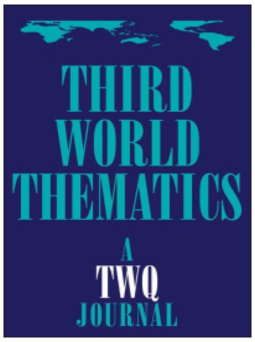

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INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

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Islamist Social Movements and Hybrid Regime Types in the Muslim World

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ABSTRACT
Since the Arab Uprisings in 2010–2011 and subsequent counter-revolutions, socio-economic and political crises have occurred with rapid frequency in the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel. The aim of our special issue is to investigate how and why social movements that use references to Islam or an explicit Islamist framework have adapted their ideology and their toolbox in order to negotiate and navigate the social and political terrain created by the upheavals in the recent period? Using recent field data to enrich our knowledge of Islamist movements in countries where the Islamist phenomenon has been understudied, this collection provides a framework to understand the growing political volatility and hybridity in Islamist repertoires of contention. The authors of the volume each analyse cases of Islamist social movements shifting, or attempting to shift, from one repertoire to another – from transnational to national, from non-violent to violent or *vice versa*. The collection shows that social movements adapt in different ways and make use of resources available to them, at times moving far beyond their established ideology and traditional theological references.

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Islamist social movements whether peaceful or violent, national or transnational are products of their time and the areas of the world where they exist. This means that they are as impacted by societal change as anybody else. For thirty years between 1980 and 2010, the countries of the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel were seen as stable. Regimes stayed in power and states ruled over their inhabitants. This is hardly an accurate picture anymore. Since the Arab uprisings in 2010–2011 and subsequent counterrevolutions, socio-economic and political crises have occurred in many parts of the Muslim world and with increased acuity. The Daesh insurgency of 2013–14 eventually ended with the fall of its self-proclaimed Caliphate. However, at the time of writing (September 2022), observers around the world nervously follow not only the durability of armed jihadi insurgents in the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel, but also the livelihood crises brought about by the combined economic effects of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, which could contribute to a new wave of recruitment to violent extremist insurgencies in the Muslim world. Moreover, Lebanon, once known as the

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Switzerland of the Middle East, is increasingly turning into a failed state and experience one of the world's gravest financial crises since the 1800s.

The key questions are therefore how can Islamist social movements in this landscape of chaos and confusion remain relevant to their target populations? (Hamid and McCants 2017: 1). How have they weathered the Arab counter-revolutions and adapted? Although the corpus of literature on Islamist movements published since 1979 is vast, the regional scope has often been limited to Egypt or other large Arab states where Islamist parties have had important constituencies, won electoral victories, formed single-party or coalition governments, but also experienced severe crackdowns (Utvik 2020; Wickham 2013; Schwedler 2006; Valbjørn and J. Gunning 2021). This volume, in contrast, wishes to largen the geographical scope of understudied spaces in the Muslim world. Most of the cases chosen for this volume are ruled by contested, hybrid, and unsettled regimes. They have experienced heavy ethnic- or sectarian tension and growing conflict over state power and resources in the past ten years.[1]

Moreover, whereas the literature on Islamist movements has long focused on the question of radicalism, violence, or moderation, the focus of this volume is on state-Islamist relations. This question is more salient in countries where religion intersects with other layers of social stratification, such as ethnicity, nationalism, sectarianism, and/or tribal division. This volume studies how Islamist social movements navigate such complex settings and how facing these complexities, Islamist ideologies hybridise and evolve. All the articles in this collection are based on empirical data retrieved from the authors' own fieldwork in the countries of study.

The contribution of this volume is twofold: First, to use recent field data to enrich our knowledge of Islamist movements in countries where the Islamist phenomenon has been less studied. Second, the collection and this introduction provide an analytical framework to help navigate and understand the growing political volatility and hybridity in Islamist repertoires of contention. The authors of the volume each analyse cases of Islamist social movements shifting, or attempting to shift, from one repertoire to another – from transnational to national, from peaceful to violent or *vice versa*. The collection shows that social movements adapt in different ways and make use of resources available to them, at times moving far beyond their established ideology and traditional theological references. Moreover, the volume shows that, in practice, although Islamist social movements may use relatively vague pan-Islamist references that go beyond the identification with the territorial state, most movements have a strictly domestic focus, and increasingly so. Today many Islamist social movements in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel blend Islamist ideology with (territorial) nationalism, as in the Kurdish case.

