

Political Actors, State Identity, and Regime Type

Rethinking the link between collective identity, the state, and exclusion

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1. Introduction

The access to and exercise of power are at the core of all politics. All political actors compete for power. But competition for power takes place within different rules. The rules that govern the competition, access, and exercise of power constitute the type of political regime. In democracies, institutional and procedural safeguards ensure that such competition occurs without large-scale exclusion of the losers. In dictatorships, winners take all and exclude losers, if possible, forever. Authoritarianism, ideally, tilts the political game in the favour of rulers and pre-determines the result of all future competition for power, shall they arise.

A recurrent inquiry in many scholarly fields has been into the factors that determine, or influence, which rules are going to govern the competition for, access, and the exercise of power. What factors determine regime type? This work highlights an important, yet grossly overlooked and und-conceptualized, factor that affects the type of political regime. I argue that when relevant political actors pursue opposing visions of the identity of the state, they seek the exclusion of their opponents: Opposing visions of state identity constitute an existential discord between political actors. In the context of this fundamental divide, actors resort to exclusion when competing for power. This work shows that, because exclusion is a hallmark of authoritarianism, the pursuit of opposing visions of state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and unfavorable for democracy.

1.1 The argument and the contribution

The allegation that disagreements on some level of collective identity lead to exclusion and hurt democracy is not novel (Dahl 1966, 385–86; Rokkan and Lipset 1967, 1967, 32; Rustow 1970; Snyder 2000). But most of these works do not link this causal relationship between disagreement on collective identity and regime type to the state. The existing literature has rather focused on the relationship between ‘national identity’ (Fukuyama 2018; Smith 1991; Snyder 2000, 20), “national unity” (Rustow 1970, 350), “social cohesion” (Bingham 1982; Fearon and Laitin 1996, 2003; N. R. Miller 2003; Rae and Taylor 1970), and democracy. While these works claim to be interested in collective identity expressed at the level of the

(nation) state, they have not attempted to conceptualize this collective identity as a definitional dimension of the state.

Nevertheless, some definitions of the state include what Andersen et al. (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a, 1206) call “citizenship agreement” – agreement on who belongs to the political community. While the concept of citizenship agreement had been employed, earlier, by Linz and Stepan (1996, 16–17) in their study of democratic consolidation, its incorporation into a state definition was primarily in works that study state ‘fragility’ (Bratton and Chang 2006; Carment, Prest, and Samy 2009; Grävingholt, Ziaja, and Kreibbaum 2015; Kraxberger 2007). A shared conception in these works is that the state’s legitimacy rests on its ability to democratically represent its citizens (Call 2010; Carment, Prest, and Samy 2009, chap. 3; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011, 16).

These existing concepts, whether they consider identity part of the state or not, suffer from three shortcomings that prevent them from identifying important identity divisions that lead to exclusion and authoritarianism. First, diversity or homogeneity are bad indicators of cohesion. This is why empirical investigations that test the relationship between diversity and democracy arrive at contradictory results. While some investigations find that diversity is detrimental to democracy (Almond, Powell, and Mundt 1996; Gabriel A. Almond 1956), others show diversity’s positive effect on democracy (Hardgrave Jr 1993).¹

Second, the identity of the state is not necessarily a reflection of the boundaries of the community. In some cases, the state embodies a set of principles, or ideational content. In France, the state represents ideals that evolved from the French revolution (Safran 1991). In the U.S, the state embodies the principle the pursuit of happiness is a moral obligation on earth. At least since the 1960s, the U.S has reflected also ideals of multiculturalism and equality (Huntington and Dunn 2004). In ancient China, the state represents the ideational legacy of its civilization that emphasizes progress and literacy (Fukuyama 2018, 1335).

Since, in some cases, the state embodies ideals, an agreement on the boundaries of the political community should not necessarily indicate an agreement on state identity. Some societies suffer from deep divisions on collective identity, despite having an agreement on who belongs to the community. Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region exhibit such divisions. Chapter 6 shows that Tunisia suffered severe identity divisions in 2013, despite

¹ Many scholars empirically show that diversity has not effect on violence or democracy (Fearon and Laitin 1996, 2003; Reilly 2001, 168; Steven Fish and Kroenig 2006, 829).

the lack of disagreements on its political community. The 1990s in Algeria witnessed a civil war between homogenous factions, which did not revolve around questions of belonging to the community. In Spain, the civil war that erupted in 1936 took place between opposing ideational views of the state (Bolloten 1991, chap. 1). The French revolution had also witnessed national divisions that did not stem primarily from disagreements on the boundaries of the community.

Even in cases where tensions on who belongs to the community exist, they do not always constitute the essence of national division. For instance, some identity divisions during the English civil wars occurred inside uniform political communities. Chapter 5 illustrates how the primary identity fault line in Turkey has revolved around questions of secularism and religion, despite the tensions surrounding whether Kurdistan belongs to the political community.

Third, democratic representation is an attribute of a regime type and not of the state, or state identity. If states express identity and generate legitimacy via democratic representation, it would mean that all dictatorships have illegitimate states that do not embody an identity. I shall not engage with the obvious illogic of this reasoning, but it is important to note that almost all data-sets that measure ‘stateness’ categorically treat dictatorships as weak states.²

The shortcomings that stem from existing concepts clearly illustrate the need for a better understanding of the interaction between the state and collective identity, and its relationship to regime type. The concept that this work proposes analytically captures state identity when it reflects an ideational content as well as when it embodies a homogenous population. It distinguishes state identity from democratic representation and is, therefore, applicable in both democracies and dictatorships.

The next chapter defines state identity as the *symbolic identity of the state*. The identity of the state could symbolically reflect the boundaries of the political community. States such as Israel, Armenia, and Malaysia exemplify these cases. But it could also embody an ideational content such as in France or the U.S. But in all cases, state identity is symbolic. It is distinct from the actual boundaries of the community which could, in practice, be less straightforward than what the symbolic identity of the state suggests. In Israel, for instance, while the state symbolizes a national home for the Jewish people, this has translated to different practices of

² I will, however, discuss this next chapter. See for instance: “Failed and Fragile States”. *Country Indicators for Foreign Policy*. “Index of State Weakness in the Developing World”. *Brookings*. “Constellations of State Fragility”. *The German Development Institute*. “Fragile State Index”. *Funds for Peace*.

exclusion and inclusion from the political community throughout history.³ While Armenia embodies the Armenian people, the actual boundaries of the political community encompass Yazidis, who are also represented in the parliament. State identity is also not equivalent to democratic representation. Political actors in dictatorships, like in democracies, can share the same vision of state identity, without democratic representation.⁴

Moreover, shifting the focus from homogeneity, democracy, and the boundaries of the community to state identity enables this work to investigate identity divisions that occur in homogenous societies. Regardless of what state identity embodies, *a dissent on state identity between relevant political actors leads to exclusion and is, therefore, conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious to democracy.*

The argument above is divided into three hypotheses. First, that dissent on state identity is positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy (H1). Second, that the relationship in H1 is causal and mediated by exclusion: Dissent on state identity leads to exclusion and, therefore, to authoritarianism (H2). Third, dissent on state identity can be on an ideational content; it can occur in homogenous communities without disagreement on the community's boundaries (H3).

1.2 The research strategy

By combining a large-N analysis with a small-N comparison, this dissertation tests the general validity of its hypotheses, without overlooking complex causal mechanisms. To test the general validity of H1 and H2, chapter 4 examines the 129 countries that exist in the [B]ertelsmann [T]ransformation [I]ndex data-set. The BTI data is chosen because it is the only data-set that operationalizes state identity in a way that approximates this work's conceptualization of state identity. It complements the statistical analysis with a Bayesian process tracing to test the hypothesized causal mechanism between dissent on state identity, exclusion, and authoritarianism during Tunisia's democratic transition and Turkey's autocratization. Periods of regime transition are particularly useful for this inquiry for two reasons. First, they are periods in which a change in the type of political regime occurs; this allows the examination of

³ This is neither a thesis about the different modes of inclusion in the political community, nor about the state or the politics of Israel. All examples here are employed for the sole purpose of pointing that state identity is not a simple equivalent for citizenship or the political community. Even in cases where the state embodies a people, it does so symbolically.

⁴ Even if we concur that the state carries out a 'representation function' (Milliken and Krause 2002, 757), this 'representation' remains symbolic.

how causal processes that affected regime type unfold. Second, transitions are periods of political instability that bring to the surface identity disagreements.

The logic of case selection is straightforward. Both Tunisia and Turkey share many features, including a historically entrenched division on state identity. While Turkey transitioned to an authoritarian regime in 2017, Tunisia concluded a democratic transition in 2014.⁵ Importantly, Tunisia is purposefully selected because it is a case that, at first sight, challenges the argument of this dissertation: It successfully transitioned to democracy, despite the serious identity division between seculars and Islamists.

The analysis of regime transitions in Turkey and Tunisia relies on a combination of sources that are discussed in chapter 3. In contrast to Turkey, the available scholarly works, policymakers and media reports documenting the *process* of transition in Tunisia are scarce. Chapter 6 shows how scholars have failed to provide detailed accounts of Tunisia's transition and rather focused on discussing the reasons behind its success. For this reason, this work's examination of Tunisia's transition is the first to analyze the original transcripts of the National Constituent Assembly, which was elected in October 2011 and tasked with drafting a new constitution.⁶ The process of writing a new constitution in Tunisia was not only central to the transition, but also witnessed some of the most explosive disagreements on the constitutional text between political actors.

1.3 The findings

This dissertation shows that dissent on state identity is strongly associated with authoritarianism in 129 cases. Likewise, a consensus thereon is associated with democracy. This effect is higher in magnitude and statistical significance than that of indicators for good economic performance. The effect of state identity on regime type compares to that of competitive market dynamics. Moreover, dissent on state identity is negatively associated with the existence and performance of institutions and ground rules that are important for democracy. Finally, dissent on state identity indicates the likelihood that anti-democratic actors play an important role in politics as well as the inability of the political process to manage cleavages and conflict.

⁵ Chapter 3 discusses the periods under examination.

⁶ As well as to serve as Tunisia's legislative body until a new constitution enters into effect and subsequent elections take place.

In Turkey, a dissent on state identity between Kemalists and Islamists drove both to seek the exclusion of the other from politics. These exclusionary dynamics resulted in Turkey's transition to authoritarianism. Despite Tunisia's celebrated success in the transition to democracy, the dissent on state identity between Islamists and secularists halted the democratization process and led to a political deadlock and crisis in the summer of 2013. The decision of the leaders of both factions to resolve their dissent on state identity was the condition that allowed the subsequent national dialogue to succeed and save Tunisia's transition from the fate of its neighbors.

1.4 The relevance and who should read this

The relevance of this work is, however, not confined to these cases. Chapter 7 shows how the perspective of this work helps in understanding a phenomenon – dissent on the state's identity – that became prominent in several places during the last years. Because of its generalizable effect on the behavior of political actors and the type of political regime, the concept of state identity and the configurations surrounding it are relevant for multiple theoretical and empirical inquiries:

- The concept of state identity is relevant for theories and definitions of the state. It is better than existing concepts in capturing all variations of the collective identity that the state expresses (state identity). As a result, the proposed concept helps in identifying identity disagreements that remain unrecognized by existing concepts.
- It is, therefore, relevant for a relatively new literature that examines the relationship between the state and political regime (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a; Fukuyama 2014; Hanson 2018; Mazzuca and Munck 2014; Møller and Skaaning 2012).
- Both the statistical and case analyses of this dissertation show that dissent on state identity is relevant for the study of democratic backsliding and autocratization, which has attracted substantial attention in recent years (Cassani and Tomini 2020; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019; Maerz et al. 2020). This is particularly timely in light of the concurrent rise of anti-democratic actors that claim different identities to their states in existing democracies.
- More generally, this work is important for the long inquiry into the factors that make democracy and dictatorship more likely (Cutright 1969; Inglehart and Welzel 2009; Lipset 1959; Møller and Skaaning 2012; Neubauer 1967; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Welzel 2020). It empirically highlights a factor that is a strong statistical predictor of regime type.

In addition, the analysis of regime transitions in Turkey and Tunisia makes this work also relevant for two narrower inquiries:

- The study of the factors that affect the process of transitions and their outcomes (Bermeo 1997; O'donnel and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1986; P. Schmitter 2014): This work brings the long-forgotten variable of 'national unity' and state identity back in the study of transitions (cf. Rustow 1970). It also bridges structural and agent-based approaches in the study of transitions by focusing on the interaction between political actors and the state.
- The inquiry into the regime transitions in Turkey and Tunisia: This dissertation's perspective explains the alliances, the fault-lines, and the polarization that occurred in both transitions. Moreover, it detects important milestones in the transition process that remain unrecognized by existing approaches.⁷

The audience that would find interest in this work is, therefore, wide-ranging. Scholars who are interested in any of the fields discussed above will find use in at least one of the coming chapters. Policy-makers will also find relevance in this work as a link between political actors, the state, collective identity, and exclusion. But it will be of particular relevance to policy-makers who deal with issues of state fragility and state legitimacy. The analysis of Tunisia and Turkey will be of interest to scholars of the MENA region, and particularly for those who study Tunisia and Turkey. Finally, this work should be thought-provoking for anyone who has an interest in understanding many of the world's current events that revolve around national identity conflict, the state, and the global erosion of democracy.

1.5 The structure

Chapter 2 presents the main arguments of this dissertation. It discusses this work's general understanding of the state and its relationship to other actors. It highlights the shortcomings of the existing conceptualizations of collective identity at the level of the state. It then introduces the concept of state identity and demonstrates its conceptual superiority vis a vis existing concepts. After discussing the main operational concepts of this work, chapter 2 discusses how dissent on state identity leads to exclusion and authoritarianism. Chapter 3 discusses the method of analysis. It explicates the main variables employed in the large-N analysis and the analysis materials analyzed in Turkey and Tunisia. Chapter 4 presents the results of the large-N analysis

⁷ For instance, it explains why the Tunisian transition experienced a major crisis and a deadlock in 2013, which remain largely under-recognized in the literature. It also explains how Turkey evolved from a model of Middle Eastern democracy to the gloomy reality of tyranny and dictatorship.

on the BTI data set. Chapters 5 and 6 analyze the transitions of Turkey and Tunisia, respectively. Chapter 7 discusses the empirical and theoretical relevance of the findings in previous chapters. It contextualizes this dissertation by debating the generalizability of the hypotheses, addressing counter-arguments, as well as highlighting its limitations. It suggests ways for future research to address these limitations and to augment our understanding of state identity. Chapter 8 concludes this dissertation and suggests agendas for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter illustrates the shortcomings of existing conceptualizations to analytically capture the collective identity that is expressed by the state. This leads investigations of the relationship between the “nation-state” and regime type to inconsistent and distorted empirical findings, despite the sound theorization regarding this relationship. It then introduces the concept *state identity* and argues that it is superior to existing concepts in two ways. First, it captures a broader range of state identities than existing concepts do. As a result, it sheds light on divisions on state identity that are overlooked in empirical investigations which employ existing concepts. Building on existing works that link disagreements on ‘national identity’ to exclusion, *I argue that when relevant political actors have opposing claims on state identity, they seek to exclude their opponents. This pursuit of exclusion is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious to democracy.*

Section 1 debates how existing state traditions treat the identity element of the state. It argues that the neo-Weberian tradition is better suited than other traditions for this chapter’s inquiry. The neo-Weberian tradition does not only consider identity a definitional dimension of the state. It is also particularly suitable for examining the interaction between political actors and the state’s identity dimension. Section 2 illustrates the shortcomings of existing conceptualizations, the empirical distortions they lead to, and the need for a new concept. Section 3 introduces the concept of state identity and shows how it avoids the conceptual and empirical shortcomings in existing works. It defines state identity as *symbolic* and distinguishes it from the concepts of citizenship, ascriptive homogeneity, and democratic legitimacy. Section 4 builds on existing works that hypothesize that divisions on collective identity lead to exclusion. It argues that opposing claims by relevant political actors on state identity lead to exclusion. That way, it shifts the causal link to exclusion from diversity, and disagreements on who belongs to the community, towards disagreements on the symbolic identity of the state. Section 5 discusses the concepts.

2.1 General approaches to the state

The works that scrutinize the relationship between the state and political regime do not usually engage in broader discussions about the different approaches to the state. These works rather build on the pivotal work of the German sociologist Max Weber (1926) “*Politik als Beruf*”

without discussing whether their approaches are superior to alternatives (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, and Nay 2014; Mazzuca and Munck 2014). Despite their differences, the ‘neo-Weberians’ share a view of the state as a tripartite structure;⁸ each structure fulfills a different function.⁹ The first is the monopoly on the use of force within a specified territory (the security function). The second is state bureaucracy, or administration (administrative and provisional function). The third is identity (the representation function) (Call 2010; Carment, Prest, and Samy 2009; Fukuyama 2014, 2014; Grävingholt, Ziaja, and Kreibaum 2015). In the words of Andersen et. al, “all extant definitions of stateness include one or more of [these] three defining attributes” (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a, 1205). One central aspect that differentiates the neo-Weberian from the Weberian perspective of the state (1926) is that the former, in contrast to Weber, considers identity a definitional dimension of the state (cf. Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert 2016).¹⁰

This dissertation shares the neo-Weberian tripartite understanding of, as well as its general perspective on, the state. But in contrast to the works above, I first illustrate why this perspective is better suited than alternatives for my inquiry into the relationship between political actors, state identity, and regime type.

Three assumptions in the neo-Weberian tradition of the state make it particularly useful for this purpose: **The first** is how it treats identity as a definitional element of the state. **The second** is that it views the state as a political entity of special importance. **The third** is that it allows us to examine the interaction between the state and other political actors. Together, these assumptions are adequate starting points for the inquiry of state identity and its relationship to the political regime.

1. Identity as a definitional dimension of the state:

- a. While attributing a ‘collective’ dimension to the state dates back to earlier philosophical works on the state,¹¹ not all modern traditions consider identity a *definitional element* of the state. The pluralist liberal tradition, for instance,

⁸⁸ The ‘neo-Weberian’ tradition is a loose term that terms together different works and approaches that share a focus on “the organizational logic of state action” (Vom Hau 2015, 136).

⁹ This does not mean that all works that belong to this tradition have all three aspects or attribute them equal importance (see Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a, 1206 for a good mapping of works within this tradition).

