing a constant supply of weapons and the direct order from Iran to help keep the Assad regime in power. The former is important for Hezbollah to keep its position of power in Lebanese domestic politics, where its weapons serve as a latent and sometimes manifest and credible threat. The latter is an immediate consequence of the allegiance to *wilāyat al-faqīh*, according to which the involvement in war is to be decided by the supreme jurist (Khatib 2015, 110–11, Qassem 2010). Neither, however, are reasons that Hezbollah gives in its discourse – they are not consistent with its ethics of the legitimate use of force, nor its insistence on being a Lebanese and independent actor (see Chapter 5). These reasons, therefore, constitute important instances of the unsaid. Beyond the legitimation of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, the direct and indirect consequences of this involvement also had to be processed discursively and, in turn, yielded new legitimation problems (Farida 2020, 120–39). In addition to the human losses that Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian war caused, its support of the Assad regime was costly in other respects as well. Even though Hezbollah went to great lengths to claim the opposite in its discourse, its support of the Assad family, the Houthis in Yemen and Bahraini protestors was read as being moti-

vated by sectarianism – and it contributed to sectarian tensions and violence in Lebanon (Khatib 2015, see also Chapter 3). Conjuring up Arab and Muslim unity and identifying Western hegemony, the Israeli threat, 'Takfirism' and Saudi aggressions as a danger to all Arabs and Muslims in their diversity was one alternative framing of conflict dynamics that Hezbollah tried to discursively construct as reality (see Chapter 2). The creation of new enemy images served both to keep 'resistance' plausible and to mitigate the sectarianising effects of Hezbollah's actions. Yet none of this prevented Hezbollah from casually using sectarian rhetoric and reproducing sectarian categories, while simultaneously claiming to reject them. This ambiguity allows for the mobilisation of the Shi'i community, in particular, and the appeasement of the Lebanese public, in general, at the same time. But as we know today, this 'playful' sectarianism – which is by no means unique to Hezbollah – was a game that, at some point, the Lebanese were all too familiar with, and they were thus well aware of its ability to gloss over the failure to actually address political, social and economic problems. In 2019, they decided to no longer play along and mass protests erupted in Lebanon, markedly turning against the sectarian system and politics (see the Conclusion of this book).

While Hezbollah insists on being resistant, the extent to which its discourse reflects both the clash of civilisations and the dystopias of the Western hegemony is striking. While the addition of the 'Takfirists' and the Gulf states to the list of oppressors seems to relativise a marked 'West' versus 'Islam' dichotomy, Hezbollah ultimately considers both tools in the hands of the US and its allies in their endeavour to continue the subjugation of the region. The Others created in Hezbollah's discourse are not equally distal and different (Hansen 2006), and whereas 'the West' and Israel appear unchangeable, the 'Takfirists' and the Gulf states seem to be more of a temporary (albeit no less urgent) problem. In this sense, Hezbollah reifies rather than resists the epistemology offered by Western hegemonic discourse, especially the antagonistic relations between the Western Others and Arab-Muslim Selves. However, the derivation of these categories and, more broadly, the lens through which global conflict dynamics are interpreted stem from Shi'i religious discourse – and, therefore, can be considered a transformation of the dystopias present in Western discourse or a form of resistance against the Western world order. They are used to expose Western hypocrisy and denounce its stance towards

the 'Middle East' and North Africa as one claiming to be underpinned by morals but in fact driven by interests. '[T]he ruler of the American, western and other world administrations is not united norms. Right[s] and values are not the adopted norms,' Nasrallah explains. 'Norms are rather political considerations and interests' (Hezbollah 2011b).

Analysing the lens through which an armed non-state actor perceives reality is important, and not only from the perspective of Islamist and area studies. Rather, Hezbollah illustrates the high relevance of non-state actors for trans- and international conflict dynamics. Rebel groups and other ANSAs tend to be analysed in their 'domestic' context, for example the civil war or local conflict dynamics of which they are part (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023a), even though the transnational character and properties of these conflicts are well known (Salehyan 2009). The transnational aspect has often been seen as a function of 'strategic calculations at domestic and regional levels' (Darwich 2021b, 5), although the above would suggest the opposite. It is because of a certain worldview and ideas of what its basic operating principles and conflict structures are that Hezbollah acts in a certain way domestically, regionally and globally. As May Darwich (2021b, 5) rightfully demands, approaches of foreign policy analysis should be applied to actors such as Hezbollah, so as to study them as a more disaggregated phenomenon and come to more fine-grained conclusions. Following her impetus, the above could be read as an analysis of Hassan Nasrallah's operational code (Holsti 1977, S. G. Walker 1983), for it reveals his beliefs about the conflictual nature of global politics and links them to actions taken by Hezbollah to influence its international environment. 'Today, the globe – the entire globe – is influenced by what is taking place in the region,' as Nasrallah has put it (Hezbollah 2015c). For Hezbollah, this means that it must take action to influence global politics by confronting the regional manifestation of hegemonic schemes.

Notes

1. France is never explicitly named as the former colonial power, even though colonial rule and its injustice are frequently referenced. This can only be interpreted as a strategy to avoid confrontation with an important cooperation partner. Similarly, while the old regime is often explicitly associated with Ben Ali, Habib Bourguiba is never named as a culprit. On the contrary, he is sometimes lauded as an impor-

tant leader in the liberation movement. For the ambivalent relationship between *Nahdawis* and Bourguiba, see also Ounissi (2016).

2. It is astonishing how close some of Ennahda's considerations are to what is referred to as a 'transition paradigm' in the democratisation literature; see, for example, Carothers (2002).

3. The regime 'used Islamists as a scarecrow in order to frighten progressives, women and the West, and to silence all those who spoke out against it'.

4. 'If we want to demonise the Salafists, it will be them who will be in power ten to fifteen years from now'.

5. 'A period of crisis when society was divided into two parts'.

6. Marjana was 'Ubayd Allah's mother. 'Ibn Marjana' translates as 'son of Marjana'.

7. This narrative is misleading because the first two *aliyot* or waves of Jewish migration had already occurred in the nineteenth century to Ottoman Palestine. See, for example, Gelvin (2021).