Hybrid regimes, hybrid pathways to resistance

Studying Islamist social movements stretching from Mali, Libya, and Tunisia to Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, this collection places a particular focus on hybrid and unsettled regimes in segmented societies. The term "hybridity" was first used in a seminal study of political systems in Central America to account for "complex social environments where well-established categories fail to describe emerging patterns of social organisation, practices and identities" (Karl 1995; see also: Voltmer, Selvik, and Høigilt 2021, 843). Hybrid regimes combine attempts at democratic rule with authoritarian tendencies and the instability of the unsettled regime type (see Wigell 2008).

In "unsettled" regimes, sovereignty is limited, institutions work haphazardly, electoral outcomes are regularly disputed, and political violence and social unrest are common. Examples of unsettled regimes are the extremely fragile states like Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, and Libya; countries in the midst of war like Syria; or states in political turmoil and economic crisis like Tunisia. Most of these polities (with the exception of Tunisia) are deeply contested, with various competing state projects often as strong as the formal state government in power in the capital. The regimes in power fear a loss of privilege and rights and obstruct attempts at the needed institutional and structural reform (Wiktorowicz 2006, 2–3). Informal practices and disputed jurisprudence challenge the rule of law.

Hybrid pathways of resistance, or hybrid repertoires of contention, are more recurrent in hybrid regimes. The hybridity of the state and the regime in power spills over to civil society and contributes to a hybridisation of Islamist social movements (see Voltmer, Selvik, and Høigilt 2021, 843). As part and parcel of their societies, Islamist social movements must relate to the logic of the state and how it encapsulates society. Existing in a hybrid political environment therefore means that the possible pathways of resistance will have a hybrid character. In other words, state structure and state strategies will have a direct impact on how Islamist social movements respond and thereby hybridise. That said, the repertoires (or pathways to resistance) clearly differ among the movements and countries of study in this collection, as each movement has its own trajectory shaped by the country's social and political settings and the historical pathways of state-religious relations. For example, Tunisia's stability until 2021 opened up other repertoires of contentious politics and movement behaviour, including participation in elections (see Blanc 2021, this issue).

The growing hybridity since 2011 of the regimes in the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel has created a more fluid and hybrid Islamist landscape. Pathway shifts occur more easily and frequently. This volume puts its lens on repertoire shifts by Islamist social movements in the hybrid regimes of Libya, Mali, Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. As for Tunisia, while we recognise its many political and economic challenges, it has still been an outlier in stability among our other case countries. This makes it an interesting comparison case for this collection.

Obviously, this volume does not cover all of the Muslim world as important areas and countries are not included among our cases. We also have no focus on the increasing authoritarian control over the religious field in Morocco, Egypt, and the Gulf states (see Fahmi 2022). Further studies will have to analyse the constraints and survival of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and what the political transformation in Saudi Arabia means for the future of Saudi and global Islamism.

Definitions

A couple of additional definitional explanations are in order. First, by Islamism we simply mean acts of Islamic activism as an exercise of "systematic religious effort" which "exceeds the ritual observance of Islam and which [are] not organised by the state" (Hegghammer 2007, 76). This broad definition includes movements inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood

(Ikhwan-type movements), Salafi movements (including quietist Salafis), and jihadi movements (see Utvik 2020, 74). The aim of this volume is therefore to analyse how various movements within this wide and often contradictory ideological spectrum relate to their respective states and what determines this relationship (Schwedler 2020).

Second, the notion of Islamist social movement must be defined. In 2004, Quintan Wiktorowicz published the book *Islamic Activism*, one of the first attempts to synthesise Islam and social movement studies (Wiktorowicz 2006, 19). It defined Islamic activism as the mobilisation of contention to support Muslim causes (Ibid: 2). Islamist social movements are the formal organisations and informal groups that lead and participate in Islamic activism. Islamist social movements are no different than other social movements in how they mobilise resources and operate more generally (they are not *sui generis*) (Ibid: 3). Islamist social movements resemble other "new social movements" that battle for "post-materialist" values such as identity and culture (and which unlike workers' movements do not define themselves principally in relation to the system of production) (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 1999: 10). Islamist social movements have long led a battle for meaning and values inside the Muslim world. Although some Islamist social movements have expressed wishes to create an Islamic state, most others have simply expressed their desire to "create a society governed and guided by the *shari'a* (Islamic law)" (Wiktorowicz 2006, 16).

Building on Wiktorowicz and the large corpus of important studies that followed in the wake of this book (Lacroix 2011; Hegghammer 2007; Donker 2019; Hafiz 2018; Pall 2018a; Lefèvre 2021, to just mention a few), the papers in this collection are therefore not only concerned with how Islamist social movements relate to the state but, even more importantly, how they design pathways of resistance, or repertoires of contention: Do they choose peaceful or violent means, and do they operate within the state or by supporting a competing polity?