¹⁰ Even though he discussed the population dimension (M. Weber 2008, 156–57)

¹¹ Hobbes and Locke called it the “commonwealth” (Hobbes 1998, 96; Locke 2003, 107) while Rousseau referred to it as the “general will” (Rousseau 1999, 66). While they differed in how they understand the emergence of the state, they agreed that the state is an expression of commonality that individuals contractually enact (Rousseau 1999, 55; Hobbes 1998, 101; Locke 2003, 109 and 101).

focused on the state as a neutral arena of competition among different political groups and did not assign it an identity component (Bentley 1955; Held 1989; Kariel 1968).¹² The ‘bringing the state back in’ movement (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985), which criticized the pluralists’ shyness away from incorporating the state as an actor in political analyses, did not talk of identity as an integral part of states.

- b. It does not solely focus on state identity, but integrates it within a broader understanding of the state.** Despite the importance of the identity dimension of the state, it does not, on its own, constitute the state. The state is rather a set of interacting dimensions that include multiple institutions and functions that these institutions fulfill. Despite that, works that focus on the expression of collective identity on the state level do not attempt to integrate this identity component in a comprehensive understanding of the state. These works are rather concerned with national identity (Anderson 2006), nationalism (Gellner 1983), and social cohesion (Rokkan and Lipset 1967).¹³ The neo-Weberian approach, in contrast to these works, views the state as a complex entity that has three dimensions that include monopoly on the use of force, administration, and identity.
- c. It does not predetermine the identity of the state.** The neo-Weberian perspective does not predetermine the content of state identity.¹⁴ Marxist approaches, on the other hand, view the state as inherently and universally a representation of the capitalist class (Jessop 1990; Marx and Engels 2018, 382–83; Petras 1977; Wright 2016).¹⁵ The neo-Web also runs contrary to what Migdal proposes in his “state in society” definition of the state (2001), which argues that all states embody an “image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory”

¹² Scholars within this tradition have, however, focused on different political groups (Almond 1988; Marinetto 2007, chap. 1)

¹³ Even though sometimes they acknowledge their interaction with the concept of the state (Gat 2013, 26; Smith 1991, vii),

¹⁴ Section 2 discusses how the conceptualizations of state identity in this approach are however problematic and limit this identity to agreement on citizenship or, in empirical works, to democratic representation. But the neo-Weberian approach does not *necessitate*

¹⁵ This does not mean that works in this approach do not account for state actions that divert from this interest (see for instance Offe 2018; Poulantzas 2018). But the state remains the expression of capitalist class interests, even if other classes manage to sometimes divert actual state policies from capitalist interest (Poulantzas 2000).

(15). The neo-Weberian perspective provides a view of state identity that is sufficiently abstract to be applicable to all states.¹⁶

2. **The state is important:** The neo-Weberian approach builds on Weber's (1926, 9) emphasis on the state as an important political entity for modern societies. Despite the infamous pluralists who denied any importance to the state (Bentley 1955; Easton 1957, 1981; Latham 1952), the neo-Weberian tradition shares its assumption regarding the importance of the state with many other traditions:

The debate concerning the importance of the state runs parallel to another debate regarding the autonomy of the state. Contrary to the division regarding the autonomy of the state, most approaches seem to agree that the state is an important political actor.¹⁷ It is not surprising that the newer tradition of "bringing the state back in" that started with the works of Skocpol and her colleagues (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985) emphasizes the importance of the state. But even other approaches that ascribed the state a lesser degree of autonomy see the state as a political entity of importance. Despite the skepticism of the pluralist tradition of the state's importance, its underlying logic is that the state is important enough that political groups compete to further their interest via state structures (Almond 1988; Truman 1971, 862).¹⁸

Similarly, while the Marxist tradition has been historically divided regarding the agency it attributes to the state (Barrow 1993, 89–93),¹⁹ it never undermined the importance of the state in perpetuating capitalist class domination. Even the post-structuralist tradition, which criticized the over-focus on the state and proposed a focus on power-relations and discourse instead (Foucault 2007, 2007; P. Miller and Rose 1990), could not escape but acknowledge the importance of the state in modern societies (Foucault 1980, 1982, 122).

3. **The state is neither exceptionally autonomous, nor can it be reduced to societal variables:** The neo-Weberian approach is superior to approaches that reduce the state to societal variables. Instead of overlooking the state or fetishizing it, the neo-Weberian approach enables the examination of the interaction between the state and non-state actors. That way, it

¹⁶ This is despite the shortcomings of the conceptualizations of state identity that appear in the works of that employ the neo-Weberian approach. Section 2 discusses these shortcomings.

¹⁷ Skocpol and (1985, 26) and Marinetto (2007, 5–6) make a similar claim.

¹⁸ Even Dahl (1956, 64) talks about democracy as a system that curtails state power.

¹⁹ The debate is on whether the state is merely a functional proxy of class struggles (Poulantzas 2000), or does it also autonomously impact these struggles (Therborn 2016).

is particularly useful in inquiries regarding the identity dimension of the state, which links the state to its inhabitants.

Reviews of state literature and theories usually divide state traditions between those that view the state as a sovereign autonomous actor, and those that view the state as dependent on other societal structures (Almond 1988, 854–55; Marinetto 2007; Migdal 2001, chap. intro.).²⁰ While this differentiation is, in practice, rarely stratified along these extreme views, the degree of autonomy of the state informs how it is treated as a variable in political analyses. Post-structuralist approaches, for instance, view the state as a product of a broader diffused web of power relations (Foucault 2007; McNay 2013). As a result, the post-structuralist tradition motivates analyses to treat these power relations, instead of the state, as independent variables affecting political outcomes and the state (Foucault 1982; P. Miller and Rose 1990). A similar perspective is prominent in the pluralist tradition. Most ‘pluralists’ focus on the interests of political groups and how they affect the state rather than on how the state affects politics (Marinetto 2007; Vom Hau 2015; Watkins 1968). While it is difficult to categorize Migdal (2001) in one specific state tradition, his definition of the state reduces it to the different levels on which the state operates in society (15-16).²¹ The reduction of the state to societal variables results in overlooking the power of state variables

The neo-Weberian approach treats the state as a political actor that affects political outcomes. While it does not refute that non-state variables and broader power relations affect the state and politics, it does not reduce the state to variables that operate on the level of society. It enables, therefore, the examination of the interactions between the state and non-state actors and the political effects of these interactions.

The neo-Weberian approach is, thus, particularly adequate for examining how this identity component is related to regime-type. It does not detach state identity from other institutions that, together, form the state. While it is not without legitimate criticisms (Stepan 1978),²² the neo-Weberian perspective offers an abstract view of state identity that can apply to a wide range of states. At the same time, it does not predetermine or generalize a specific identity for all states. Moreover, its assumption about the importance of the state and its position vis-à-vis other political actors allows us to examine the interaction between political

²⁰ Not all reviews of state literature divide state theories in this manner (see for instance Vom Hau 2015).

²¹ Even though he talks about the ‘image of the state’, most of the analysis focuses on how the state operates in society.

²² In fact, this chapter illustrates how current conceptualizations of state identity in this tradition are problematic and suggests a new more adequate one.

actors and state identity. That way, this approach is more suitable than others to test the hypotheses of this dissertation.

2.2 Why do we need a new concept?

Giovanni Sartori (1970) warns against parochialism; that is, that a researcher ignores existing concepts and invents instead “an ad hoc, self-tailored terminology” (247). The purpose of this section is not to introduce an ad hoc new concept called *state identity*. The purpose is to illustrate the *need* for this new concept. The utility of the concept of state identity stems from the shortcomings of the existing conceptualizations of the state’s identity dimension in the literature. This section first discusses the existing concepts that try to capture the identity dimension of the state. It then shows the conceptual problems they create and the empirical pitfalls they generate.

2.2.1 The three existing concepts

Scholars admit the difficulty of defining the identity dimension of the state (Call 2010, 308; Gellner 1983, 5). Three concepts have been, however, employed to capture identity on the level of the state. The following groups together concepts that neither necessarily belong to a single coherent strand in the literature, nor developed for the same purpose. The common thread in each of the following is how they define and conceptualize the ‘collective element’ that is expressed by the state.

a) *Nation, national identity, or “nationness”*: These concepts do not come from the literature that defines the state. Nevertheless, they attempt to capture not any type of collective identity, but a collective identity that is expressed on the level of the (nation) *state*. National identity is considered the shared sense of belonging – a “state of mind” (Kohn 1946, 19) – that groups individuals under the jurisdiction of one state (Anderson 2006; Fukuyama 2014, 1335). Nation-states are those states in which the nation, this shared sense of belonging, preceded the creation of the state. In these cases, the boundaries of the state correspond with the cultural boundaries of the nation (Diamond and Plattner 1994, xii; Gellner 1983, 7; Kohn 1946, 17; Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011, 52).

Faced with the empirical reality of multi-national diverse states, some works differentiate between “nation-states” and “state-nations” (Rejai and Enloe 1969; Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011). In contrast to nation-states, state-nations have a heterogeneous and diverse population. The political societies of these states could also be divided along the lines of their

ascriptive diversity. Despite that, these states manage to gather the loyalty of their population usually via a process of political integration and participation (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a, 1204–5; Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011, 58).

b) *The boundaries of the political community (citizenship agreement)*: This conceptualization appears in some works that study regime transitions, and in some literature on state ‘fragility’.²³ Linz and Stepan (1996) define citizenship agreement as “the absence of profound disagreement about the boundaries of the political community” (16-17). Others have employed different terms, but the same conceptualization (Bratton and Chang 2006; Kraxberger 2007; Rustow 1970).²⁴ This view, thus, equates the identity of the state to the boundaries of the political community.

c) *The legitimacy of the state (the representation function)*: This conceptualization comes from the literature on state fragility. These works view the identity of the state to be its ability to generate legitimacy by representing its demos (Milliken and Krause 2002, 757). This representation is carried out via democratic institutions that allow citizens to decide the actions of the state (Call 2010; Fukuyama 2014; Grävingholt, Ziaja, and Kreibbaum 2015; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, and Nay 2014).

2.2.2 The shortcomings of existing concepts

These three conceptualizations either fail to capture the range of variations of the identity dimension of the state, or blur the line between the state and political regime. These two conceptual problems are detrimental because they dilute the usefulness and sharpness of a very central concept in the study of politics - the concept of the state. But what is more is that it leads empirical investigations that investigate the link between the state and the political regime to inconsistent results, and sometimes even tautological reasoning.

a) The conceptual shortcomings

The conceptualizations discussed above lead to two main problems:

The first is that the concepts of ‘nationness’ and ‘citizenship agreement’ do not capture instances in which ‘national identity’ is neither about ascriptive homogeneity (real or

²³ Some of the following could rather be seen as measurements and not concepts. I, nevertheless, treat their engagement with state identity as indicative of how they conceptualize it.

²⁴For a complete list of scholars who incorporated “citizenship agreement” in their definition of the state see (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a, 1206)

perceived), nor reflect the boundaries of the political community.²⁵ In chapters 5 and 6, I show how the identity of the state in Turkey and Tunisia was distinct from their homogenous populations and did not reflect the boundaries of their political communities. In addition, the following anecdotal examples illustrate how the state can reflect an ideational identity instead of the boundaries of the community.

In the U.S, the state reflects a set of principles that date back to the declaration of independence (1776); the U.S represents the values of “equality among men” and that the “pursuit of happiness” is a moral obligation (Huntington and Dunn 2004, 67). After it got rid of ethnic elements from its identity in mid of the 20th century, ideals of multiculturalism have also made their way into the set of ideals the U.S stands for (142). France also exemplifies cases in which ‘national identity’ reflects a set of ideals that were born out of the French revolution (Safran 1991; E. Weber 1976).

While the conceptualizations discussed in the last section account, to an extent, for cases in which states embody ‘a people’ or a community’s boundary, they do not account for cases in which the state embodies a (set of) principles and ideals. Existing concepts do not capture the essence of state identity in cases such as Turkey, Tunisia,²⁶ the U.S, or France. That way, they fail to capture the full range of variations in ‘national identities’.

Second, the conceptualizations proposed by ‘state nations’ and ‘state legitimacy’ conflate the state’s identity with the regime-type democracy. The ‘state nation’ is a concept that is particularly developed to capture instances of ‘nationness’ in diverse societies. Stepan et al. admit, however, that the ‘state nation’ is a term that describes “democratic states” that do not “result from existing or forged homogeneity” (Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011, 54). That way, the concept of ‘state nation’ does not include states that have diverse societies and are ruled by an authoritarian regime. To be sure, Stepan et al. argue that diverse ‘authoritarian states’²⁷ enforce homogeneity and, therefore, do not belong to the instances of ‘state nations’ (Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2011). Similarly, the ‘representation function’ of the state is

²⁵ In some cases, the state embodies an ascriptively homogenous population. In these cases, the state is an expression of the boundaries of this homogenous community. Examples of these cases include Portugal, Israel, and Armenia. In some other cases, the state reflects the boundaries of a heterogenous community. Examples of these cases include Belgium or Switzerland. I discuss these differences in section 3.

²⁶ Later chapters illustrate this in details in the two cases of Turkey (chapter 5) and Tunisia (chapter 6).

²⁷ In this chapter, ‘authoritarian states’ will be employed in quotations because authoritarianism and democracy regime types. Maintaining the conceptual clarity between the state and the political regime is important for any useful investigation between these two concepts.

a concept that defines the identity dimension of the state as democratic representation and legitimacy (Call 2010, 308; Grävingholt, Ziaja, and Kreibbaum 2015, 1291).

Another conflation between the state and the political regime exists also in the neighboring literature on *nationalism*. While it is important to note that this literature is not directly concerned with the state but with nationalism as a political ideology, it is still closely related to the state in so far as it indicates how individuals develop loyalty to the state (Gat 2013, 26; Smith 1991, vii). This literature differentiates between “ethnic” and “civic” versions of nationalism (260-264). While it disagrees with the differentiation between nation-states and state-nations (see Smith 1991, 59), it equates western national models with a civic democratic character. Civic nations ensure legal and political equality among their members (9; 11). Ethnic nations are, in contrast, populist in tone in which politicians justify any action by referring to the “will of the people” (11). Similar to the literature on state nations, this literature equates a specific form of national identity to a regime type.²⁸

The confusion between aspects of the political regime – in this case, democracy – and a dimension of the state leads to an inferential problem: It considers (diverse) states that are ruled dictatorially, inherently, and by definition, weak states. If the so-called ‘state nations’ can only mobilize loyalty and a sense of belonging from their population via democracy, it means that diverse authoritarian states fail to attract similar loyalty and belonging from their citizens. Said differently, the concept of ‘state-nation’ suggests that a heterogenous country is either democratic and enjoys loyalty from its citizens or authoritarian and lacks such loyalty. In the same manner, the literature on state fragility has largely treated states that are run by authoritarian regimes as ‘fragile’ on the legitimacy dimension because different groups are not *democratically* represented in these states (Call 2010; Carment, Prest, and Samy 2009, chap. 3; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011, 16).

A quick look at empirical evidence refutes that ‘authoritarian states’ have an inherently compromised state identity, or are illegitimate. It is hardly arguable that China, Russia, or Kazakhstan have ‘illegitimate’ states just because they lack democratic representation. At the same time, democratic representation does not necessarily result in a strong or uncontested state identity. The Weimar Republic suffered a clear rift regarding state identity despite a

²⁸ In section 3.1, I show how some state identities have elements that may be mistaken for democracy as a regime type even though they are not.

vibrant democracy and functioning representation.²⁹ In recent years, the U.S, a vibrant democracy, has witnessed serious contestation regarding its identity (Restad 2020).³⁰ Equating the identity dimension of the state with a specific regime type is, therefore, conceptually flawed.³¹

Moreover, while there are states that generate loyalty via democratic procedures,³² this does not equate the identity dimension of the state to democracy.³³ Generating support for the state via democratic mechanisms does not mean that state identity could be reduced to these mechanisms. Even in consociational settings, where states are known to attract loyalty from citizens via democratic procedures, the state embodies an identity that is separable from these procedures.³⁴

Another important evidence of the shortcoming of equating democracy with the state's identity is that this positive association between democracy and loyalty to the state in diverse societies is far from universal. Democracy did not secure enough loyalty to a united Ireland neither during the first half of the 20th century, nor during the 1990s. Democracy had also failed to secure enough loyalty from political groups for the former state of Czechoslovakia in 1993. At the same time, diverse states that are run by authoritarian regimes can secure loyalty from the population, despite the lack of democratic representation. For example, it is hardly arguable that current day Malaysia or pre-democratic Brazil and Indonesia did not enjoy loyalty from their populations. Even more, 'authoritarian states' can enjoy the loyalty of their populations whilst emphasizing heterogeneity. The state in Singapore does not represent or embody a homogenous population. Even though it gives the Malay population a special status (Constitution of the republic of Singapore 2021, pt. XIII 153(2)), the identity of the state emphasizes and takes pride in heterogeneity (Remaking Singapore committee 2004, 100).³⁵

²⁹ As evident in the Nazi's party program first published 1925 in which they promised to pursue a vision of 'ethnically pure' and anti-communist Germany (for a translation see Noakes and Pridham 1998).

³⁰ In both the U.S and the Weimar republic, the disagreement on the identity of the state has led to a weakening of democracy in the former and totalitarianism in the latter. This is telling of the relationship between state identity and regime-type. But it does *not* suggest that democracies are – *per definition* – legitimate states with strong identities and dictatorships weak with compromised identity.

³¹ The assumption here is that good concepts are those that precisely express empirical phenomena.

³² For instance, consociational democracies (Lijphart 1969).

³³ Section 3 discusses how state identity in these states differ from democracy. This section is dedicated to highlighting the shortcoming of this view.

³⁴ Boynton and Kwon (1978, 14) argue that "elite commitment to maintaining the national society" is one of the most important success factors to the elite accommodation in Consociational politics".

³⁵ The difficulty of reconciling the special status of the Malay population with the celebrated diversity of the population has forced the 'Singaporean' identity to rather reflect principles of pragmatism and self-renewal than a specific political community (Yang 2014, 410). Also, article 153A of the constitution recognizes diversity and protects it (Constitution of the republic of Singapore 2021, pt. XIII).

Diverse states are governed dictatorially can thus also enjoy the loyalty of the population, sometimes even without having to impose homogeneity.

Finally, some state identities can seem related to democracy in so far as they reflect or embody principles of equality, multiculturalism, liberty, or the like. This should not, however, be confused with democracy as a type of political regime.³⁶ Ideals like equality or liberty can be associated with democracy, but they do not constitute democracy as a *regime type*. The state can even embody these ideals in clearly authoritarian contexts. As discussed above, Singapore celebrates aspects that are commonly associated with democracy, such as multiculturalism and diversity, despite being authoritarian. State identity cannot, therefore, be reduced to a specific regime type, even in cases where the identity of the state interacts with principles that are commonly associated with democracy as a regime type.

The two shortcomings discussed above stem from existing conceptualizations of the state's identity. The conceptualizations of 'national identity' and 'citizenship agreement' conflate state identity with the boundaries of the community and homogeneity. This renders them inadequate in capturing state identities that neither stem from homogeneity, nor mirror the boundaries of the political community. The concepts of 'state nation' and 'representation' conflate aspects of the state with a type of political regime. In the flawed logic of those who equated state identity with democratic representation, all states that are ruled by authoritarian regimes are weak.³⁷ The concept of 'state nations' would similarly consider heterogeneous societies that are ruled by authoritarian regimes weak. These shortcomings have empirical consequences.

b) Empirical shortcomings in examining the relationship between identity, the state, and political regime:

Two strands of literature tested the relationship between collective identity,³⁸ the state, and regime type empirically. The conceptual flaws discussed above led to distorted empirical findings in both strands.

³⁶ A political regime is rather a set of rules, formal or informal, that govern the political process (Fishman 1990).

³⁷ It is hardly convincing to consider states with old and established traditions of "stateness", such as Russia or China, weak states.

³⁸ Here, I am referring strictly to works that examine *collective identity expressed on the level of the state*, or what the literature usually considered the 'nation'.

The first is the literature that examines the relationship between “social cohesion” and democracy.³⁹ The ‘social cohesion’ literature equates cohesion with ascriptive homogeneity (Almond, Powell, and Mundt 1996; Hardgrave Jr 1993; Rae and Taylor 1970; Steven Fish and Kroenig 2006). This leads it to arrive at contradictory empirical conclusions. Some scholars find a positive relation between social cohesion and democracy (Almond, Powell, and Mundt 1996; Gabriel A. Almond 1956). Others show that heterogeneity does not negatively affect democracy (Fearon and Laitin 1996, 2003; Hardgrave Jr 1993, 71–80; Reilly 2001, 168; Steven Fish and Kroenig 2006, 829).

The reason for this inconsistency is that homogeneity is not the defining element of cohesion and national unity. As discussed above, there are homogenous yet fragmented polities. In some cases, fragmentation regarding the national identity exists in ascriptively homogenous populations. At the same time, all consociational settings testify that there can be national unity in ascriptively fragmented societies.

The second, more recent, strand of literature empirically investigates the relationship between the different dimensions of the state and democracy (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014a; Fukuyama 2014, 2018; Hanson 2018; Mazzuca and Munck 2014). It suffers from a democracy bias in two ways. The first is tautological reasoning when examining the relationship between the state and political regime. As shown above, the representation function of the state is conceptualized as its ability to democratically represent its citizens. Building on this conceptualization, almost all data-sets that empirically measure the extent to which the state exists in different polities equate the identity dimension of the state with democracy.⁴⁰ Any investigation of the nature of the relationship between the identity component of the state and regime type following this literature would necessarily result in a tautology: Such an examination would be an examination of the relationship between democratic representation and regime type. Similarly, equating “state-nations” with democratic systems falls into the same problem. It leads to tautological reasoning if we examine the relationship between the identity of the state and any consociational democracy. In Belgium or

³⁹ Despite not explicitly discussing the nation or the state, the ‘social cohesion’ literature, examines the relationship between collective identity on the level of the nation and democracy.

⁴⁰ (Brooking n.d.; Country Indicators for Foreign Policy n.d.; Fundforpeace n.d.; German Development Institute n.d.).

Switzerland, for instance, we would be tautologically examining the link between the “state-nation” – i.e. democratic inclusion – and democracy.

In addition to tautology any attempt to examine, for instance, the relationship between the identity of the state and regime-type in Lebanon, in Singapore following the conceptualization of “state nations” would be misleading. Lebanon and Singapore are “state-nations” in that they have very diverse societies that are brought together under a state that does not attempt to homogenize the population. But unlike what the concept of “state-nations” hypothesizes, they are both run by authoritarian regimes.

The second way in which this democracy bias manifests is that all the literature discussed above examines the impact of the identity component of the state only on democracy. The literature that examines more broadly the relationship between the state and political regime focuses on the “state-democracy nexus” (Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning 2014). Some even take the research design as far as to consider the dependent variable to be either democracy, or in the lack of a strong cohesion, civil strife, and violence (Calhoun 2002, 20 and 72; Zuckerman 1975, 238).

Taken together, these empirical pitfalls are the result of the inadequate conceptualization of state identity. To better examine the long-suspected relationship between disagreement on collective identity, the state, and the type of political regime, a better conceptualization of state identity is needed. This conceptualization should capture the essence of this dimension of the state.

2.2.3 Three definitions that came too close but missed

Before I discuss this work’s conceptualization of state identity and show how it outperforms existing ones, it is worth presenting three conceptual endeavors that were of particular inspiration. The three conceptualizations that are discussed below alluded to, but did neither fully develop nor combine, two important aspects of state identity. **The first is that the state represents a *symbolic identity*.** This is a vastly overlooked element of Milliken and Krause’s functionalist conceptualization of the state (Milliken and Krause 2002). As shown above, functionalist “Weberians”⁴¹ approached this representation function of the state to strictly mean the representation of individuals or groups within a democratic system. This is perhaps

⁴¹ I mean here those who, influenced by the works of Max Weber, define the state as a tripartite structure (see section 1).

understandable since Milliken and Krause tie this symbolic identity back to “state subjects” (757).⁴² That, besides their lack of discussion regarding what representation of such symbolic identity entails, pushed Milliken and Krause’s conceptualization to the same misfits that were discussed in section 2.2. They did not illustrate whether the *representation function* can only be carried out by democratic representation,⁴³ and overlooked cases in which the state represents a symbolic (set of) idea(s).⁴⁴

The second is that the identity of the state could be constituted on ideas. In his recent work on the relationship between national identity and democracy, Francis Fukuyama (2018, 9) argues that national identity could stem from an ethnic sense of belonging but also a set of shared ideas.⁴⁵ Not only does Fukuyama not develop this conceptualization further, but⁴⁶ he also falls back into conflating the boundaries of the political community with state identity. Except for this one instance, Fukuyama focuses primarily on defining the boundaries of the political community (12- 13; 10-11; 7). The revert to equating national identity with the boundaries of the political community is clear in his conclusion. There, he states that “[d]emocracy means that people are sovereign, but if there is no way of delimiting who the people are, they cannot exercise democratic choice (15).

Interestingly, the conceptualization of state identity in the Bertelsmann Transformation Index’s data-set (BTI) incorporates both the ideational aspect of state identity and the boundaries of the political community. The BTI measures agreements (or lack thereof) on two elements. The first is whether relevant political actors agree on “citizenship”.⁴⁷ The second is whether they agree on the dominant/ official “conception” of the nation-state (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018b, 16). To the best of my knowledge, the BTI is the only data-set that incorporates the element of whether actors agree on what the state is about in its measurement of the identity

⁴² They argue that the state “represents the symbolic identity of state subjects” (757).

⁴³ While some literature has increasingly discussed non-democratic forms of representation (Brooker 2013, 106–8; Ezrow and Frantz 2011a, 55–65; Schlumberger 2010; von Soest and Grauvogel 2017), the term representation retains a democratic sense if used without qualification

⁴⁴ I discuss this in section 2.1

⁴⁵ Fukuyama states that “National identity begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of the country’s political system, whether or not that system is democratic. Identity can be embodied in formal laws and institutions that dictate, for example, which language or languages will be considered official ones, or what schools will teach children about their country’s past. But national identity also extends into the realm of culture and values. It consists of the stories that people tell about themselves: where they came from, what they celebrate, their shared historical memories, and their expectations about what it takes to become a genuine member of the community.” (8).

⁴⁶ The stated purpose of this article was not to develop the concept of national identity.

⁴⁷ As I will discuss, the BTI actually measures agreements/disagreements on the boundaries of the political community and not too much the democratic understanding of citizenship.

component of the state.⁴⁸ While the language of “citizenship” implies, per definition, a bias towards democracies, the extent of this bias is very minimal in the data.⁴⁹

The BTI does not, however, disaggregate the scores of these two elements for the countries it examines.⁵⁰ By failing to do so, the BTI’s conceptualization juxtaposes the boundaries of the political community with the identity of the state. This, besides producing then the problems discussed in section 2, prevents the data set from properly capturing some individual instances in which blunt disagreements exist on the identity of the state. As discussed above, some states do not personify the boundaries of the political community and rather, as will be explicated below, embody a set of principles or an ideational identity. In these cases, as the case studies in this dissertation will show, blunt disagreements on the identity of the state can exist without a parallel disagreement on the boundaries of the political community.⁵¹

These three conceptualizations of state identity offer some insight towards a more suitable conceptualization. But they all fall end up producing some or all of the problems discussed above. This is not surprising since Fukuyama’s work as well as that of Milliken and Krause fall under one or the other of the three existing conceptualizations that I discussed above (section 2.1). The BTI’s conceptualization is however a significant improvement over other data-sets that equate the identity dimension of the state with democratic representation. It nevertheless still juxtaposes the boundaries of the political community with the identity of the state and does not, thus, offer a superior conceptualization to the existing ones (even if a much superior operationalization).

2.3 The concept of state identity and how it solves the problem in current conceptualizations

This section introduces the concept of state identity. It then illustrates how it solves the problems that the existing conceptualizations generate. In doing so, it shows how the concept of state identity offers shows how it offers a superior framework of understanding the identity

⁴⁸ This is the main reason I test my hypotheses using the BTI (see chapter 4).

⁴⁹ Many autocracies in the BTI data score high on state identity.

⁵⁰ I have reached personally to some members of the board who confirmed that they do not disaggregate the raw scores of these two elements.

⁵¹ The next chapter explains how this does not affect the overall validity of the BTI data for the purpose of examining the relationship between state identity and regime-type.

component of the state, compared to the concepts of citizenship agreement, national identity, and representation.

2.3.1 What is state identity?

A defining characteristic of the modern state is that it symbolizes a specific identity. In functionalist terms, the state ‘represents’⁵² a symbolic identity. Sometimes this symbolic capital embodies some kind of “a people”- an ascriptively (ethnically, religiously, or linguistically) homogenous people. This is, for example, the case in Israel and Armenia; both draw on a symbolic identity of representing a specific people.

In other cases, identity – the character – of the state, mirrors some (set of) ideals.⁵³ In these cases, it does not symbolically draw on a specific ethnicity or a religious denomination. France exemplifies these states; it draws on the symbolic capital of the once-revolutionary ideas of a republic of Fraternity, Egalitarianism, and Liberty (Safran 1991).

Yet another variation of state identity is when the symbolic character of the state reflects not a single people, but a diverse population. But unlike what the “state nation” literature suggests, not all of these states are run democratically. Some diverse states are democratic; in these states, political actors may or may not be organized along the lines of this diversity. In the U.S and Switzerland, political actors are not divided along ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines, despite their diversity. In India, political actors are divided along their lines of diversity. Some other diverse states are authoritarian like Singapore.

In all of the above cases, state identity is distinct from the boundaries of the political community. Even in the cases where the character of the state reflects the boundaries of society, regardless of whether homogenous or diverse, its identity is distinct from the actual boundaries of its political community. In Armenia, for instance, the state identity embodies the symbolic community of all the ethnically Armenian people. The actual political community in Armenia does include, however, Yazidis and Russians who since 2017 enjoy mandatory representation in the Parliament. In Israel, state identity symbolically designates the political community of the Jewish people. But the actual boundaries of the political community include

⁵² As will be explicated below, this is not democratic representation.

⁵³ I do not use representation here in the sense of democratic representation.

non-Jewish Israelis; some of these individuals acquire some access to political positions such as in the parliament.⁵⁴

In states that draw their identity from symbolizing the boundaries of some political community, it is natural that a disagreement on who belongs to this community would likely result in a disagreement on state identity.⁵⁵ It is thus unsurprising that the existing literature conflates the boundaries of the political community with the identity of the state. This is because a disagreement on the political community can, in many cases, co-occur with a disagreement on the state. This is not because both state identity and the boundaries of the political community are the same things. It is rather because if a state symbolically represents a political community, disagreements on the political community make it more likely, though not necessary, that the symbolic representation of these boundaries become in turn troubled.

This does not, however, justify the conflation of these two analytically distinct concepts of state identity and the boundaries of the political community. This is especially the case since some empirical cases illustrate that the levels of tension surrounding these two entities – state identity and the boundaries of the community – do not always coalesce in states that symbolize a specific boundary of a community. In Lebanon, for instance, the level of disagreement on the boundaries of the political community is disproportionate to the disagreement on what the state symbolizes. Despite the troubling nature of Lebanon's state identity, the spirit of the national reconciliation agreement that brought more than two decades of civil war to an end in 1989 continues to serve as the symbolic capital of its state identity. The *Tai'f* agreement has since provided different warring factions in Lebanon with a state based on common existence among different sectarian divisions (Hudson 1997). But while this state identity that is centered around *Tai'f* continues to attract considerable loyalty,⁵⁶ the Lebanese political community remains more deeply divided into many political sub-communities (cf. Kingston 2013). A somewhat similar situation exists in China, where there is a relative degree of agreement on the identity of the state embodying progress and literacy (Fukuyama 2014, 1335), yet a more pronounced fragmentation regarding the political community (Dikötter 1996, 592).

The identity of the state remains *symbolic* in all cases. To follow the same examples above, Israel's identity draws on the idea of a national home for the Jewish people. It is,

⁵⁴ I use the example of access to the parliament here as evidence of belonging to the political community and not as indicative of democratic representation. This does also not imply that minorities in Israel have full access to citizenship.

⁵⁵ Section 4 details the operational concepts of this dissertation.

⁵⁶ This is evident by the sheer fact of the existence of Lebanon as a state.

however, unclear what does this “Jewish national home” exactly entails. On the level of politics and policies, different political groups in Israel have interpreted this in very different ways. Similarly, India’s state identity capitalizes on its multi-confessional character. The exact content of this symbolic identity remains however symbolic and has been historically pursued in very different manners. The symbolic character of the state’s claim on representation is one key characteristic of state identity.

Because of its symbolic nature, state identity is distinct from regime type.⁵⁷ All states, regardless of the type of political regime that runs them, are embodiments of some symbolic identity. In contrast to the literature that was discussed in section 2 above, the identity of the state is separable from democracy as a regime type and cannot be reduced to democratic representation. It is important to note, however, that democracy could surely serve as a mechanism that garners loyalty to the state from the population. Perhaps this is one reason the state fragility literature measures the legitimacy of the state by the extent to which democratic representation exists. But this does not justify the reduction of the identity dimension of the state to democratic legitimacy. This is particularly unreasonable because, as discussed above (section 2.2.1), democratic representation does not always garner support for the state, and authoritarianism does not necessarily result in a lack of loyalty to the state.

There are nevertheless rare cases in which the content of state identity is closely linked to some principles that are reminiscent of democracy. This should not be conflated with democracy as a regime type. Germany and the U.S.A exemplify these cases. After the Second World War and the destruction of the Third Reich, Germany’s identity has been delicately forged around its post-war constitution in what some called *Verfassungspatriotismus* (Constitutional patriotism) (Müller 2007, 2–3). The basic principles in this constitution are closely tied to elements of democratic liberal rule. In the U.S the second half of the 20th century reoriented American identity to represent individualism and multiculturalism. But because these are all elements that the state *symbolically* represents, they are symbolically linked to democracy but should not be conflated with democracy as a regime type.

State identity is thus *the symbolic marker of the state. It is distinct from any attribute of democracy or authoritarianism. State identity can symbolize the political community but is distinct from the actual boundaries of the community. The functional correspondence to this*

⁵⁷ This is the case even in cases where state identity symbolizes ideals that are associated with democracy.

identity dimension is the state's representation function, which operates outside the realm of representation as a characteristic of democratic regimes.

2.3.2 What does it solve

The above conceptualization of state identity offers advantages over the three existing conceptualizations of the nation, citizenship agreement, and representation. I formulate these advantages in relation to how they enable a better understanding of disagreements on the identity of the state and regime type:

- (1) *State identity as defined above allows us to capture disagreements on the identity of the state that do not stem from a disagreement on the boundaries of the community.* The concept of state identity does not equate the identity of the state to the boundaries of the political community. This allows it to capture tensions regarding the identity of the state even when the boundaries of the political community are not contested.
- (2) *It also allows us to understand “national identity” and disagreements thereon independent of homogeneity:* The concept of state identity differentiates homogeneity and diversity from the identity of the state. It allows us to capture identity disagreements on the state that occur in homogeneous communities.
- (3) *It maintains the conceptual boundaries between the state and the type of political regime.* All states represent a symbolic identity. This has nothing to do with representation on the regime-type level, such as democratic representation.

In other words, the concept of state identity enables us to capture the whole range of variation in which the identity of the state exists. This aid is more adequately identifying disagreements on that identity regardless of whether the polity is homogeneous or not and independent from regime type and the social boundaries of the community.

This, in turn, enables this dissertation to investigate the relationship between different configurations around state identity and regime type. It argues that dissent on state identity among relevant political actors produces exclusive and polarized political dynamics that are conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy.

2.4 Hypothesis and causal mechanisms

Despite its shortcomings, the literature discussed above deduces a very logical relationship between collective identity expressed at the level of the state and regime type. The common

denominator in these works is that disagreements on the identity of the state hinder democracy.⁵⁸ Here, I build on the causal arguments of this literature, despite disagreeing with their conceptualizations. I argue that *dissent on state identity among relevant political actors produces a zero-sum game in which actors pursue the exclusion of their opponents*.