Fourth, the use of the concept "pathway" is intended to reflect the possible social, political, and economic forms that resistance can take, rather than being another term for "strategy". In one country, under a specific regime or under certain social, economic, and political circumstances, certain pathways may be possible, while at another time or in another place they would be impossible, whereas others still can be traversed by a religious movement with at least the hope of survival and possibly success, modest, or more. This volume shows that Islamist social movements adapt their pathways to the political opportunities given by the political field but that the ideology and the identity of the movement, as well as the decisions of the movement leader, constrain which opportunities movements can take.

This conceptualisation of pathways is therefore linked to the idea of repertoires of contention. A repertoire of contention is a recurrent, predictable, and fairly narrow toolkit of specific protest tactics used by a set of collective actors in a particular campaign (Taylor and Van Dyke 2007). The idea here is that although protest possibilities are virtually unlimited, the repertoires of contention adopted by various groups are predictable and limited by the repertoires that actors have already internalised (see Gade 2019a; Blanc 2021, this issue). In other words, pathways evolve very slowly, and they are generally a blend of local transmission from the past alongside adaptations to the external environment and transnational diffusion (Gade 2019a, 58, 71; see also Taylor 1989).

In what follows, this introduction first lays out the genealogies of contemporary Islamism and explains that Islamist movements in the contemporary world must either choose a transnational or state-oriented pathway. Second, it explores key factors that can induce shifts from one pathway to another: context and situational logics; agency; and transnational diffusion. Third, taking the case studies from this volume, this introduction analyses the new era of volatility and hybridity that has emerged since 2010 and how various Islamist movements have adapted to it. Fourth and finally, the introduction concludes and points a way forward for future research.

1) The Muslim Brotherhood Movement, Salafism, and Jihadism: Three Genealogies

The question of pathways to resistance in the Muslim world has become particularly pertinent in the last decade and this applies not least to Islamist and Salafi movements. The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood was created in Egypt in March 1928, and then spread across the Muslim world (Lia 1998:36, 155). Although these movements are linked to the Egyptian mothership, they are organised on a national basis. What they have in common is that they foresee change as a top-down process brought about when the movement assumes state power (Roy 1994, 3).

Salafi movements have a different genealogy as they trace their roots back to Islamic reformism in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century. Contemporary Salafism developed into a defined theological corpus of thought by the 1990s in Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states. Salafism today, however, is a global and heterogeneous movement independent of the official religious establishment in Saudi Arabia (Commins 2015, 156). Salafi groups foresee change as emerging bottom-up, through predication, education, and the sum of individual religious efforts (purification, preaching, etc.) (Utvik 2014, 70, 364; Commins 2008, 36). However, some Salafi groups in the Arab world have since the 2000s entered parliaments (Utvik 2014). As most of the movements studied in this special issue are close to the Salafi brand, we place particular focus on the diversity of the contemporary Salafi spectrum. Like the Muslim Brotherhood organisations, Salafis in various countries have their specific domestic history and are shaped by current events and social and political conditions in their respective countries (Gade 2022, 113; Bonnefoy 2017, 21, 27; see also Rougier 2011, 33–34).

To the authors of this volume, Salafism is a theological reference that does not dictate political behaviour. Internal doctrinal debates aside (Wagemakers 2016, 15), most Salafis agree on a strict adherence to the principle of Tawhid (the oneness of Allah), a rejection of human reasoning and logics (Wiktorowicz 2006, 207) and the principle of loyalty and disavowal in Islam (al-wala' wa-l-bara') (Wagemakers 2016, 19). Politically, this doctrine has been used to legitimise three contradictory courses of action (pathways): First, quietist Salafist, who refuse party politics and support the ruler in place. Secondly, political (or *haraki*) Salafist, who participate in elections and/or take political opinions independently of the Saudi royal family. These can also be seen as a product of the hybridisation of Salafi doctrine and of Muslim Brotherhood political strategies (see Lacroix 2011; see also: Rougier 2008, 80). Thirdly, jihadis (violent Salafist), who fight either a local jihad against the domestic rulers or a global jihad against the West (see Maher 2016).

Jihadi groups, or jihadi insurgents, definitively make clear references to Islam and this informs their worldview, how they relate to civilian populations and their strategies of combat. However, this does not mean that their jihadi identity is completely monolithic. For example, the Syrian jihadi insurgency Ahrar al-Sham is essentially an Islamist movement driven by Islamist ideology, but that has not prohibited it from also attempting to create nationalist credo for itself. In fact, two of the papers in this special issue (Gade and Palani 2022, this issue; Drevon 2021, this issue) show how Islamism more generally can fuse with nationalist ideas and sentiments and create new hybrid version of Islamism.