This causal link comes from two separate strands in the literature. One strand is what became known as “transitology” (O’donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1986; P. Schmitter 2014). In this literature, the hypothesis that an agreement on the “nation” is necessary for democracy has remained largely theoretical and empirically unpursued. Since Rustow (1970, 350) argued that “national unity” is the “only background condition” for democracy, subsequent empirical investigations have abandoned this condition in their search for the *process* of transition and the choices political actors make during transitional processes (Bermeo 1997; Colomer 2000; Przeworski 1986; P. Schmitter 2014, 72; cf. Snyder 2000; Stepan 1997; Vanhanen 1990; White 1994).⁵⁹

A central question for the ‘transitology’ literature is when and why do political actors *decide* to manage their competition within the rules of democracy (Bermeo 1997, 305; Rustow 1970, 355).⁶⁰ Rustow’s point was that differences on the ‘nation’ are so fundamental that they prevent competing actors from making this choice to resort to democracy in managing their different interests. Unlike competing interests on economic and social issues, the conflict among “religious, national, and racial groups, instead, that has proved most tenacious and has caused recurrent bitterness...” (359).⁶¹ Disagreements on the nation produce “competitors in a zero-sum game” (Fukuyama 2018, 11). In a democracy, individuals will often have to compromise on issues for the greater good. This can only happen if they agree on a common ground governing their actions. An agreement on national identity, therefore, “make[s] possible liberal democracy itself” (ibid).

⁵⁸ One criticism I delivered to works that test this relationship empirically is that they are only interested in understanding democracy and not authoritarianism.

⁵⁹ Despite that, later works in ‘transitology’ continued to stress the importance of ‘national unity’ to democracy, yet without incorporating it as a variable in empirical analyses: Fukuyama (2018, 11) argue that “nationness”, or “national identity” make democracy possible. Thomas Carothers (2007, 24) disagrees that there are pre-conditions to democracy in a sequential sense, but he admits that the lack of “identity-based divisions” is one among the factors that are of “particular importance” to the likelihood of successful democratization (24).

⁶⁰ The agency of actors is a core pillar of the ‘transitology’ literature (P. Schmitter 2014, 72)

⁶¹ Earlier, Dahl (1966, 385–86) similarly argued that conflicts concerning sub-cultures within a polity are hard to solve within democratic procedures. More recently, Jack Snyder (2000, 20) made the same argument.

The second strand of literature links ‘social cohesion’ to democracy (i.a. Bartolini and Mair 2007; Deegan-Krause 2007; N. R. Miller 2003).⁶² This literature suggests a causal mechanism between social cohesion (or homogeneity) and democracy that is mediated by polarization and violent conflict.⁶³ Societies are divided along the lines of different cleavages and politics inherently produce winners and losers. However, in societies that have intense divisions, individuals likely belong to rigid political identifications that make them unlikely to find a common ground on any political issue (Deegan-Krause 2007, 256; N. R. Miller 2003, 134).⁶⁴ This context leads to polarization and violent conflict and has, therefore, a negative impact on democracy (Almond, Powell, and Mundt 1996; Bartolini and Mair 2007; Bingham 1982, 44–46; Calhoun 2002, 20 and 72; Gabriel A. Almond 1956; Rae and Taylor 1970, 1; Zuckerman 1975, 238).⁶⁵

In light of the discussions in previous sections, I add four important qualifications to this causal relationship: First, divisions on *state identity* create a zero-sum game and lead to exclusion. Homogeneity and agreement on the boundaries of the “nation” do not indicate agreement on state identity.⁶⁶ Second, these divisions need to involve *relevant* political actors. Third, division on state identity is not, simply, a variation on how political actors *view* the state; it is rather the pursuit of opposing state identities. This occurs when relevant political actors have opposing *claims* on state identity. I call this discord *dissent* on state identity.⁶⁷ Fourth, *exclusion* links dissent on state identity to regime type. The exclusion of relevant political actors leads to authoritarianism and hinders democracy.

Dissent on state identity is, thus, conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy. Opposing claims on state identity create a zero-sum exclusivist political game in which actors pursue the exclusion of their opponents from politics. In the context of this

⁶² But in contrast to the “transitology” literature, the literature that meddles on social cohesion tests this relationship between homogeneity and democracy empirically. As shown in section 2, these works arrive at contradictory conclusions regarding the effect of homogeneity on democracy. A similar observation regarding this literature is made by Haggard and Kaufman (2016, 131–32).

⁶³ Some, however argue that *only* polarization and *not* diversity that leads to violence (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 571; see also Horowitz 2000)

⁶⁴ Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 32) made a similar argument when they discussed the effect of cleavages on the party system.

⁶⁵ Scholars link this divisive context to a negative effect on democracy in different manners. Miller (N. R. Miller 2003, 134), for instance, shows how this context alienates actors from resorting to elections and rather motivates them to overthrow democracy if it exists. Others argue that that it leads to polarization and (violent) conflict, which, in turn, hurts the prospects of democracy (Steven Fish and Kroenig 2006, 829).

⁶⁶ As I argued in sections 2 and 3, the way the literature conceptualizes collective, or ‘national’, identity leads to inconsistent and tautological empirical results.

⁶⁷ The next section discusses these concepts.

fundamental disagreement – dissent on state identity – ordinary political disagreements turn into existential battles.

2.5 Conceptualization

Dissent is a strong disagreement that leads to discord. While political disagreements are a natural part of politics and do not necessarily lead to divisions, dissent is a particularly strong disagreement.⁶⁸ **Dissent on state identity** occurs when relevant political actors *claim* contradictory identities for the state. **Dissenting claims** are, thus, claims that are contradictory and are, therefore, in a state of strong opposition to one another. Dissent on state identity occurs when relevant political actors have opposing claims on state identity. These *Dissenting claims* are, thus, claims that are in a state of strong opposition. Different preferences regarding the interests or policies the state pursues, or regarding the specific variation of the state's existing identity *do not* constitute a dissent on state identity. Opposing, or dissenting, claims on state identity are those that seek contradictory symbolic identities for the state.

Claims comprise all types of action that a political group undertakes. These actions include statements that are issued to evoke a political effect. Examples of that include slogans during protest movements but also statements during electoral battles. Claims also include all forms of political action that could manifest in voting behavior or rallying behind specific legislation. However, claims on state identity are not individual disagreements or personal feelings of alienation from, or support for, the state. Individual feelings might inform the inner motivations of individuals, and in turn, political action. But *unless* they are translated to political action, they are neither considered claims, nor operational variables in this dissertation.

Relevant political actors are tricky to define or conceptualize, in a universal manner. In some contexts, political parties constitute relevant political groups. In other contexts, political parties are hardly relevant or do not even exist. Actors also vary in the degree of relevance. Some groups are more relevant than others. These varying degrees of relevance could be the products of different socio-political, demographic, and historical factors that will vary among cases. It is, therefore, necessary to establish the relevance of political actors on a

⁶⁸ The word dissent means “a strong difference of opinion on a particular subject, especially about an official suggestion or plan or a popular belief” (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.).

case basis.⁶⁹ Generally, relevant political actors are those that can halt the political process. This could be, for instance, because these actors constitute a sizeable portion of the population or hold access to key economic or political resources.

When relevant actors dissent on state identity, they pursue the exclusion of their opponents. While some forms of exclusion are natural to all politics even in democracies (see for instance Taylor 1998), **exclusion** here refers to *the annihilation of the opponents' (future) chance to compete for, or access, power, or excluding opponents from every aspect of the political process*. Dissent on state identity creates, therefore, an **exclusivist zero-sum political game** in which winners of political disagreements take all and annihilate the losers. In this context, political disagreements turn into **battles** in which the behavior of political actors is driven by their desire to exclude their opponents.

Through its effect on exclusion, dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy. This book understands **political regime** to be the formal and informal rules regulating who has access to political power and how this access is achieved; these rules also govern the relationship between those who are in power and those who are not (Fishman 1990, 428). Democracy and authoritarianism are, thus, sets of rules that govern the access and exercise of power. Modern democracy – or what Robert Dahl (1982, 1989) calls *polyarchy* (henceforth, democracy) – has 7 institutional criteria that set it apart from non-democratic regimes. Dahl argues that the institutions of *polyarchy* are the modern adaptations of democracy that existed only in the city-states of ancient Greece.⁷⁰ **Democracy** is defined by the following criteria (Dahl 1982, 10–11, 1989, 108–14):

- 1) *Elected officials* control government decisions; these officials are chosen via
 - 2) *Free and fair elections* which enjoy
 - 3) *Inclusive suffrage* that allows all adults to vote and grants them the
 - 4) *Right to run for office*.
 - 5) *Freedom of expression* is granted to all citizens without retribution or punishment.
- Citizens have the right to

⁶⁹ The strategy of determining relevant political groups in the empirical chapters is illustrated in the next chapter on methodology and operationalization.

⁷⁰ Dahl (1989, chap. 15) calls this the *Second Transformation* which brought bigger human organizations – the nation states – to be the units in which democracy – polyarchy – as a regime-type exists.

6) *Alternative information*, which is protected by law as well as the right to form

7) *Independent associations* such as political parties and interest groups to defend their interests.

Authoritarian regimes are those that fail to meet either of Dahl's 7 criteria. Juan Linz (1975, 264) provides, however, a more positive definition of authoritarianism. In his seminal work on totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, he argues that authoritarian regimes have (1) limited, non-responsible political pluralism, (2) absence of large-scale mobilization, and (3) an absence of a guiding ideology (Juan Linz 1975). Since the latter points differentiate authoritarianism from totalitarianism,⁷¹ limited pluralism is the criterion that distinguishes authoritarianism from democracy.

Exclusion is, therefore, a hallmark of authoritarianism. Pluralism is limited when important political actors are kept from meaningfully participating in the political process or when their chances for (future) access to power are annihilated. To be sure, Dahl (1982, 6) defines inclusion as a central element of the ideal of democracy. In his later work (Dahl 1989, 126–27), Dahl stressed inclusion as an integral element of democratic rule.

Regime-type is thus binary; political regimes are either democratic or authoritarian. This is not to deny the existence of meaningful variations within each regime type, nor to ignore that some cases manifest a combination of authoritarian and democratic elements – what some call “hybrid regimes” (Bogaards 2009; Diamond 2002; Wigell 2008a).⁷² But a regime remains authoritarian once it fails to meet either of Dahl's 7 criteria, or has limited pluralism,⁷³ even if they have elements that resemble a democracy. Variations *within* authoritarian regimes could be captured by a classification of authoritarian regimes, which does not only differentiate between these regimes in terms of where the locus of power occurs (Geddes 1999; Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius 2013), but also in terms of the gravity of authoritarianism (cf. Lai and Slater 2006). Similar variations in democratic regimes are better studied since the concepts of

⁷¹ We have argued elsewhere, however, that modern-day authoritarian regimes are increasingly exhibiting features that are in ways similar to totalitarian regimes (Schlumberger et al. forthcoming). This might complicate Linz's differentiation between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and may necessitate a reconsideration of new ways in which autocrats invite un-democratic “participation” and disseminate fragmented narratives that may look like ideologies.

⁷² Whether hybrid regimes constitute a regime type in their own right, distinguishable from authoritarianism and democracy is a matter of debate in the literature. Some argue that hybridity is a regime type (Wigell 2008b, 231); others argue that it marks a mid-point, a specific degree, on the autocracy-democracy continuum (Bogaards 2009, 411–12; for a complete discussion see Morlino 2009).

⁷³ Limited pluralism is, by definition, in violation of most of Dahl's criteria for democratic rule.

democratic consolidation and defective democracies came into mainstream political science research (Merkel 2004; Schedler 2001). The concept of “hybridity” as a regime type does not add analytical utility over the binary classification that allows for variations within regime types but keeps them analytically distinct. It fails to define a distinctive type of political regime and, instead, signals the mere difficulty of classifying some cases as democratic or authoritarian.

Nevertheless, the treatment of regime type as binary does not decisively demarcate an objective standardized measurement of the threshold beyond which a regime is democratic or authoritarian.⁷⁴ Dahl (1982, 11) argued that regimes “[c]ountries – [regimes] – can be classified according to the extent to which their political institutions approximate these [the democracy] criteria”. For that reason, he chose to call modern democracy ‘polyarchy’. Similarly, the exact extent to which a specific political order has limitations on pluralism to be considered authoritarian is open to subjective assessments. Considerations regarding thresholds are, thus, particularly relevant in studying regime transitions. The exact point in time in which a country becomes democratic or authoritarian is not straightforward in all cases.⁷⁵

2.6 Most important take-aways

The multi-fold arguments that this chapter made can be summarized in the following points:

- The neo-Weberian approach to the state is more adequate than others in conceptualizing state identity. It is particularly useful in linking the interaction between the state’s identity dimension and political actors to regime type.
- Existing conceptualizations of the state’s identity dimension do not capture the full range of its empirical variations and suffer from a democracy bias
- This leads empirical works that investigate the relationship between collective identity, the state, and regime type to arrive at contradictory and tautological findings.
- This chapter proposes a new conceptualization of state identity. State identity is the symbolic character that identifies the state. This character can symbolize a community, but can also symbolize a set of ideals. In all of its variations, state identity is immaterial and symbolic.

⁷⁴ The exact threshold of democracy – the extent to which a regime fulfills the criteria of democracy – constitute a matter of debate in the ‘transitology’ literature (Linz and Stepan 1996; Schedler 2001).

⁷⁵ See this debate in Turkey (chapter 5 section 2).

- The proposed concept of state identity thus captures the full range of variations of the state's identity. It enables a more accurate and consistent investigation of the relationship between the configurations of collective identity expressed on the level of the state and the type of political regime.
- When relevant political actors have opposing claims on the identity of the state, they pursue the exclusion of one another.
- Exclusion leads to authoritarianism and hinders democracy.
- Dissent on state identity is, therefore, conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy.

3. Methodology

This chapter is divided into four parts. Part I recaps the hypotheses and discusses the general methodological approach of this dissertation; it illustrates the merits of combining a large-N statistical analysis with a comparative small-N study. Part II discusses the methodological approach of the statistical large-N analysis. It is divided into three sections that describe the data used in the analysis, operationalization and measurement, and the method of analysis. Part III discusses the methodological approach of the small-n comparison. It is divided into four sections that discuss the cases and the logic of comparison, the time period under investigation, operationalization and the materials analyzed, and the method of analysis. Finally, Part IV summarizes the methodological approach in this dissertation.

3.1 Part I: The general methodological approach

3.1.1 Recap of the hypotheses and the way towards testing them:

The main argument in this dissertation is that the constellations of claims on state identity affect the type of political regime.⁷⁶ Dissent on the identity of the state is fundamental; it leads to exclusion and, therefore, to authoritarianism. That way, *Dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy*. This dissertation's conceptualization of state identity as symbolic is superior to existing ones in adequately capturing this hypothesized relationship (see chapter 2). Three hypotheses are thus at hand:⁷⁷

H1: dissent on state identity is positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy.

H2: The relationship of H1 is causal and mediated by the of state identity dissent on exclusion: Dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism *because* it creates an exclusivist polarized political game in which political actors seek to monopolize power and exclude their opponents. Dissent on state identity is thus deleterious for democracy.

⁷⁶ The complete argument is presented in chapter 2.

⁷⁷ Taken together, H1 and H2 constitute the overall causal argument that dissent on state identity is positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy

H3: State identity can be on an ideational content; it can occur in homogenous communities without disagreement on the community's boundaries: This identity of the state is symbolic and it is neither the boundaries of the community, nor homogeneity.

To test the general validity of H1 and H2 requires investigating these hypotheses in a large number of cases. To do that, I employ a large-N statistical analysis on the [B]ertelsmann [T]ransformation [I]ndex 2018 data.⁷⁸ This statistical analysis gives a general picture of whether H1 holds and to which extent. It also evaluates evidence of the causal pathway that is hypothesized in H2.

Yet to unravel whether dissent on state identity *causes* exclusion and *leads* to authoritarianism (H1 and H2) and *how* this relationship unfolds on the ground, I employ a small-N comparative analysis using process-tracing.⁷⁹ In this analysis, I investigate the role of this dissent on the authoritarian transition of Turkey, and on the transitional crisis and subsequent democratic transition in Tunisia.

The small-N comparative analysis tests the validity of H3. In both Tunisia and Turkey, the dissent on state identity emanated from irreconcilable claims on the ideational/ideological character that the state symbolically represents. Despite widespread agreement on the boundaries of the political community and citizenship, a stark dissent existed and clustered around whether the state presents an Islamic or a secular modern character.⁸⁰

3.1.2 Combining Large and small N analyses: A multi-method approach

The sheer use of multi-methods does not, in itself deepen our understanding of any political phenomenon. However, if employed purposefully, multi-method approaches can augment our understanding of many political phenomena (c.f Slater and Ziblatt 2013). To achieve this, the exact purpose and utility of employing multi-methods needs to be transparent and clear.

The combination of large-N and small-N methodological strategies is adequate and necessary for testing the multi-fold hypotheses of this dissertation. The large-N statistical analysis, while adequately examining the relationship between the independent variable of state identity and the dependent variable regime type mediated by the former's impact on

⁷⁸ The 2018 data was the most recent at the time of the analysis.

⁷⁹ As shown below, the statistical analysis in this dissertation is not longitudinal. It, therefore, cannot be used to test causality but can test indicators for the hypothesized causal mechanisms.

⁸⁰ That way, the small-N analysis illustrates that dissent on state identity is a conceptual category that does not necessarily need to reflect a disagreement on the boundaries of the political community.

exclusionary political dynamics, fails to examine two things: First, cross-sectional statistical data cannot establish causation, despite its ability to suggest causal relationships between predictors and the dependent variable. Causation is, by definition, a process that happens sequentially in time. While a longitudinal statistical analysis could remedy this inability of cross-sectional data to establish causation, it still fails to account for “complex causality” (Lim 2006, 22;25), and how causal processes unfold on the ground.

A small-N qualitative comparison fills this void. Despite the inability of small-N analyses to establish widely generalizable findings, they are well suited to uncover complex causal mechanisms. The methodological technique of process tracing is particularly suited to investigate how causal processes unfold on the ground and to unravel previously hidden variables that affect the dependent variable. Importantly, this complexity is needed to test, as hypothesized in H3, whether ideational dissent on the identity of the state can result in exclusion and authoritarianism.

3.2 Part II: The large-N analysis: data and operationalization.

3.2.1 The data:

This dissertation uses the data of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018 (henceforth BTI) to test the general validity of H1 and H2. The BTI “analyzes and evaluates the quality of democracy, a market economy and political management in [129] developing and transition countries” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a).⁸¹ It comprises 2 indices – “the status index”, and the “governance index”⁸². The main index that the statistical analysis relies on to test for H1 is the “status index”. The status index “ranks the countries according to their quality of democracy and market economy” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018b, 4). It is a continuous variable that can score anything between 0 and 10. The status index comprises two main variables; both are also continuous variables that can score between 0 and 10. The first is the “democracy status” variable and the second is the “market economy status” variable. The “democracy status” and “market status” variables consist of 5 and 7 sub-variables respectively as shown

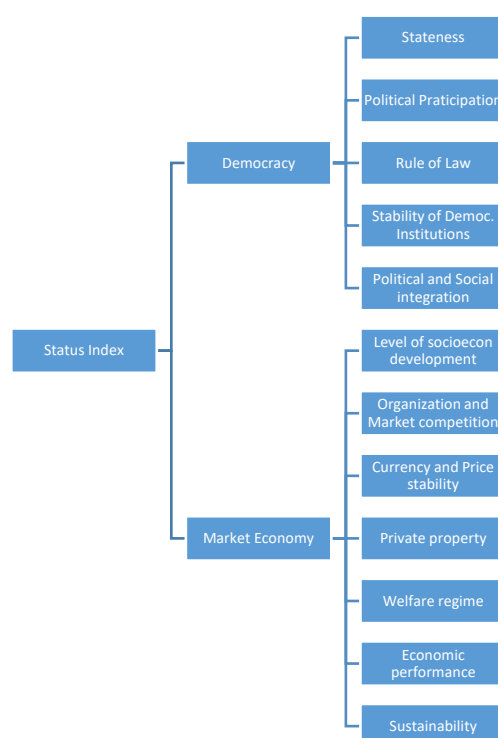
⁸¹ The website of the BTI’s methodology was updated in 2020 to state that the BTI covers 137 countries. But the 2018 data covered only 129 countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2020, 6)

⁸² In the BTI methodology it is called the governance index. In the codebook, it is referred to as “management”.

in figure A. Each of these sub-variables is also a continuous variable that can bear a score between 1 and 10. The sub-variables, such as “stateness” or “private property”, consist of four indicators each. These indicators are ordinal variables that approximate interval discrete variables; they can bear any score between 1 and 10. These scores have defined cutoff points and 1, 4, 7, and 10.

The score of each mother category comprises the arithmetic average of the sum of each of its sub-categories: The score of the “status index” is the average score of “democracy Status” and “Market Economy Status”. Each of the latter variables has a score that reflects the arithmetic average of the sum of its sub-variables.⁸³ Each of the sub-variables (e.g. “stateness”) reflects the average score of the sum of its indicators. The scores of these indicators are assigned by country experts and are checked for inter-coder consistency.⁸⁴

Figure A: The “Status Index”



The governance index “ranks the countries according to their leadership’s political management performance” and is also a scale variable that can take scores between 0 and 10 (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018b, 4). It comprises the 5 equally weighted variables “level of difficulty”, “steering capability”,

⁸³ The “Democracy Status” variable for each country is the average score of “Stateness”, “Political Participation”, “Rule of Law”, “Sustainable Democratic Institutions”, and “Political and Social Integration”. The “Market Economy Status” variable for each country is the average score of “Level of socioeconomic development”, “Organization and Market Competition”, “Currency and Price stability”, “Private property”, “Welfare regime”, “Economic performance”, and Sustainability”

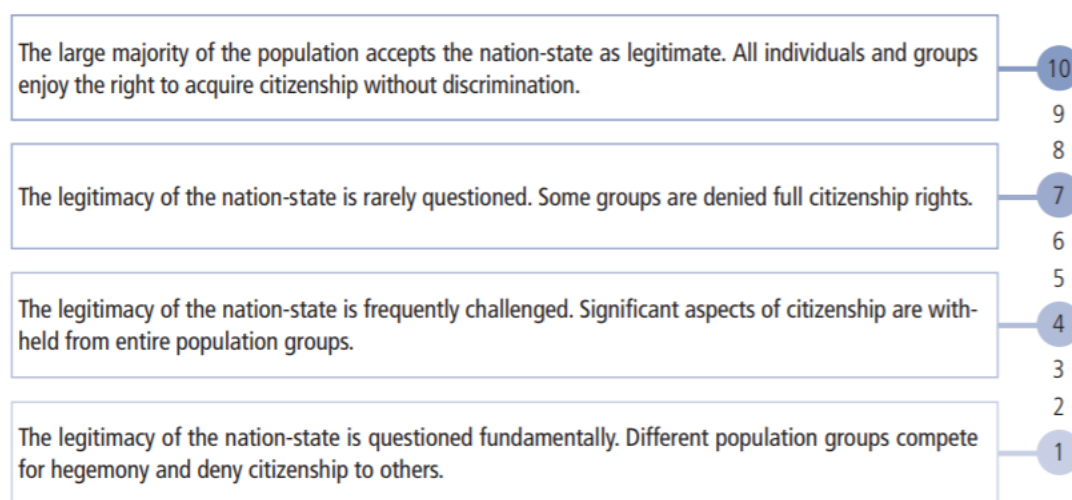
⁸⁴ A discussion of the full methodological considerations of the BTI are available on its website: <https://www.bti-project.org/en/home.html?&cb=00000>

“resource efficiency”, “consensus building”, and “international cooperation”. The score of the “governance index” for each country reflects the arithmetic average of the sum of these variables. Each of these variables is constituted by sub-variables and its score reflects the arithmetic average of the sum of these sub-variables.⁸⁵

3.2.2 Operationalization and the variables of the analysis

The independent variable: The variable “state identity” is one of four indicators of “stateness” in the BTI data.⁸⁶ It is the only indicator in available data sets that closely measure the extent to which there is an agreement/disagreement on the symbolic identity of the state.⁸⁷ The variable “state identity” measures the extent to which “all relevant groups in society agree about citizenship and accept the “nation-state as legitimate”. It particularly measures two things: (1) whether major groups in society accept and support the official/ dominant concept of the nation-state; (2) it assesses whether “access to citizenship and naturalization is denied to particular groups (on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender or for political reasons). Its defined cutoff scores are detailed in figure B (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 16).⁸⁸

Figure B: The variable “State identity”.



Despite its failure to disaggregate issues pertaining to citizenship from dissent on the symbolic identity of the state, the variable “state identity” in the BTI data remains a suitable operationalization

⁸⁵ In the analysis, I include only two of the sub-variables constituting “consensus building”.

⁸⁶ The variable “stateness” is constituted by 4 variables: “monopoly on the use of force”, “basic administration”, “interference of religious dogma”, and “state identity”.

⁸⁷ I will consistently use “State identity” to refer to the BTI variable and state identity to refer to the central concept of this dissertation.

⁸⁸

of whether political actors dissent on what this dissertation conceptualized as state identity:⁸⁹ In the BTI data, “state identity” does not disaggregate the scores between whether actors accept the concept of the state and citizenship. The variable, as shown below (figure B), aggregates both aspects in a single assigned score.⁹⁰ While this differs from this dissertation’s conceptualization of state identity that distinguishes it from citizenship agreement, it is very unlikely to lead to distorted results when testing the association between dissent on the state’s symbolic identity and regime type (H1):⁹¹ Because “state identity” focuses on disagreements between “major groups in society”, it is unlikely to capture a disagreement on citizenship that is not relevant for the state’s symbolic identity. As chapter 2 argued, dissent on state identity is very likely to occur in contexts where there are major tensions regarding who belongs to the community.⁹² Moreover, the BTI’s is the only dataset that operationalizes dissent on state identity in a way that allows a non-tautological examination of its relationship to regime type.⁹³ That way, despite its shortcomings (see chapter 2 section 2.3), the BTI variable “state identity” is well suited to test the association between dissent on state identity and regime type (H1).

While chapter 2 does not conceptualize dissent on state identity as a matter of degree, I do not introduce thresholds to the variable of state identity in the BTI data. The reason is that the introduction of any threshold would be arbitrary and result in a loss of meaningful variations among the 129 cases. Since the BTI data does not disaggregate its raw scores, introducing such a threshold would run the risk of either misclassifying cases, or underestimating (or overestimating) the existence of dissent on state identity. The second reason is that

The dependent variable(s): The main dependent variable is “democracy/autocracy”. It is consistent with my conceptualization of regime type in two ways. First, it treats regime type as a binary variable. Second, its operationalization of democracy closely approximates that of Dahl (1982, 10–11): The variable classifies cases that fulfill a minimum score in each of the following variables as democracies (coded 0): “free and fair elections”, the extent to which democratically elected representatives have the “effective power to govern”, “association/assembly rights”, “freedom of expression”, “separation of powers”, “civil rights”, and a minimum score of the average of “monopoly

⁸⁹ Chapter 2 section 3 conceptualizes state identity as the symbolic identity of the state that is separable from citizenship and homogeneity.

⁹⁰ I reached out for some members of the BTI board to inquire about whether any such disaggregated scores exist and they confirmed that they do not.

⁹¹ Even though it makes the variable “state identity” unable to test H3 – that dissent can be on the ideational content of the state’s symbolic identity. H3 is rather testes in the small-n comparative case-studies.

⁹² This is explicated in chapter 2 section 3.1

⁹³ As shown in chapter 2.2 (b), data-sets that measure stateness equate state identity with *democratic* representation. Using any of the measurements in these data-sets would lead to tautological examination between the state and regime type.

on the use of force” and “basic administration”.⁹⁴ All other countries are considered authoritarian (coded 1).⁹⁵ Figure C details these minimum scores (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2020, 3).

Figure C: BTI thresholds for democracy

Score	Variable	Threshold description
< 4 points	2.2 Effective power to govern	Democratically elected leaders de facto lack the power to govern.
< 4 points	2.3 Association/assembly rights	The freedom of association or assembly does not exist, or civil society organizations are suppressed.
< 4 points	2.4 Freedom of expression	Freedom of expression or media freedom does not exist, or severe restrictions are in place.
< 4 points	3.1 Separation of powers	Constitutional oversight of the executive, legislature or judiciary does not exist, or exists only on paper.
< 4 points	3.4 Civil rights	Civil rights are systematically violated.
< 3.0 points	1.1 Monopoly on the use of force and 1.4 Basic administration (average)	The state has no control over large parts of the country and fails to fulfill basic public functions.

A complementary indicator for regime-type is the continuous variable “democracy status”. All 129 countries in the BTI dataset receive a score for the variable “democracy status”, regardless of their regime type. In democracies, it “reflects the extent to which a democratic order is consolidated in terms of acceptance, interest representation and political culture”. In dictatorships, it “indicate[s] whether and how to assess political transformation under authoritarian conditions” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 5). Concretely, “democracy status” comprises 5 equally weighted variables: “stateness”,⁹⁶ “political participation”, “rule of law”, “stability of democratic institutions”,⁹⁷ and “political and social integration. That way, “democracy status” measures the extent to which the ground rules that are important for democracy exist in society (ibid).

To test whether dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious to democracy via its effect on exclusion (H2), the impact of “state identity” on 2 more variables is examined. The way the BTI data measures the following variables makes them good indicators for exclusion.

The first variable “cleavage/conflict management” measures the extent to which political leadership is able to depolarize structural conflicts, to prevent society from falling behind these cleavages, and to establish as broad a consensus as possible across the dividing line”. It defines

⁹⁴The BTI’s measurement of a minimal level of administration and monopoly on violence (stateness) is consistent with Dahl’s (1989, 106–7) “assumption of political order” that is central for his theory of democracy. While Dahl argues that democracy can characterize other associations than the state, he emphasizes that states “are, when judged according to the democratic ideal, the largest political units within which relatively democratized regimes will exist in the foreseeable future” (Dahl 1982, 4–5).

⁹⁵ The coding is done by the author. The dataset does not assign numerical codes to these variables; it only indicates whether a country is a democracy or an “autocracy”.

⁹⁶ This does not, however, lead to tautological testing when examining the impact of state identity on ‘democracy status’. The variable ‘state identity’ is one of five equally weighted variables that comprise the score of the variable “stateness”. Five other equally weighted variables besides “stateness” constitute the score of “democracy status”.

⁹⁷ The terminology of “stability of democratic institutions” in the BTI might be misleading to what the variable actually measures and implies that it senselessly measures institutions of democracy in dictatorships. This variable, however, measures “if democratic institutions exist” and if they do “to what extent they perform their functions effectively”. It explicitly states that “if “democratic” institutions are part of an authoritarian system”, coders should explain how they operate and mind “their potential for future democratization” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018b, 22). It also measures whether these institutions are accepted by relevant political actors.

cleavages as “significant and protracted divisions of society that are often, but not necessarily, reflected in the political party system”; they can emerge from “ethnic, class, regional or religious conflicts as well as those regarding national citizenship” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 42). This ability to address cleavages requires a fair degree of inclusion. In an exclusivist game, political actors capitalize on cleavages and divisions to rally support behind their exclusivist measures. That way, a successful cleavage and conflict management indicates a lack of exclusion whereas failure to address societal cleavages and the falling of society behind these cleavages suggests exclusion.

The second variable is “anti-democratic actors”. It measures the extent to which political actors “are able to overcome anti-democratic veto actors”. It defines anti-democratic actors as “political actors who can cause democratization to stall or fail and might include the military, influential economic actors or powerful opposition groups” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 41). In other words, the variable measures the dominance, power, and political influence of anti-democratic actors. The dominance of anti-democratic actors, as defined in the BTI, is a strong indicator of the existence of exclusionary dynamics. Anti-democratic actors are usually actors that work against the meaningful inclusion of all political forces in the political process. They use their veto powers, whether constitutional or not, to stall attempts at democratization and reform. This, in turn, means that they use their political influence to exclude and marginalize reforms and reformers. In that way, increased dominance of anti-democratic actors in a society signals a heightened exclusion while the ability of democratic actors to curb their power indicates more inclusion.

The **control variables**: The control variables in this analysis are purposefully chosen to serve two purposes. The first is the obvious reason to control for the effect of variables that are known to affect regime type. By including the control variables discussed below, the analysis ensures that the impact of the variable “state identity” on any of the dependent variables is not mediated by the effect of any of these known predictors on regime type. The second logic is a comparative one: I purposefully choose control variables that help contextualize the effect of state identity and put it in perspective.⁹⁸ Three control variables meet these criteria neatly:

“basic-administration”: This control variable helps compare the effect of state identity to that of another dimension of the state. The variable “basic administration” controls for another component/dimension of the state and its impact on the dependent variable(s). The variable “basic administration” measures “whether the basic functions of a state apparatus are fulfilled in terms of regulation, administration and implementation”. It also reflects the “operational reach” of these functions across the territory of a given state (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 17). There is a scholarly

⁹⁸ Note that some of the control variables are going to be omitted in some of the complementary models because including them would violate the assumptions that are necessary for the validity of the models. This will be detailed when discussing the results.

debate regarding whether a state's administrative capacity has a positive or a negative impact on the regime-type democracy (cf. Hanson 2018). In all cases, controlling for the state's administrative capacity in the BTI's 129 countries is necessary to both control for the effect of one possible predictor on regime-type and to compare the effect of state identity with another dimension of the state.⁹⁹

“market-based economy”: The analysis includes this variable to test the impact of state identity on regime type in comparison to a uniquely strong predictor of the dependent variable, and especially of regime type. The variable “market-based competition” assesses the macro and microeconomic indicators for the “level [to which] the fundamentals of market-based competition developed”. It also accounts for the size of the informal sector as well as various economic indicators (27).¹⁰⁰ Competition in the market is a strong statistical predictor for political competition and democracy.¹⁰¹ In fact, competition in the market is- per definition- related to democracy. It can exist only to a limited extent and in particular forms in authoritarian regimes. Full-fledged competition is, in contrast, a hallmark of democracy. Controlling for market competition allows the analysis to not only control for its impact on the dependent variables but to also contextualize the predictive power of “State identity” and compare it to that of market competition.

“output strength”: The analysis includes this control variable because it measures one of the most usually suspected factors – economic development – that affect regime-type. Lipset and others have continuously debated whether economic development leads to democracy (Berman 2007; 1959). Different scholars arrive at different results; the consensus is, however, that economic development is strongly associated with a democratic regime type. The variable measures quantitative indicators such as “GDP, GDP per capita, PPP, GDP growth, inflation, unemployment, foreign direct investment, current account balance, public debt, cash surplus or deficit, tax revenue, gross capital information” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 32).

3.2.3 The method of analysis

Two related statistical tests are employed in the analysis: binominal logistic and multivariate linear regressions:

Logistic regression tests the relationship between a range of independent variables (predictors) and one dichotomous dependent variable. I employ this statistical model to test the relationship between the

⁹⁹ Controlling for “basic administration” when testing the effect of “state identity” on regime type enables us to contrast the effect of these two dimensions of the state on the regime. More to the point, the control of basic administration scrutinizes the magnitude of state identity's effect on the regime type.

¹⁰⁰ These indicators are low importance of administrative pricing, currency convertibility, no significant entry and exit barriers in product and factor markets, freedom to launch and withdraw investments, and no discrimination based on ownership.

¹⁰¹ This is not to take sides in the debate on whether competition in the market *leads* to political competition or democracy. The statistical analysis in this book is not longitudinal and does not test sequential causality. Nevertheless, competition in the market remains a strong statistical predictor of the regime-type democracy.

predictors (independent and control variables) and the dependent variable regime type (“democracy/autocracy”). Logistic regression generates results in the form of the ratio of *odds*. The *odds* are the ratio between the probability of an event happening and not happening. The *odds ratio* is the ratio between the two odds: the odds of an event happening, and the odds of it not happening.

Multivariate linear regression tests the relationship between a continuous dependent variable and more than one continuous independent variables (predictors). I employ this statistical model to test the relationship between the predictors and the extent to which democratic dynamics and institutions exist (“democracy status”). I also employ it to test the relationship between the predictors and the indicators of the hypothesized causal pathways between state identity and regime-type discussed above. Since linear regression measures a linear relation, it generates the results in the form of the goodness of fit and a slope coefficient for each independent variable.

Both statistical modeling techniques require the data to meet some criteria. The violation of any of these criteria leads to distorted inference. Multivariate linear regression requires a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. It also necessitates that little or no collinearity exists between the independent variables. The regression model needs to have an equal variance of its residuals (homoscedasticity). Finally, the residuals need to be normally distributed. Unlike linear regression, logistic regression does not assume a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. It also does not require the residuals to be normally distributed. Logistic regression does, however, require the following three data specifications. First, it assumes a linear relationship between the independent variables and the log odds. Second, no collinearity should exist among the independent variables. Third, the errors should be independent (no autocorrelation).