The papers in this issue show that the pathways taken in this regard by Islamist actors are not static but change with contemporary domestic circumstances, historical trajectories, and world events. Islamist actors are also political actors who constantly navigate and negotiate contested political and religious fields, creating a dynamic fusion of politics and religion that needs to be studied in detail on the ground (see Gade 2022). We believe that the framework presented below can be used to track hybridisation within Islamist groups.

2) Categorising Islamism: A Perspective on Pathways

In practice, Muslim movements often have had to choose whether to work towards an Islamic state within established borders or to strengthen Islamic identity and cooperation at the transnational level. At the heart of this lies different approaches towards understanding the principles upon which authority and political order shall be established:

(i) A state-centred pathway, i.e. engaging with the state, seeking a larger share of government power; or
(ii) A pan-Islamist pathway, i.e. turning away from the state and orienting towards the transnational level, the *Umma*.

Both pathways have a non-violent and a violent declination.[2] Schematically, four possible choices are theoretically possible: *State-centred and Non-violent; Transnational and non-violent; Violent and State-centred; Violent and Transnational* (see Table 1). In practice, the choice between a domestic and a transnational Islamist pathway is certainly not binary. However, for simplification and analytical purposes, those Islamist pathways that are closer to the transnational pole on the transnationalism vs state-oriented continuum will here be considered transnational. Conversely, those pathways that are closer to the state-oriented (domestic) pole on the continuum be considered domestic.

The model of four pathways obviously represents a simplification. However, it is an important vantage point from which to discuss and analyse hybrid and shifting political pathways of Islamist groups. At the same time, it is important to account for the fact that contemporary Islamist movements are as internally divided and fluctuating as other social

Table 1. An ideal-type model of four pathways for Islamist actors.

	State-centred	Transnational
Non-violent		
Violent		

movements or insurgencies. Nonetheless, while Islamist social movements may operate in the transnational and state spheres simultaneously, one pathway still tends to prevail. The illustration in Table 1 is therefore useful for comparative- and analytical purposes and helps to identify how such movements may change over time. In what follows, the model of four pathways will be used as a roadmap and ideal types to analyse how and why Islamist movements in practice often shift their repertoires of contention and pathways.

Movements following a state-centred pathway want to maintain the existing state structure but call for increased reference to the Islamic Shari'a. They may or may not present candidates for national elections and/or vote. Conversely, movements following the transnational pathway shift their political priorities away from the territorial state, aiming instead for the medium to long-term objective of redrawing state borders, leading finally to the establishment of the transnational Islamic Caliphate.

Not that long ago, categorising Islamism was seen as relatively straightforward (Hegghammer 2009). Members of the Muslim Brotherhood organisations (Ikhwan) and affiliated groups across the Arab world were state-oriented and non-violent, while quietist Salafist were transnational and non-violent. Conversely, al-Qaeda central and other jihadis were, prior to 2011, transnational and violent groups, while armed groups of local jihadis in Egypt, Algeria, and Bosnia in the 1990s were state-oriented (Kepel 2000). Political Salafis tended to occupy a middle-ground in between the state-oriented and the transnational, depending on the nature of their main interests and activities.

State-oriented Islamic movements place their narratives and main objectives primarily within the state in which they exist, by and large accepting state borders and institutions. This often also means taking part in elections, even if their main objective may be to take over and significantly change the composition of the state in question (Schwedler 2006). However, following the violent crack-down on supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt at Raba'a Al-'Adawiya Square in August 2013, taking part in elections is no longer an option there. Egypt, UAE, and Saudi Arabia terror-listed the Muslim Brotherhood in 2014, and MB organisations in several countries have had to go underground. MB organisations have also suffered serious electoral defeats, for example in Morocco in September 2021, and surveys by the Arab Barometer pollster indicate that MB organisations have also lost some of their constituencies (The Economist 2017). Finally in states that have partially disintegrated, such as Libya, it is increasingly unclear what it means for an Islamist movement to be state-oriented.

The transnationally oriented groups focus their attention on transnational Islamism, either ignoring the state, for example by extending solidarity with oppressed Muslims abroad, or working actively to promote a transnational Islamist project that rejects international borders. Despite these crucial differences, both the state-oriented and the transnational pathways have violent and non-violent declinations.

It is striking how rare the transnational non-violent pathway really is. The violent declination of the transnational pathway is more common. However, a purely transnational pathway is difficult to maintain, as groups that aim for more than very limited support need to relate to local concerns, local myths, and narratives Most cases of the transnational pathway are linked to global terrorism perpetrated in the West (by Daesh or al-Qaeda and its derivatives).