The appendix at the end of this dissertation tests and discusses how the regression models developed in the next chapter meet these requirements. It also discusses the exclusion of some variables that were necessary for some models because their inclusion violated one or more of these assumptions

3.3 Part III: The comparative case studies

The large-N quantitative analysis establishes the general validity of the association between state identity dissent and regime type and provides some supporting evidence for the hypothesized causal mechanism. The comparative analysis of Turkey and Tunisia systematically tests causality and illustrates that dissent on state identity can occur in homogenous societies with little disagreement on who belongs to their communities. This comparison thus tests all three hypotheses of this dissertation.

3.3.1 The logic of case selection

(a) The cases

This work examines the authoritarian transition of Turkey and the democratic transition of Tunisia.¹⁰² Both countries and their transition processes share various similarities. The populations of both countries are relatively homogenous and have, with the exception of the ‘Kurdish question in Turkey, little disagreements on who belongs to the community. In both cases, a deeply rooted historical division existed on whether the state reflects an Islamist or a secularist character. In Turkey, the division between secular Kemalists and Islamists is as old as the establishment of the republic in 1923 (Çınar 2018, 180; Sakallioğlu 1998, 3). In Tunisia, the division between secular and Islamists has been the main fault line in its history (Perkins 2014, 11–12). This Islamist-secularist divide polarized the political process at various points. But more importantly, it constituted a very visible fault-line during the periods leading up to Turkey’s authoritarian transition in 2017 and Tunisia’s democratic transition in 2014. But despite this similar division and polarization, Turkey democratized while Turkey autocratized.

That way, the case selection enables this work to test H3: It can investigate whether this *ideational* identity division constitutes a dissent on state identity. The comparison of Turkey and Tunisia tests, therefore, tests whether opposing claims on state identity (dissent) lead to exclusion and authoritarianism (H1 and H2). It tests this relationship holds in homogenous cases and in time periods where the main fault-line is ideational and does not emanate from questions of who belongs to the community or on citizenship (H3). Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate how the Islamist-secularist division was an ideational dissent on state identity.

Despite this dissent on state identity, Tunisia successfully democratized. Tunisia is, therefore, deliberately chosen as a case that, at a first sight, severely challenges the arguments of this dissertation. Choosing a hard case helps avoid a confirmation bias where the researcher chooses cases that support the hypotheses and ignore cases that question them. It also helps avoid the problems of choosing on the dependent variable (see Geddes 1990) that occur when choosing outcomes that fit the predictions made by the research’s hypothesis. The Islamist-secularist tension in Tunisia was neither less prominent nor less divisive than in Turkey. Scholars and policymakers have highlighted the extent of division between Islamists and secularists during Tunisia’s transition.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Tunisia did not only democratize, but has also been the only success story – the “anomaly” (Masri 2017) –in the MENA region.

More importantly, I choose Tunisia as it is a case that severely challenges my hypotheses (H1 and H2). Unlike in Turkey where the dissent between the secular and Islamist forces accompanied an

¹⁰² The time periods of these transitions are discussed below

¹⁰³ Even though no work considers it a disagreement on the state. These works are discussed in chapter 7.

authoritarian transition, in Tunisia, a similar severe dissent on state identity accompanied a democratic transition. Why transitions? The period under investigation

(b) The time period

Why examine transitions?

Periods of regime transition offer an excellent context to test the relationship between claims on state identity and regime-type outcomes. These periods are generally characterized by turbulence and uncertainty. They bring to the surface latent fundamental disagreements between relevant political actors. That way, transitional periods are good suspects in which disagreements on the character of the state come to the surface of the political scene. More importantly, transitional periods are – per definition – succeeded by a change in the type of political regime. They offer, therefore, a unique possibility to investigate the importance of various factors to the outcome of transitions. Studying the transitional periods of Turkey and Tunisia allows the investigation of how the claims of relevant political actors on the identity of the state affect the newly evolving rules of the political game.

When does a transition start and end?

The literature highlighted the breakdown of authoritarian regimes as the starting point for transitions and the coming of new actor(s) to power as their concluding points (O'donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1986; P. Schmitter 2014). More recent literature has, however, argued that democracies can break down in a more incremental way (Bermeo 2016; Gerschewski 2021). This makes it easier to demarcate the period of regime transition in Tunisia than in Turkey. In Tunisia, it starts with the fall of a long-standing dictator in 2011. In the direct aftermath, the constitution is suspended and political forces elect a new legislative and constituent body to write a new constitution. The writing of a new constitution was the main task of Tunisia's transition and constituted, as chapter 6 illustrates, the main point of contention between political actors during the transition. Therefore, contrary to the literature on transitions, I consider the Tunisia's transition to have concluded when political actors agreed, after more than one year of intense conflict, on a constitutional draft that received a majority vote in January 2014.

In Turkey, it is harder to define a starting and ending point to the transition. The lack of a traditional transition in which political actors write the rules for a new political game after the collapse of an old regime renders any attempt to define a concrete starting point to Turkey's transitional period arbitrary. I highlight the controversy surrounding the nomination of Abdullah Gul to the post of the president in 2007 as the starting point of Turkey's transition and the 2017 constitutional amendments as its end-point. The 2007 controversy around the nomination of Abdullah Gul was the beginning of a visible and protracted struggle between the AKP and its secular opponents. Subsequently, secular actors attempted to prevent the AKP's candidate from running in elections and pursued the legal banning of

AKP from politics (see chapter 5). Over the succeeding years, the AKP orchestrated a series of political and constitutional reforms that gradually ended any meaningful pluralism and increased the AKP's domination over political power. This makes the period preceding the 2007 presidential elections a suitable starting point for the exclusivist politics that led to authoritarianism.

Chapter 6 argues that the 2017 constitutional amendments marked the conclusion of Turkey's transition because they institutionalized the new rules of an authoritarian political game. It concentrated the powers in the hand of the AKP-backed president Erdogan and ended any meaningful power contestation. Moreover, the amendments were carried in an atmosphere of political repression, retaliation, and lack of basic freedoms.¹⁰⁴ That way, the amendments were the formal institutional expression of an already dynamic authoritarian context. The 2017 constitution nullified any hope for a swift retreat towards democracy.

3.3.2 Operationalization and materials analyzed

a) Operationalization

This dissertation argues that relevant political actors seek to exclude each other from the political game when they have opposing claims on state identity— that is, on the symbolic character of the state (i.e. Dissent on state identity). It highlights that the symbolic character of the state is an analytical category distinct from the boundaries of the political community or agreement on citizenship. The state does not need to symbolically reflect the boundaries of the political community and can rather reflect an ideational character that the state represents.

Relevant political actors: As chapter 2 argued, the location of relevant political actors will vary from one context to another. This dissertation explores the contemporary history of each case to determine which political actors are relevant and determine the content of their claims on the identity of the state.

Dissent on state identity: To identify these claims, the chapters examine actors' publicly available verbal and written statements in which they claim a specific state identity. They also examine actors' attempts to change or maintain legal and constitutional clauses pertaining to state identity. A dissent on state identity occurs when relevant political actors have opposing claims regarding what the state embodies or represents.

Exclusion: is the attempt of an actor to prevent another from the (future) chance of accessing power. In both cases, I look at actors' attempts to change the law or the constitution in a way that

¹⁰⁴ I discuss the amendments, their context, and their authoritarian effect in chapter 5.

prevents other actors from a meaningful *chance* to access political power in the future, or from participation in the political process.

Regime type (democracy/authoritarianism): A regime is considered authoritarian or democratic depending on whether it systematically fulfills Dahl's institutional minimum of democratic rule (Dahl 1982). To be sure, I cross-check my evaluation with other academic evaluations and, in the case of Turkey, with regime classification scores from the Freedom House Index and the BTI.¹⁰⁵

b) The materials analyzed

In both cases, newspaper material (articles, T.V interviews... etc.) as primary sources and academic articles as secondary sources are analyzed to:

- Identify the main political battles that were fought during the transition in each case.
- Identify the main choke-points and crises during the transitions.
- Identify the constellation of alliances during the transition.
- Locate the official statements by relevant political actors.
- Identify the occurrence and evolution of exclusionary political dynamics.
- Identify the concrete steps towards a different regime type (constitutional amendments, changes in the status basic or political rights... etc.).

In Turkey, the transition is well documented in scholarly works and media and policymakers reports that are accessible in the English language. The main events of the transition and the incremental move towards authoritarianism (the alliances, the statements of political actors, the constitutional amendments, elections, and their results) received adequate international coverage. These, as well as the most prominent political battles that were fought, are documented in academic sources and accessible in primary media sources.

Therefore, I primarily rely on academic and media sources as analysis materials in the case of Turkey. Academic sources provide reliable accounts of the transition, including its alliances, battles, political statements, and the behavior of political actors. Media sources are used as primary sources that complement academic sources in documenting the events during the long years of Turkey's transition. They particularly provide insights into the main political events that unfolded during the period under examination. Together, these sources provide a detailed description of the main tenets of the dissent on state identity as well as the behavior of political actors.

In contrast, the nature of the transitional period in Tunisia was different from that of Turkey. From the moment Ben Ali left Tunisia, political actors were burdened with the main task of writing a

¹⁰⁵ I do that for the case of Turkey because its regime-type is a matter of controversy in some strands in the literature. In contrast, Tunisia's authoritarian character prior to 2014 and its democratic transition in 2014 are uncontested.

new constitution that defines the nature of the state, politics, and society in the post-Ben-Ali's republic. While the final version of the constitution that received a majority vote in January 2014 as well as major events in the transition received scholarly and media attention, the details behind the constitutional writing process and its drafts are poorly documented.¹⁰⁶ With that missing, scholarly and media sources do not adequately account for the process of transition that unfolded in Tunisia between 2011 and 2014.

Consequently, I rely on the transcriptions of the so-called “general discussions” sessions that took place in the Tunisian [N]ational [C]onstituent [A]ssembly – the main elected body that was tasked with drafting a new constitution. Despite the public availability of the official transcription of these sessions, they remain surprisingly outside the scope of analysis in all major academic works on the Tunisian transition. In all cases, the process of drafting the constitution was, however, convoluted. The NCA formed several internal committees that were responsible for the drafting. There is, however, no data of the discussions and negotiations that took place within these committees. The text that these committees produced was then discussed in the general sessions of the NCA. These sessions are publicly available and officially transcribed in the Arabic language.¹⁰⁷ The NCA transcripts reveal the issues that were the subject of disagreement following each constitutional draft; they also reveal the graveness of these disagreements and whether and how they halted the transition.

Media sources still offer crucial material in the case of Tunisia. They illuminate the issues that were prominently discussed throughout the transition and reveal the extent to which these issues were contentious. They are also helpful in tracing the constitutional drafting process when it, during some periods of the transition, took place solely within the internal NCA committees for which no official data exists. They also capture the views and statements of political actors during the transition, the battles they considered worth fighting, and their demands. This situates the constitutional struggles surrounding the identity of the state in their broader context and examines the interaction between these struggles and the broader battles that were fought during the transition.

In both cases, the materials analyzed provide the necessary documentation for tracing their transitional periods. Different materials are, however, analyzed in both cases due to the varying degrees to which their respective transitions are documented. To analyze the Tunisian process necessitates a deeper dive into primary sources that complement the international scholarly and media focus on its widely celebrated democratic outcome.

¹⁰⁶ As I discuss below much of these procedures do not exist in the online archives of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly.

¹⁰⁷ All translations into the English language are made by the author.

3.3.3 How is the material analyzed? The method of analysis

I analyze the transitional periods of Turkey and Tunisia by employing a variation of process-tracing techniques embedded in Bayesian logic (Bennett 2008). The very basic logic of Bayesian process-tracing is that the researcher enters the analysis with previously identified degrees of confidence in the hypotheses vis a vis alternative explanations. The researcher then increases her confidence in explanations the more they can predict the empirical evidence that she finds (Bennett 2008, 706). The general validity of this dissertation's hypotheses (H1 and H2) is established in chapter 4. I, therefore, enter the qualitative analysis with enough confidence in these hypotheses that places them on equal footing with alternative and competing explanations.

Chapters 5 and 6 test the hypotheses in both cases by locating important events or outcomes during the process and weighing the evidence that supports the explanations offered by the hypotheses vis a vis alternative explanations. I focus on illustrating what existing explanations fail to explain and systematically check whether existing evidence supports this dissertation's hypotheses. As Bennett puts it while discussing this technique of process tracing "the goal is to document whether the sequence of events or processes within the case fits those predicted by alternative explanations of the case" (705). That way, an explanation using process-tracing works by combining evidence that affirms the hypotheses at hand and those which refute alternative explanations (706-707).

But not all types of evidence are treated equally. In analyzing the transitional process in Turkey and Tunisia, I rely on a combination of the following types of evidence: Van Evera (1997, 31–32)¹⁰⁸ distinguishes between different kinds of evidence in the context of process tracing. Each kind contributes differently to the confidence level in any explanation over the other. Some evidence simultaneously increase confidence in one explanation while refuting, thus decreasing confidence in, alternative explanations. These are different from evidence which absence refutes an explanation, but its existence does not affirm it. These are for instance conditional variables without which an explanation cannot be possible, but their existence does not necessarily confirm that explanation.¹⁰⁹ Still, these are different from the evidence that strongly suggests an explanation but their absence does not reduce confidence in it. By systematically evaluating wide-ranging types of evidence, this dissertation weighs evidence that supports its hypotheses against those which support alternative explanations.

One serious potential pitfall of this variation of process tracing is the danger of not adequately considering alternative explanations. Doing so could lead to a serious confirmation bias (see p. Bennett

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Bennett and visited by the author for cross-checking.

¹⁰⁹ Bennett (2008, 706) discusses in detail Van Evera's example of this: "Was the accused in the state on the day of the murder?". If s/he was not, then s/he cannot be the murderer, but being in the state on the day of the murder does not greatly increase the likelihood of the suspect being the murderer.

2008, 713). To avoid this potential pitfall, I dedicate sections in each chapter to discuss alternative explanations even if they seem irrelevant at the first sight. Doing so minimizes the risk of falling into confirmation biases and helps locate the explanatory limits of the hypotheses at hand.

3.4 The methodological approach in a nutshell

The combination of a large-N statistical analysis and a small-N comparative analysis using process-tracing test the three hypotheses of this dissertation. The large-N established a generalizable validity of the relationship between state identity and regime type. The qualitative analysis tests for causality and illustrates that dissent on state identity could emanate from conflicting claims on the ideational content that the state represents.

I employ data from the BTI to statistically test for this relationship. I build the statistical models by running logistic and multivariate linear regressions. In these models, I test the relationship between the variable state identity, which closely resembles this dissertation's concept, and dependent variables of regime-type and exclusion while controlling for variables that are known to influence regime-type outcomes.

The qualitative analysis employs process tracing to compare the transitional periods of Turkey (2007-2017) and Tunisia (2011-2014). These cases are similar in many aspects but differ on the outcome of their transition. Tunisia is, moreover, a challenging case because, despite the dissent on state identity between secularists and Islamists, it managed to successfully democratize in 2014. By choosing these two cases, the analysis not only controls for the variables that are similar among both cases, but also purposefully picks a challenging case that acts against any confirmation bias.

4. The general validity of the argument

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1 presents a logistic regression analysis that tests the relationship between the independent variable ‘state identity’ and the dependent binary variable ‘democracy/autocracy’. Section 2 presents a multivariate regression model that tests the relationship between the independent variable ‘state identity’ and the continuous dependent variable “Democracy Status”. Section 3 presents several multivariate regression models to test the relationship between ‘state identity’ and 2 indicators of exclusion. The models include all the control variables unless the inclusion of any of these variables violates the validity of the analysis. In that case, the control variable that violates the assumptions of the statistical model is omitted from the analysis. A detailed discussion of these statistical decisions is in the appendix of this dissertation. Control variables are included to isolate the impact of state identity of the dependent variables and to contextualize its impact in relation to other predictors that influence each of the dependent variables.¹¹⁰ That way, Sections 1 and 2 test the general validity of H1 of this dissertation; section 3 tests various indicators of H2.

Model I confirms that dissent on state identity is associated with an increased likelihood of authoritarianism and that consensus thereon with an increased likelihood of democracy. It also shows that the magnitude of this effect is greater than the strength of the economy and comparable to that of competition in the market. Model II confirms H1 by showing a similar effect of ‘state identity’ on the status of institutions that are important for democracy (‘democracy status’). This points towards the relevance of ‘state identity’ for variations *within* each type of political regime as well as for regime type. The results of Models I and II are consistent with the hypothesized causal mechanism that the effect of ‘state identity’ on regime type is due to its effect on the likelihood of exclusion H2. Models III and V show that dissent in state identity is associated with a decrease in the ability to manage cleavages and an increase in the influence of anti-democratic actors. This suggests that dissent on state identity increases exclusion (H2).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ In this chapter prediction is employed in its statistical sense. It does not imply a sequence or causation.

¹¹¹ This is rather suggestive and does not directly or adequately test the effect of dissent on state identity on exclusion.

4.1 Model I: The impact of state identity on regime-type

The first model is a logistic regression model which tests the relationship between the variables ‘state identity’ and “Democracy/Autocracy”, controlling all the other variables. The logistic regression is carried out in two steps. Step 0 does not include the predictors in the model and includes a constant instead. Step 1 includes the independent variables in the regression equation. The findings below show confirm H1. They show that the score of ‘state identity’ predicts the type of political regime. Model I also show that ‘state identity’ outperforms the strength of economic indicators in predicting regime type and compares this effect with that of competition in the market.

4.1.1 The data without including the predictors

Without including the hypothesized predictors, the model in figure 1 can correctly predict 55 percent of the cases. In the BTI data-set, 45 percent of the cases are autocracies and 55 percent democracies. Before including the predictors, the statistical software takes its chances by assuming that all countries are democracies. That way, it is able to correctly predict the cases 55 percent of the time.

Figure D: Prediction table before including the variables in Model I

Classification Table^{a,b}

Observed			Predicted		Percentage Correct
			Democracy/Autocracy 0	1	
Step 0	Democracy/Autocracy	0	71	0	100.0
		1	58	0	.0
	Overall Percentage				55.0

a. Constant is included in the model.

b. The cut value is .500

The statistics in Figure 2 test whether excluding the predictors from the model (i.e.: from step 0) has a statistically significant effect on the ability of the regression model to correctly predict the outcome. In our model, including all the predictors increases the prediction power of the model.

Figure E: Removing any of the predictors has a significant impact on the prediction power of Model I

Variables not in the Equation			Score	df	Sig.
Step 0	Variables	Q11.1 Output strength	20.933	1	.000
		Q7.1 Market-based competition	34.626	1	.000
		Q1.2 State identity	21.282	1	.000
		Q1.4 Basic administration	18.229	1	.000
		Overall Statistics	42.710	4	.000

4.1.2 Including the variables

The statistics in figure 3 indicate the general validity of the model: After including the predictors, the model's ability to correctly predict whether a case is a democracy or an autocracy increase to an overall of 76 percent. It correctly predicts 81 percent of democracies and 69 percent of autocracies. This general increase in the model's power to correctly predict suggests that the independent and control variables are good predictors of the dependent variable. The Chi-square statistics test the hypothesis that including the predictors does not improve the model over the baseline model that included only a constant. They confirm that the predictors improve the model over its baseline ($p = .275$).

Figure F: Chi-Square and prediction table after including the predictors in Model I

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test				
Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.	
1	9.863	8	.275	

Classification Table ^a					
Observed			Predicted		Percentage Correct
			Democracy/Autocracy 0	1	
Step 1	Democracy/Autocracy	0	58	13	81.7
		1	18	40	69.0
	Overall Percentage				76.0

a. The cut value is .500

More importantly, the logistic regression coefficients shown in figure 4 indicate that all our predictors except "Output strength" have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable of

regime type ($p < 0.05$). The impact of each predictor on the dependent variable is expressed in terms of an *odds ratio* [Exp (B)]: The odds ratio is a numerical expression of the strength of association between two variables; it is calculated by dividing the *odds* of variable X occurring in the presence of variable Y divided by the odds of variable X occurring in the absence of variable Y. The *odds* are the probability of an event happening over the probability of it not happening. That way, an odds ratio of 1 means that the odds of event X happening is equal in the absence and presence of event Y. An odds ratio below 1 indicates a decreased odds of the event X happening, whereas a ratio above 1 indicates an increased odd thereof. In the BTI data, the probability of any given country to fall under the category of “autocracy” is 0.45 (45 percent). The odds of each country being authoritarian is thus 0.818 (0.45/0.55).

Figure G: Model I logistic regression coefficients

		Variables in the Equation						95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Q11.1 Output strength	-.133	.183	.528	1	.468	.876	.612	1.253
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	-.813	.221	13.575	1	.000	.443	.288	.683
	Q1.2 State identity	-.498	.168	8.766	1	.003	.608	.437	.845
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.396	.191	4.287	1	.038	1.485	1.021	2.161
	Constant	6.021	1.460	17.002	1	.000	412.108		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Q11.1 | Output strength, Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration.

The findings of the logistic regression in figure 4 support the relationship hypothesized in H1 of this dissertation: That dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarian rule and deleterious for democracy. More importantly, ‘state identity’ outperforms economic strength in predicting regime type. Even more, its effect on regime type is less than, but comparable to, that of competition in the market—an exceptionally strong predictor of regime type.¹¹² These findings confirm that an increased consensus on state identity increases the likelihood of democracy and an increased dissent of authoritarianism.

Holding all other predictors constant, a 1-point increase of the variable ‘state identity’ decreases the odds of a country to fall under the category of autocracies by a multiplicative factor of 0.608. A 1-point increase in the extent to which relevant groups agree on the identity of the state, i.e.: of the variable ‘state identity’, decreases the odds of any country falling under the category of authoritarianism from a baseline of 0.818 to 0.497 (the baseline odds multiplied by the factor 0.608).¹¹³

Putting this influence in terms of probability change, a 1-point increase in the score of the variable ‘state identity’ decreases the *probability* of any of the 129 cases from a baseline probability of

¹¹² As chapter 3 argued, the variable ‘market-based’ competition was intentionally employed as a control variable because it is, by definition, associated with regime type: Competition in the market is a hallmark of democracy.

¹¹³ The equation of converting probability to odds is $\text{probability} / (1 - \text{probability})$.

45 percent (odds = 0.818) to 33 percent (odds = 0.497).¹¹⁴ An additional 1-point increase in the score of ‘state identity’ decreases the probability of autocracy further from the already reduced 33 percent (odds = 0.492) to a mere 23 percent (odds = 0.299).

Expressed conversely, an increased dissent on state identity increases the chances of autocracy. Since our dependent variable is binary, a 1-point decrease of ‘state identity’ increases the odds of autocracy by a multiplicative factor of 1.645.¹¹⁵ This is the same as saying that a 1-point increase of ‘state identity’ increases the odds of democracy by the same multiplicative factor (1.645). Holding all other variables constant, a point decrease in the agreement on state identity increases the odds of autocracy from 0.818 to 1.346 (0.818×1.645). In other words, the likelihood that a case falls under the category of autocracies from a baseline of 45 percent (odds=0.818) to 57.3 percent (odds= 1.346). In the same way, a point increase of ‘state identity’ increases the odds of being a democracy from the baseline of 1.222 (55 percent) in the data-set to 2.010 (66.7 percent).

The findings of this logistic regression model point to the pivotal strength of ‘state identity’ in predicting regime type. ‘state identity’. Comparing the impact of ‘state identity’ with that of two strong predictors of regime type – economic performance and competition in the market – helps contextualize the importance of ‘state identity’ in comparison to these predictors. The variable ‘state identity’ has a bigger impact on regime type than economic performance (‘output strength’) does. Moreover, the strength of economic output, after disentangling it from competition in the market, is statistically insignificant in predicting regime type ($p=0.468$ compared to $p=0.003$ value of ‘state identity’).

All the more, the impact of ‘state identity’ on regime type is comparable to competition in the market (‘market-based competition’). In predicting authoritarianism, a point decrease in ‘market-based competition’ increases the probability of authoritarianism by only 7.5 percent more than a point decrease in ‘state identity’ does: The regression results in figure 4 show that 1-point increase of the variable ‘market-based competition’ decreases the country’s odds to be an autocracy by a multiplicative factor of 0.443. By inverting this factor, we can conclude that a 1-point decrease in the value of ‘market-based competition’ increases the odds of authoritarianism by a factor of 2.257 ($1/0.443$). Consequently, it increases the probability of authoritarianism from a baseline of 45 percent to 64.8 percent (odds= $0.818 \times 2.257 = 1.846$).

In predicting democracy, a point increase of the variable “market-based competition” increases the likelihood of democracy by 6-6 percent more than the increase that a point of state identity cause: A point increase in market competition increases the odds of democracy from a baseline of 1.222 to 2.758 ($1.222 \times \text{the factor } 2.257$). That way, it increases the probability of a country being democratic

¹¹⁴ The equation of converting odds to probability percentage is $[(\text{odds}/1+\text{odds}) \times 100]$.

¹¹⁵ Here, I inverted the odds ratio (1/odds ratio). The principle is that the ration x: y is 2:1 is the same as saying y:x is 1:2.

from a baseline of 55 percent to 73.3 percent, compared to 66.7 percent that results from a point increase of the variable ‘state identity’.

In addition, ‘state identity’ proved more potent than the administrative dimension of the state (‘basic administration’) in predicting regime type. compared to the influence of state identity, the influence of the state’s administrative capacity on the odds of authoritarianism is lower and statistically less significant ($p= 0.038$). It turns out that an increased administrative capacity is conducive to authoritarianism.¹¹⁶ A 1-point increase of the variable “basic administration” increases the odds of autocracy by 1.485. It increases the likelihood of authoritarianism from a baseline of 45 percent to 54.8 percent, compared to the 57.3 percent that a 1-point decrease of ‘state identity’ predicts. The probability that the effect of the state’s administrative capacity on regime-type is a matter of chance is higher ($p= 0.038$) than that of dissent on state identity ($p= 0.003$).

These findings confirm H1 of this dissertation: That a dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy. The data also illustrates that this hypothesis is generalizable as it is valid in 129 countries in the BTI.¹¹⁷ This general validity of the argument is particularly relevant because the effect that ‘state identity’ has on regime type outweighs that of economic performance in both magnitude and statistical significance. The comparable effects ‘state identity’ and ‘market-based competition’ have on regime type, substantiate the hypothesized relevance of ‘state identity’ for the type of political regime.

4.2 Model II: State identity and the status of democratic institutions

The second model is a multivariate linear regression model that tests the effect of the variable ‘state identity’ on the outcome variable ‘democracy status’,¹¹⁸ controlling for the same variables as in model I. To meet the assumptions (requirements) of linear regression, the variables ‘basic administration’ and ‘output strength’ were omitted from model II.¹¹⁹

Consistent with model I, the regression results of model II indicate that ‘state identity’ is a strong predictor of the extent to which institutions that are important for democracy exist and are

¹¹⁶ This finding confirms the literature that associates the state’s administrative capacity to authoritarianism (ia. Hanson 2018).

¹¹⁷ Chapter 7 discusses the limitations of these findings as well as the generalizability of all the findings.

¹¹⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, the variable ‘democracy status’ is a complementary dependent variable that helps assess the impact of the variable ‘state identity’ on regime-type. It does not measure regime-type per se but rather assesses the extent to which “the ground rules of democracy are both established and accepted within society”. In authoritarian regimes, it “indicate[s] whether and how to assess political transformation under authoritarian conditions” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 5).

¹¹⁹ Both the assumptions of linear OLS regression and the details of how the original data violated them are discussed in the appendix of this dissertation.

functioning in the 129 countries. Also, the magnitude and statistical relevance of ‘state identity’ are comparable to those of ‘market-based competition’ on the dependent variable. This supplements model I in confirming the general validity of H1. It also points towards the relevance of ‘state identity’ for variations *within* each type of political regime. Finally, the findings of model II are consistent with H2: That state identity’s impact on regime type is mediated by its effect on exclusion.

The general model statistics in figure 5 confirm its general validity. The model summary statistics show that the model explains 64.2 percent of the variation on the dependent variable. The F value in the ANOVA table shows that the model is statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable ($p = 0.000$).¹²⁰

Figure H: Model II general statistics and regression coefficients

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.805 ^a	.648	.642	1.240634817	1.983

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q1.2 | State identity

b. Dependent Variable: SI | Democracy Status

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	357.063	2	178.532	115.992	.000 ^b
	Residual	193.936	126	1.539		
	Total	550.999	128			

a. Dependent Variable: SI | Democracy Status

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q1.2 | State identity

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.377	.482		-.783	.435	-1.331	.576		
	Q1.2 State identity	.380	.069	.330	5.503	.000	.243	.516	.778	1.285
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	.572	.058	.595	9.935	.000	.458	.686	.778	1.285

a. Dependent Variable: SI | Democracy Status

The regression analysis coefficients in figure 5 confirm show that the state identity and competition in the market have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable ($p = 0.000$). Holding all other variables constant, a 1-point increase of ‘state identity’ induces an average increase of 0.380 points change of the variable ‘democracy status’. Comparably, a point increase of ‘market-based induces an average increase of 0.572 points increase of ‘democracy status’ – only 0.192 average points more than the influence of ‘state identity’.¹²¹

¹²⁰ The F value is the ration between the variance explained by the model over that which is not explained by the model. The model is considered explanatory when the F value is statistically significant and has a value greater than 1.

¹²¹ The overlapping confidence intervals mean that the difference in the magnitude of the effect on the dependent variable might even be smaller between ‘state identity’ and ‘market-based competition’.

The results in model II indicate two important things. First, they substantiate the validity and generalizability of H1, which were already established in model I. Second, the results show that ‘state identity’ does not only predict variations in the *type* of political regime, but also variations *within* each type of political regime. In both democracies and dictatorships, a dissent on state identity affects the political regime: In democracies, it is associated with the weakening performance of democratic institutions. In dictatorships, it increases the likelihood that institutions that would be important for democracy are missing or malfunctioning.¹²²

This suggests that ‘state identity’ is also a relevant variable in the study of the factors that impact the quality of democracy in democracies and readiness for democracy in dictatorships. The relevance of state identity for a multitude of variables pertaining to the (type of) political regime is consistent with H2: If dissent on state identity leads to exclusion, then it is expected to negatively impact various important elements for democracy. The results presented in model II are consistent with these expectations.

4.3 Dissent on state identity and exclusion: Two supporting models

This section tests the impact of state identity dissent on exclusionary dynamics between political actors by running a multivariate regression analysis with the same predictors on three dependent variables: “conflict management” and “anti-democratic actors”.¹²³ Testing the impact of the variable ‘state identity’ on these variables provides preliminary results on the validity of H2.¹²⁴ The results of models III and V below show that dissent on state identity is associated with an increase in the influence of anti-democratic actors and the inability to manage political cleavages. Both of these things suggest an increase in the level of exclusion in a polity

4.3.1 State identity and cleavage management (Model III)

figure 6 shows the relationship between dissent on state identity and the ability of the political system to manage cleavages and potential conflict. The variable “cleavage/conflict management” measures “the extent to which the political leadership is able to depolarize structural conflicts [in order to] prevent society from falling apart along [existing] cleavages” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 42). Similar to the other models, it controls for basic administration and the strength of economic output. The variable

¹²² Democratic institutions are not to be confused with institutions that are important for democracy. Democratic institutions are institutions that function democratically and exist in democracies. Institutions that are important for democracy, such as parliaments or associations exist in all regime types.

¹²³ As discussed in the previous chapter, the score of each of these variables, as measured in the BTI data, is affected by whether exclusionary dynamics exist.

¹²⁴ That dissent on state identity affects regime-type by inducing exclusionary dynamics between political actors.

market-based competition has been removed because its inclusion violates the assumption of linearity between the predictors and the dependent variable, which is necessary for the validity of the statistics.¹²⁵

Figure I: Model III multivariate linear regression on the DV “cleavage/conflict management”

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.764 ^a	.584	.574	1.344	1.880

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q11.1 | Output strength, Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration

b. Dependent Variable: Q16.3 | Cleavage / conflict management

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	317.093	3	105.698	58.475	.000 ^b
	Residual	225.945	125	1.808		
	Total	543.039	128			

a. Dependent Variable: Q16.3 | Cleavage / conflict management

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q11.1 | Output strength, Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-1.337	.542		-2.468	.015	-2.410	-.265		
	Q1.2 State identity	.444	.080	.388	5.527	.000	.285	.603	.675	1.481
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.091	.084	.100	1.085	.280	-.075	.257	.393	2.542
	Q11.1 Output strength	.447	.091	.417	4.921	.000	.267	.627	.464	2.155

a. Dependent Variable: Q16.3 | Cleavage / conflict management

The regression analysis shows that both an increased consensus on state identity and a better economic output have a similar positive impact on the management of cleavages and conflict ($p=0.000$). A point increase of ‘state identity’ and “output strength” induces an average of 0.444 and 0.447 increase in the value of the dependent variable, respectively. In addition, the general model statistics confirm its general validity. The R-square indicates that the model explains 57.4 of the variation on the dependent variable.

4.3.2 State identity and anti-democratic actors (Model V)

Figure 7 shows the effect of state-identity dissent on the inability of democratic actors to curb the political powers of anti-democratic actors. The variable “anti-democratic actors” measures the extent to which reformers can “exclude or co-opt anti-democratic actors”. These actors are defined in the BTI to be those “who can cause democratization to stall or fail and might include the military, influential economic actors or powerful political groups” (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018a, 41). The model controls for “basic administration” and “market-based competition”. The control variable “output strength” is removed because it is not linearly related to the dependent variable, which violates the assumptions for valid regression analysis.

¹²⁵ The tests confirming the violation of the variable “market-based competition” of the linearity assumption are presented in the appendix.

Figure J: Model IV multivariate linear regression on the DV "anti-democratic actors"

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.682 ^a	.465	.452	2.112	2.028

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration

b. Dependent Variable: Q16.2 | Anti-democratic actors

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	484.634	3	161.545	36.225	.000 ^b
	Residual	557.428	125	4.459		
	Total	1042.062	128			

a. Dependent Variable: Q16.2 | Anti-democratic actors

b. Predictors: (Constant), Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.994	.821		-1.211	.228	-2.620	.631		
	Q1.2 State identity	.478	.126	.302	3.797	.000	.229	.727	.677	1.476
	Q1.4 Basic administration	-.421	.154	-.333	-2.728	.007	-.726	-.115	.287	3.489
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	1.002	.151	.759	6.654	.000	.704	1.300	.329	3.038

a. Dependent Variable: Q16.2 | Anti-democratic actors

The model can predict 45.2 percent of the overall variation on the dependent variable. This is not surprising since many omitted historical factors contribute to the existence of anti-democratic actors. The model is generally valid though as all variables have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable “anti-democratic actors” ($p < 0.05$).

The analysis shows that an increase in the agreement on state identity causes an average of 0.478 increase in the value of ‘anti-democratic actors’: It signals an increased ability of political actors to curb the power and influence of anti-democratic actors ($p = 0.000$). The state’s administrative capacity harms the ability of political actors to curtail the powers of undemocratic actors. In other words, while dissent on state identity decreases the ability to curb anti-democratic actors by 0.478 points, a decreased administrative capacity increases this ability by 0.421.

The failure to exclude or co-opt antidemocratic actors suggests that these actors have an increased influence on the political process. These actors usually comprise institutions or economic elites that exclude other actors from (some parts) of the political decision-making.¹²⁶ The negative relationship between the variables ‘state identity’ and ‘anti-democratic’ actors is, therefore, indicative of an increase in the level of exclusion.

¹²⁶ These actors are anti-democratic because they exclude. Otherwise, they would just be powerful actors and not anti-democratic actors.

The magnitude of the effect of state identity on the dependent variable is around half that of competition in the market. Increased competition in the market is naturally a strong predictor of the decreased power of anti-democratic actors. These actors are in many cases against not only political competition but also economic competition. It is also hardly imaginable that anti-democratic actors dominate a context in which free-market competition exists. Seen comparatively, a 1-point decrease of “market-based competition” predicts a 1-point decrease in the political power of anti-democratic actors, compared to the average of 0.421 points decrease that a 1-point decrease of ‘state identity’ brings.

4.4 Conclusion

This large-N statistical analysis on 129 countries shows that dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism (H1). It also shows that, in all regime types, such dissent is detrimental for the institutions and the dynamics that are important for democracy. In addition, section 3 provides evidence that dissent on state identity is a strong predictor of exclusionary dynamics (H2).

Model I confirms the general validity of the hypothesized relationship between dissent on state identity and the type of political regime. Model II does not only confirm these findings, but also illustrates that dissent on state identity is relevant for variations within one regime type. Models III and V suggest that dissent on state identity increases exclusion and support, therefore, the hypothesized effect of dissent on state identity on exclusion.