Context, agency, and transnational diffusion

This volume analyses these processes of shifts between the domestic and the transnational level as contingent, reversible, and multiple. Moreover, it recognises that within each movement, there is a discussion over which repertoire of contention to choose. The focus will now turn to why the repertoires of Islamist movements evolve and/or shift over time and increasingly hybridise. To account for movements' choice of pathways, three main explanations may be considered: 1) context and situational logics, 2) agency (choice), and 3) transnational diffusion and "frame resonance".

Context and situational logics

Context is obviously important. It is very different to be an Islamist group in present-day Syria than it was twelve years ago. The same is true in Tunisia, which until 2021 was ranked as "Free" by Freedom House (it lost this status in 2021 after President Kaïs Saïed introduced a number of emergency measures). In Tunisia pre-2021, Islamists still had a chance of gaining a seat or even executive power when venturing into elections, while this is not the case for different reasons in countries such as Syria, Mali, and Libya.

This means that the opportunities available are determined by context. McAdam (1999, 27) coined this as the political opportunity structure that consists of four components related to contextual factors:

(1) The relative openness of the institutionalised political system;
(2) The state's capacity and willingness to use coercion;
(3) The stability or instability of elite alignments in the polity;
(4) The presence or absence of elite allies.

Yet, this conceptualisation is criticised for being too static and structuralist, ignoring subjectivity and the "battles of meaning" that are constitutive of contentious politics (Fillieule 2006, 214). Indeed, the specific relationship between a movement and political power is dynamic and interactive (Della Porta and Reiter 1998, 20; Alimi, Demetriou, and Bosi 2015, 7; Dobry 1986). As movement behaviour tends to disclaim pre-set rules, a qualitative in-depth approach is required to research it.

For example, context alone does not explain why the Muslim Brotherhood in Sisi's Egypt, facing a very closed political system, has avoided resorting to violence (Fahmi 2017). Conversely, Tunisia, known for its more inclusive political system (relatively speaking in the region) until 2021, has "exported" the highest number of foreign fighters per capita in the Arab world to jihadi theatres abroad (The Economist 2014). Moreover, state-oriented and transnational groups – peaceful as well as violent – tend to co-exist within most polities in the Middle East and North Africa.

Some scholars such as Beinin and Vairel (2013:14) have advocated a move away from the political opportunity conceptualisation towards what they call the logics of interaction and situation. Taking a relational view of the interaction between the social movement and the state, states generally respond to movements voicing grievances with a variable mixture of concessions and repression. Both the state response to the movement claims and the movement's interpretation of these responses are obviously important. Actors choose a state-centred pathway if they believe that it will have a chance of winning against the authorities, and if this is not the case groups may prefer a transnational pathway.

Changes in macro-structures are important for understanding social movement behaviour only if they are visible and perceived as constituting an opportunity (see McAdam 2005, 61). Repression, for example, can have different effects depending on how it is perceived (Davenport 2012:76; Gurr and Moore 1997:1082). Repression may make injustice seem more acute, and thus favour mobilisation – such that some leaders of resistance movements have used provocation as a conscious strategy to gain sympathy (one example is Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian Fatah, see Sayigh 2000). Alternatively, repression can create a perception of increased risk and decreased gains, thus lowering the activists' commitment to the struggle.[3] Repression may therefore either favour a willingness to confront the state or a wish to transcend the state and connect with other polities.

Grievances voiced by the Islamist movements and the underlying injustice evoked may become particularly acute if the state is considered to be unfair vis-a-vis certain population groups. In societies characterised by ethnic or religious (sectarian) pluralism, such as in the cases in this collection, there have often been historical battles for the political and economic resources of the state. Another group's empowerment in the domestic political system is often seen as a zero-sum game and as necessarily detrimental for one's own group. This has occurred in Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, and Libya, countries that have all experienced civil war.

Here, the identity politics perspective (or ethnic politics) is valuable to analyse how Islamism intersects with ethnic-, national, or other identities. This collection sees national identities as imagined, instrumentalized, and contested (see Anderson 2006, 6; Stavenhagen 1996, 285). Moreover, it considers sectarian identities to be reversible, and to be the product of a process of sectarianisation led by identity entrepreneurs.[4] As this volume shows, in multi-ethnic and neopatrimonial states, where one group so often prevails over others (Seurat 1986), Islamist movements must navigate complex terrains and often become more pragmatic, especially in terms of alliances.

Agency

Even in a constrained context, movements often still have some leeway and agency but a political pathway is never chosen in a vacuum, and strategies taken in the past often stick (Taylor and Van Dyke 2007). Moreover, although leaders must observe constraints inherent in terms of the constituency and movement resources, some leaders show more agency than others by strategic manoeuvring and taking risks.

Social movement studies have analysed the role of movement resources (see McCarthy and Zald 1977), in-group socialisation processes (see McAdam 1988; Aminzade, 2001; Taylor 1989), and internal divisions (Benford and Snow 2000). However, since these studies are all based on democratic contexts, they are not directly transferable to the study of Islamist movements in what often are neopatrimonial state structures. Arguably, insights from sociology, political anthropology, and history may complement these approaches, and the papers in this special issue show how this can enrich the field of social movement studies.

We consider actors to be rational, in the sense that they wish to maximise their own power resources but recognise that their subjective rationality is shaped by their social experiences and worldviews. Thus, pre-existing local networks (Denoeux 1993), as well as family and clan divisions, are important to understanding political behaviour. Arguably, political ethnography must be taken seriously as Islamist pathways cannot be understood without reference to the conflicts that already structure the political space (Castells 1973, 1983; see also: Lefèvre 2021). Moreover, considering that social movements are rarely immaculate conceptions but rather re-groupings of former social movements (Taylor 1989, 761), one needs to take into consideration the trajectories (Fillieule 2005) of the primary leadership figure.

Transnational diffusion

Transnational diffusion refers to the mechanisms through which transnational norms and repertoires of contention are transferred onto and received at the local level. Notwithstanding the technological revolution, which eases the diffusion of global slogans and narratives across space (Bakke 2013) and helps spread images of human suffering in the Muslim world (Kepel 2008, 44), global social movements still face enormous obstacles. For example, global slogans of Salafi jihadism were primarily received by a segment of poor Muslims who had never been outside their own country, and rarely outside their quarter of residence (see Rougier 2007, 246).

The success or failure of global slogans can be explained as a function of “frame resonance” (Benford and Snow 2000, 477). To have the potential to succeed, a cause must fit the given cultural and historical context and appeal to the “deep identities” prevailing in the communities it seeks to mobilise (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 87). Global Salafi jihadi slogans have gained some ground in the Levant because they fit with the strong anti-Shi’i and anti-Alawi sentiments in segments of the population. For example, since 2011, Lebanese Sunni youths who travel to Syria and speak in the name of global Jihadi slogans often do so because they wish to fight Hizbullah on Syrian soil (Gade 2017).

If global norms run counter to the identities and norms prevalent in a society, social movements must be able to transform the latter through mobilisation campaigns. For instance, it is possible that nationalist actors engaging with Jihadi groups for initially tactical reasons over time learn new transnational norms and action repertoires (Taylor and van Dyke 2007: 265).

The hypothesis of a shift towards global slogans (Hegghammer 2009b) should be nuanced keeping in mind that religious leaders in the Levant, even those who have organisational and monetary ties to “mother organisations” abroad, are able to act autonomously. Salafi ideology is not “imported” unchanged from the Gulf but adapted to local contexts (Gade 2022, 113). The papers in this issue also show that much of the Islamist activism that passes as “transnational” in reality has adopted global concepts but still operates solely at the domestic level. Violent groups that take foreign symbolic targets will often privilege those with a domestic importance (Tarrow and McAdam 2005). This creates the hybrid pathways to resistance that are analysed in this special issue.

3) A new era of volatility and hybridity?

The post-Arab spring era has turned the Islamist field upside down as the previous relatively straightforward categorisation of Islamism and Islamist actors has waned and been replaced by a much more volatile field of hybrid actors. For example, while Salafist groupings tended to avoid party politics prior to 2011 (except in Kuwait, where Salafis entered parliament in 1981) (see Pall 2018b; Utvik 2014), post-Arab spring groups and movements have participated in elections and entered parliament in several countries (see Blanc 2021, this issue). In many states, Salafi groups had to choose between standing outside the formal domestic political field or participating in parliamentary elections (Utvik 2014; Lacroix and Chalata 2015).

Recently, the violence of Daesh has discredited the notion of an Islamic state (Gade 2019b). This has spilled over to a weakening of the appeal of Islamist movements close to the Muslim Brotherhood ideology. Interestingly, while there has been a decline in the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood, there is a parallel increase in the popularity and visibility of Salafism in the Middle East, including Iraqi Kurdistan (Gade and Palani 2022, this issue; see also: Pall 2018a, 105) and Lebanon. In Syria, when the state collapsed, many members of the Muslim Brotherhood joined the Free Syrian Army, leaving the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood cannibalised by Salafi armed groups like Ahrar al-Sham (see Drevon 2021, this issue). In Egypt and Tunisia, there has been a decline in political Islam (the Muslim Brotherhood movement) and a rise in the popularity of Salafi jihadi movements (Fahmi 2022). In several places, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Iraqi Kurdistan, movements close to the Muslim Brotherhood chose to define themselves as “Muslim Democrat” rather than as “Islamist”, following the model of the Turkish AK Party. These trends could indicate that we are not seeing the overall decline of political Islam, but rather its transformation (see also Fahmi 2022).

The shifts in Islamist pathways are visible in Syria in particular, for example in the case of Ahrar al-Sham. The group was created by former members of the state-oriented Muslim Brotherhood, who decided to take up weapons to defend the group’s existence. Moreover, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS; the group formerly known as al-Nusra Front) has in recent years shifted away from a global jihad agenda towards a more state-oriented agenda (Drevon and Haenni 2021, 2). HTS has changed some of the dynamics in the Syrian war, but the course of the war itself and Turkish patronage have also changed HTS (Ibid: 1). Elsewhere, the Movement in Support of Islam and Muslim (JNIM) in Mali still pledges occasional support to al-Qaeda but its area of operation is confined to the Eastern Sahel of mainly Mali and neighbouring Burkina Faso. In January 2022 it released a statement saying that while it would continue to attack French forces and interests in Mali, France, and the French were not its enemy, suggesting that its real enemy is the government that France until recently has been supported strongly by armed forces on the ground.

In Iraq, current trends likewise illuminate a diverse and fragmented picture of the field of Islamism. In the north, in the Kurdish territory officially known as Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), a brand of Kurdish Islam is constructed as a pillar of embryonic nation-building (Gade and Palani 2022, this issue). However, quietist Salafism is also on the rise in the KRI, and although it uses Kurdish folklore to counter criticism from Kurds that it is against the

Kurdish project, Salafism is at odds with nation building, Kurdish *de facto* statehood and the attempt by the KRI government to consolidate the religious sphere in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In southern and central Iraq, societies under Baghdad's hybrid power, the Iraqi nationalist anti-corruption and youth movement has given ample opportunity for the political entrepreneurism of maverick religious-political leader Muqtada al-Sadr. Muqtada al-Sadr has found a niche in his "Iraq first" approach to Shia politics, though his movement's outlook and ideology have clear resemblance to the Islamic Republic he defies (Selvik and Amirteimour 2021, this issue).

There is a striking similarity between al-Sadr (even if he is a Shia) and the Sunni Wahhabi-inspired leadership of Imam Mahmoud Dicko in Mali. The latter not only takes a stand against the violent Salafi-inspired insurgents in the country but has become the country's most important political actor without being tainted by the widespread idea of politics as dirty in Mali (Bøås and Cissé 2022, this issue). Conversely, in states with a more open political system, like Tunisia prior to 2021, Islamist parties such as An-Nahda and Salafi groups have been included in social arenas that were formerly closed to them (Blanc 2021, this issue). In the clientelist political order of Lebanon, Salafism has had popular appeal due to extensive discontent in cities like Tripoli and Sidon after the 2011 Syrian crisis increased Sunni-Shia tensions and worsened conditions for the Lebanese economy, leading to a decline in the country's standard of living (Knudsen 2021, this issue, see also Gade 2017, 2022).

Moreover, it can also be noted that global terrorism perpetrated in the West motivated by the ideology of jihad (i.e., the transnational violent pathway) has declined significantly since 2018 (Global terrorism index 2022). While violent jihadi insurgents have benefitted from the weakening of many state structures in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, contemporary forms of jihadism are more localised and territorialised than al-Qaeda and Daesh's transnational terrorism. This is certainly the case in Mali, where the strength of armed Islamic insurgents like the JNIM and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) rests on their ability to integrate locally through the appropriation of local grievances and lines of conflict (Bøås 2015). Yet they still adhere to the idea of transnational jihad even if the support they receive from al-Qaeda and Daesh, respectively, is minimal if not non-existent. In Libya, quietist Salafis have taken up arms but, with several competing "governments" making claims to the political throne in Tripoli, it is not only unclear what it means to be state centred in the case of Libya but also whether the Libyan state exists as anything more than *de jure* right now (Collombier 2022, this issue).

In practice most Islamist social movements have a strictly domestic focus. Even Salafis have a local and domestic/national focus in their day-to-day activities. Moreover, when Islamist groups choose to adhere to the state, their project is often banalised and/or oriented into day-to-day politics (Roy 1994). This is the case when Islamist groups enter into parliament and/or create a specialised political party. As Gade and Palani (2022), this issue, and (Blanc 2021), this issue, show, the success of the party in elections often depends more on current political dynamics and trade-offs made in parliament than on Islamist ideology. The Islamist party often loses its distinctness and becomes a party like any other. Moreover, even jihadi-inspired insurgencies that make frequent use of Islamist slogans and references to the mythology of jihad need to relate to local peoples' everyday concerns, for example struggles over land rights, water access, and other local concerns and cleavages (see Bøås and Cissé 2022, this issue).

Thus, while the main configurations of Islamism still can be illustrated by the ideal-type model above, the articles in this volume also show how Islamist social movements have made innovations to their toolbox and repertoires of contention. Therefore, this particular field of religious-influenced politics has shifted into new manifestations that are local and global at the same time. In the Kurdish and Syrian cases, for example, nationalism and Islamism are often blended. This means that the space for local entrepreneurship even in the sphere of religion is much larger than it used to be, leading to a much more open landscape of religious constellations.

As mentioned, the four categories here are ideal types, while all empirical cases are in practice hybrid. However, we still believe that each of the empirical cases have more resemblance with one of the four ideal types (see Table 2).

What this means in practice in each case, depends on the nature of the state and on the context, and this needs to be studied qualitatively on a case-by-case basis. We therefore believe that this two-by-two table is simply a starting point for further research and discussion. For example, it might be asked what factors push Islamist social movements or individuals to embrace violence (see Knudsen 2021, this volume), or what factors push them to restrain or stop the use of violence (see Drevon 2021, this volume; Selvik 2021, this volume; Blanc 2021, this volume).

Arguably, local politics and individual case studies are central to understanding how specific movements are conditioned not only by the external environment and leadership decisions but also by the space in which the movements operate (Lefèvre 2021, 13). Moreover, the behavioural decisions of an Islamist social movements are shaped by its lessons and learnings of the past, its available repertoire, and its ideology (see Blanc 2021, this issue).

4) Bottom-up approaches and middle-range theorising

It can be argued that what builds solid and sound social research is first and foremost when scholars have a thorough, empirical understanding of the movement and the case at hand. This demands onsite field investigations, while a plurality of approaches should be utilised to analyse the new and much more hybrid pathways of Islamist groups.

Contributors in this volume use different middle-range theories to account for a group's choice of pathway. Some borrow insights from the political opportunity structure approach, and from contentious politics and social movement studies (Blanc 2021, this issue; Drevon 2021, this issue). However, the effects of religion have so far been ignored in social movement studies because the economy of salvation has been

Table 2. An ideal-type model of four pathways for Islamist actors, with example from case countries.

	State-centred	Transnational
Non-violent	Kurdish religious nationalists Imam Mahmoud Dicko (Mali) Jabhah Islamiyya, Itilaf al-Karama (Tunisia)	Quietist Salafis in Iraq who oppose Daesh
Violent	Ansar al-Sharia (2011–2013) (Tunisia) Ahrar al-Sham (Syria) Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) The Sadrist movement Quietist Salafis in the Libyan war Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir (2013)	Movement in Support of Islam and Muslim (JNIM) (Mali) The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) Ansar al-Sharia (2011–2013) (Tunisia)

forgotten. Moreover, other papers in this volume take the identity politics perspective to understand Islamist social movements operating in multi-ethnic and neopatrimonial states (Seurat 1986). The Big Man approach is useful in movements where the leader is venerated as an "exception" (see Bøås 2013) – as someone more than the average man as the "Big Man" does not need to come to office but is office in *persona*. Obviously, the "Big Man" can be a man of religion just as much as he can be an atheist. Other papers draw on the literature about Salafis (Collombier 2022, this issue) or on the literature on nation building and *de facto* statehood to account for the battle of ideas and distinct versions of nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan (Gade and Palani 2022, this issue). In a discursive context like the Kurdish one, all actors must somehow relate to nationalism, thus the emergence of the concept of "Kurdish Islam", while Knudsen's (2022, this issue) paper takes an approach inspired by the urban ecology literature.

What this collection therefore brings to the fore is the value of critical analyses that not only empirically show important changes that are taking place within the contested field of Islamism, but also how grounded empirical analysis leads to novel and innovative re-conceptualisations. Arguably, a fusion of politics and religion in the Muslim world is taking place that will continue to inform the politics of people, place, and state in predominantly Muslim countries in the short to medium term. By the inclusion of cases from North Africa and the Sahel, this volume also broadens the range of studies of Islamism from the core Middle East countries to the new battlegrounds of contestations between states and Islamism, but also within Islamism in North Africa and the Sahel.

Notes

1. Tunisia is included as a control case, see below.
2. Violence is in this case seen as armed jihad, or unplanned clashes with the state security apparatus, or vigilantist or other violence committed against humans.
3. For the nexus between repression, disengagement, and burn-out, see: Fillieule (2005): 28; (McAdam 2005, 67).
4. "Sectarianization" is the political instrumentalization of sectarian identities by identity entrepreneurs or an external political climate that heightens the salience of sectarian attitudes. (Hashemi and Postel 2017); (Valbjørn and Hinnebusch 2018, 45–47).

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