The analysis in this chapter does not however test three important things: (1) It does not sufficiently test how dissent on state identity leads to exclusion. While it tests the relationship between state identity and various indicators that support such a hypothesis (H2), it does not show that dissent on state identity *cause* exclusion. (2) The analysis does not provide longitudinal evidence to confirm the causal relationship between dissent on state identity and authoritarianism. It is rather a cross-sectional analysis that takes a point in time and tests the extent to which dissent on state identity predicts the dependent variables above. That way, it only provides a strong indication of causality but does not test it. (3) It also does not test whether dissent on state identity could emanate from irreconcilable claims (dissent) on the ideational/ideological character of the state (H3). The variable ‘state identity’ measures both the dissent that emanates from disagreement on the boundaries of the political community as well as disagreements on the conception of the nation-state. It does not disaggregate these scores.

The next two chapters address these issues.

5. Turkey

This chapter shows how the dissent on state identity influenced Turkey's transition to authoritarianism between 2007 and 2017 by focusing on two things. First, it explains why Turkey's political actors pursued the exclusion of one another after the initial democratic gains of the preceding period (2002-2007). Second, it illustrates how the perspective that focuses on state identity dissent identifies and locates the main political disagreements of the transition and how they unfolded (henceforth, the battles of transition), the alliances that were formed during these battles, and the pivotal points and concrete events in Turkey's autocratization (henceforth, critical junctures).¹²⁷

Section 1 details the subject of state identity dissent in Turkey and outlines its relevant political actors. Section 2 argues that Turkey had indeed witnessed an authoritarian transition and contests works that argue otherwise. Section 3 shows that the existing literature fails to explain why Turkey witnessed this transition and insufficiently accounts for important features of Turkey's transition. Section 4 discusses the emergence of dissent on state identity that sparked exclusion. Section 5 argues that dissent on state identity explains *why* actors pursued excluding one another and account for important aspects of *how* Turkey's transition unfolded.

5.1 What is the dissent about and who are the relevant actors?

While it is not the only identity fault-line in Turkey, the Islamist-secularist divide in Turkey has been the main divide driving the dissent on state identity in Turkey since the mid-1990s and until 2017 (Aydın-Düzgit 2019, 25; Çınar 2018, 180; Sakallioğlu 1998, 3). The struggle around the status and position of Turkey's Kurdish population, while important, has hardly influenced the disagreement on state identity at least since the Welfare party's electoral victory in 1996. The Welfare was not the first Islamist party to secure a formal position in Turkey's political scene and question the Kemalist view of Turkey's identity. But it was the first to secure a substantial electoral victory to challenge Kemalism in 1996 (Yavuz 1997). As a response, the constitutional court and the Turkish military respectively, two strongholds and defenders of Kemalism, banned the Welfare party from political life and suspended politics in the spirit of guarding the Kemalist secular identity of the state (Çınar 2018, 180).

¹²⁷ Critical junctures are important steps that were taken during Turkey's transition. Critical junctures are times where deep change takes place. It is a term that distinguishes "normal" from "intense" times.

During its first term in power, the AK party learned from the failures of its predecessors and successfully dodged the wrath of Kemalist state institutions, and led Turkey to a full democratic experiment. Despite harboring explicitly Islamist politicians and former members of the Welfare Party, including Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in its ranks (Özkan 2015, 72; Tepe 2005, 69), the AKP was careful to distance its politics from Islamism and to officially endorse the secular character of Turkey (Çınar 2008, 111,113). This, in addition to its outstanding economic performance that extracted Turkey from deep economic recession (Çarkoğlu 2012, 514), enabled the AKP to transform the Turkish political landscape. It attracted support from different societal groups, transcended the Islamist-secular divide,¹²⁸ and successfully negotiated the necessary democratic reforms that would bring Turkey closer to EU membership (Başkan 2015, 38–39; Çınar 2018, 177).

During the period under investigation (2007-2017), the relevant political actors in Turkey have been political parties,¹²⁹ particularly the AKP and its opponent the CHP, as well as secular state institutions. When the dissent on state identity resurfaced in 2007, the AKP had already managed to become the most relevant political actor representing Islamists. It not only secured an electoral majority in the national assembly and a sizeable victory in local elections but also convinced the Gülen movement of the necessity to follow the AKP's leadership. They agreed to utilize the AKP's electoral presence to exclude their secularist opponents from politics and the Gülen's presence in secular state institutions to bring them under control. These attempts were opposed by the traditional Kemalist actors in state institutions led by the military and the judiciary and in the political society led in many instances by the strongest Kemalist party, the CH party.

The reintroduction of multi-party politics in the mid-1940s paved the way for the channelling of some ideas that do not strictly adhere to Atatürk's legacy to the political scene. Realizing the societal appeal of Islam as an identity marker, the ruling RPP "adopt[ed] a liberal attitude towards Islam" (Ahmad 1988, 756). In the early 1950s, the Democratic Party unseated the long-ruling RPP from power. But when they failed to secure an electoral majority in the 1957 elections, it appealed to Islamic rhetoric to seduce a wider electoral base. In the decades

¹²⁸ Başkan (2015) and Çınar (2018) allude to the fact that the AKP was relatively successful in attracting voters outside of the traditional Islamist camp during its first term in power.

¹²⁹ This has been the case since the introduction of multi-party politics in the 1940s. One can however argue that some periods of Turkish history witnessed the resurgence of many non-party relevant movements. What is important here is that political parties have been the main political actors in Turkish politics *during* the period under investigation.

between 1960 and the end of the Cold War, the western allies embarked on a strategy to contain the spread of communism; in the MENA region, they relied on empowering Islamists to counter the communist tide (757). The result was that the elections in 1973 witnessed, for the first time, the establishment of a political party that represents Islamist claims on Turkey's identity (Özkan 2015, 74–77). Consequently, all coalition governments between 1973 and 1983 included the openly Islamist National Salvation Party. In the aftermath of the military coup in 1980,¹³⁰ the Welfare party started ascending in the Turkish electoral system. Between 1983 and 1996, the Welfare party took part in all coalition governments. In 1996, the party won more than 20 percent of the seats in parliament (Yavuz 1997, 43).

The Islamist-secularist rift has existed throughout most of modern Turkish history and cannot be convincingly related to a single moment. But the electoral performance of the Welfare Party in 1996 gave a new thrust to this divide. At least since then, the Islamist-secularist fault line has been integral to Turkish politics. It created a zero-sum exclusivist political game between the secular actors, particularly the judiciary, the military, and the CHP, and the AKP. These polarized dynamics were the main driving force behind the authoritarianization of Turkey that started with the struggle surrounding the veil and was concluded by the 2017 constitutional amendments and the establishment of Erdogan's "new Turkey".

5.2 Did Turkey turn authoritarian?

Since the 2017 constitutional amendments that granted Erdogan unlimited powers and further instigated the AKP's control over state institutions, Turkey surely fails to fulfill four criteria of democratic rule: Citizens of Turkey have limited access to alternative sources of information; the freedom of expression is severely violated; the freedom of association is severely curbed, and the voting procedures take place under unfree conditions. While many of these violations had existed since the 2016 unsuccessful coup attempt, the 2017 amendments were the institutional expression of this new authoritarian regime. The amendments changed the rules of the game not only *de facto*, but also *de jure*.

¹³⁰ The continuous instability and violence in the 1970s motivated the military, both because it sees its role as the protector of the nation and to maintain internal cohesion, to assume power and ban all political parties in 1980 (Demirel 2003, 259–61).

The exact point in time that marked Turkey's transition to authoritarianism may be subject to legitimate disagreements. This is the nature of protracted authoritarian transitions that occur gradually and over a long period.¹³¹ The reason is that there is no agreed-upon threshold for the criteria that define different regime types. While Dahl's definition of democracy (Dahl 1982, 1989), or 'polyarchy', is straightforward, it does not indicate clear thresholds of the extent to which countries need to fulfill the institutional minimal criteria to be considered a democracy. Linz's (1975) definition of authoritarianism, similarly, does not demarcate a clear threshold beyond which, for instance, pluralism would be considered limited. In Turkey, this can lead others to mark different points in time, such as the 2016 coup, when Turkey stopped being democratic.

Nevertheless, I consider the 2017 constitutional amendments in Turkey to be the decisive moment of transition towards authoritarianism. While the practices of the AKP in the aftermath of the coup were clearly authoritarian,¹³² the 2017 amendments institutionalized this new authoritarianism.¹³³ In the direct aftermath of the failed coup, the government detained sources of regime-critical information; it arrested more than 100 journalists and shut down more than 23 T.V stations. In October 2016, the government detained managers of the infamous newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Human Rights Watch 2016, 1). The purge curbed and sanctioned most forms of freedom of expression; the AKP detained the full range of critical voices from Kurdish supporters, teachers, lawyers, and judges (Esen and Gumuscu 2017, 62; Lagendijk 2016, 2). Moreover, Freedom House reports that between the attempted coup and the end of 2017, "more than 1,500 civil society organizations have been summarily closed and their property confiscated" (2018a, sec. Executive summary). In this context of diminished freedoms, the Turkish citizens were called for a referendum on constitutional amendments in 2017 that would change the nature of the political system, altered the checks and balances, diminished the autonomy of state institutions, and granted unprecedented powers to the president (Bâli 2018; Erdogan Takes Total Control of "New Turkey" 2018; Esen and Gümüşçü 2017, 304).

The 2017 amendments have also institutionalized an unequal political battlefield, tilted heavily towards Erdogan who is drastically transforming the political landscape in Turkey to

¹³¹ As opposed to more clear cut autocratization that results from, for instance, coups.

¹³² I owe the thought and differentiation between authoritarian practices and authoritarianism to the work of Marlies Glasius (2018; Glasius and Michaelsen 2018) who explicated this differentiation.

¹³³ To be sure, both Freedom House (2018a) and Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018a) rate Turkey as an autocracy as of 2017.

eliminate actual competitors to the hegemony of the AKP. The amendments eliminate all relevant positions of power which are not chosen by the ruling party and the president. For instance, the amendments grant the president the power to directly appoint mayors, a position that had been traditionally subject to independent electoral procedures. Erdogan himself has started his political career as the mayor of Istanbul. Similarly, the amendments bring independent state institutions, specifically the judiciary which is entitled to supervise the conduct of the executive and the legislative branches under the direct control of the AKP-dominated parliament and the office of president Erdogan (Esen and Gümüşçü 2017, 306–7).

This was a qualitative shift from the democracy, albeit flawed, that existed in Turkey during the AKP's first term in power between 2002 and 2007. The AKP was able to not only evade the intervention of the military that had been the main factor degrading Turkey from a status among democratic countries and was instead characterized by some as a “hybrid regime” (Diamond 2002, 23; Karatnycky, Piano, and Puddington 2003, 24),¹³⁴ but it also enjoyed the rest of Dahl's institutional minimum for democratic rule (cf. Somer 2016, 489). Turkey's citizens had access to *alternative sources of information* thanks to a relatively free press that was ranked 55th in the world; it also enjoyed substantial degrees of civil liberties including *freedom of expression* (Freedom House 2003, 9). *Independent associations and political parties* operated in a relative degree of freedom and *universal suffrage* was even more consolidated after the AKP's willingness to set steps in the further inclusion of the Kurdish population in the political community.

Earlier signs of Turkey's authoritarianization had surely been evident, but they did not systemically violate democracy's institutional minimum. Even as early as the 2011 national elections, Turkey had already witnessed substantial authoritarian progressions. The fact that political actors in Turkey were sure that the AKP will score a win in the 2011 elections (Çarkoğlu 2011, 43; Kubicek 2011, 443) testifies however to the autocratic turn in Turkish politics even before the 2017 amendments. The question was not so much whether the AKP wins the election. The question was “whether the AKP would win two-thirds of the 550 seats in the National Assembly, which would give it the power to unilaterally write a new constitution (Kubicek 2011, 444). By that time, the AKP had already established control over important parts of the judiciary, curbed the political influence of important opposition opponents, and was promising the writing of a new constitution altogether (Özbudun 2015).

¹³⁴ Because the AKP evade the intervention of unelected actors like the military, Turkey's elected representatives were the decision makers- one of Dahl's core criteria for polyarchival rule (Dahl 1982, 1989).

But despite all that, Turkey was backsliding but had not yet transitioned to authoritarianism (Aslan-Akman 2012).¹³⁵ Elections were still free and fair, despite the increasingly polarized atmosphere of intimidation. Autonomous associations, freedom of expression, as well as general civic and political rights, existed, despite being increasingly violated (Kubicek 2011, 446).

Despite this clear authoritarian turn in Turkey, some strands in the literature fail to recognize it. These strands are reminiscent of theoretical literature that blurs the line between different regime types and treats variations in political regimes as solely a matter of degree instead of types.¹³⁶ The first considered the evolving authoritarian dynamics in Turkey a consolidation of its defective democratic character (Cinar 2016; Taş 2015). The second builds on works that contest that Turkey was ever a democracy and categorize it as a “hybrid” regime instead (Somer 2016).¹³⁷ It contests that Turkey was ever a democracy despite Turkey’s democratic experience between 2002 and 2007

This failure to account for the qualitative change in Turkey’s regime type has serious implications. First, it blinds these works from asking important questions about the motivations and the dynamics behind Turkey’s transition to authoritarianism, since they do not acknowledge that such transition took place in the first place. Second, it motivated scholars to arrive at falsely optimistic evaluations of Turkey. It motivated some to celebrate the “Turkish model” and indulged in wishful thinking as to the likelihood of its replication in some of its neighboring autocracies (Duran 2008, 88–90).

The precise turning point that witnessed Turkey’s transition from a backsliding democracy to an authoritarian regime might be subject to a legitimate debate. After all, thresholds of qualitative changes are hard to pinpoint. Evaluated in its context, the 2017 constitutional amendments marked however a clear qualitative change in the institutional make-up of Turkey, establishing an authoritarian regime with most powers concentrated in the hands of Erdogan. But despite this potential debate about the timing of the transition, the fact

¹³⁵ Even though some observers had noted by the time that Turkey transitioned to a dominant party system (Kubicek 2011, 444).

¹³⁶ For a complete discussion of this theoretical literature, its contributions, and flaws see chapter 2.

¹³⁷ There are substantial scholarly disagreements as to the point on which a democratic transition is concluded. Turkey’s 2002 elections and the coming of the AKP to power and its ability to dodge the intervention of unelected institutions is in line with most measurements of a successful democratization. For a complete discussion of these measures, see (Bogaards 2010).

that Turkey has witnessed an authoritarian transition that marks a fundamental shift from its successful democratic experience between 2002-2007 is hard to miss.

5.3 What do current explanations miss?

Various works acknowledge and analytically engage with Turkey's authoritarian transition (Çalışkan 2018; i.a: Esen and Gumuscu 2016).¹³⁸ The most prominent of these works stems from political-economic approaches (I. Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018). They fall under two categories that overlap in some parts of their analyses: The first set of explanations **(i)** blames the AKP's neopatrimonialism for the authoritarian changes in Turkish politics. The second **(ii)** blames the AKP's majoritarian understanding of politics for Turkey's authoritarian turn. Both share the AKP's economic success as the condition that allowed it to establish neo-patrimonial ties and to perpetuate a majoritarian understanding of politics.

These works miss, however, two things. **First**, they explain *how* Turkey transitioned to authoritarianism, but do not explain *why* it did so.¹³⁹ **Second**, they fail to locate and identify the main political disagreements of the transition and how they unfolded, the alliances that were formed during these battles, and the pivotal points and concrete events in Turkey's autocratization.¹⁴⁰

That way, the most important milestones of Turkey's authoritarianization remain unrecognized by these existing accounts. Incorporating the dissent on state identity in Turkey supplements exiting works by explaining *why* political actors played an exclusivist political game. It also complements these works' accounts of *how* the transition, its alliances, disagreements, and critical junctures unfolded.

Before discussing these two shortcomings, it is important to not overlook one seemingly compelling and straightforward explanation as to *why* Turkey transitioned to authoritarianism. In a nutshell, this (counter) argument cites the good old thirst for political power as the reason behind Turkey's authoritarianization. It sees identity struggles between the Islamists and the secularists as the result of this thirst, not the reason behind it. Çınar (2018, 185) exemplifies

¹³⁸ I do not discuss the numerous works that confine themselves to descriptive accounts of Turkey's authoritarianism.

¹³⁹ Those who acknowledge that Turkey witnessed a regime change offer explanations as to this change and those who believe it witnessed a deterioration of its democracy or a revival of its authoritarian characters offer explanations as to this turn.

¹⁴⁰ Critical junctures are important steps that were taken during Turkey's transition. Critical junctures are times where deep change takes place. It is a term that distinguishes "normal" from "intense" times.

this argument neatly; he states that Turkey's authoritarian transformation under the AKP was "driven by power, as opposed to ideological concerns". That way, the AKP's action and practices "define its political identity, and not vice versa", he adds.

The strife for power underlies all politics, but it does not explain authoritarianism. All political actors in both democracies and autocracies strive to access and maintain political power. The question that is relevant for regime type is thus not whether political actors strive for power but what decides how they pursue power.¹⁴¹ That way, the argument exemplified by Çınar does not explain *why* the AKP and the secularists in Turkey played an exclusivist game in their pursuit of power. It also does not explain why their pursuit of power was not based on exclusion during the AKP's first term in power.¹⁴²

The hypothesis I offer in this chapter accounts for *why*, in their pursuit of power, the political actors in Turkey resorted to exclusion. It shows how the AKP's claim on Turkey's state identity was opposed to the identity that the Kemalist seculars pursued for the state. This dissent on state identity led to exclusion. This does not deny that both the Islamists and the secularists strove for power; it explains why they chose exclusion in their pursuit.

5.3.1 Describing the how and skipping the why

The approaches that focus on the AKP's successful establishment of neo-patrimonial structures do not explain why the AKP did so. They show how the AKP used the economic success of its earlier years in power to develop patron-client economic structures. These structures tie economic opportunities in Turkey to loyalty to the AK party. The establishment of these patronage networks took place in the course of neoliberal economic restructuring that the AKP embarked on after it ascended to power in 2002 and ran parallel to the AKP's democratic reforms. This "dual" reform – the formal democratic and the informal neo-patrimonial – enabled the AKP to establish control over important sectors such as the energy and media sectors, which, in turn, extended the AKP's power outside the official political sphere (Somer 2016, 493). It restructured the relationship between state and society (Massicard 2014) and enabled the AKP to present its interest "as those of the state, and, often, the personal interests of particular AKP politicians or President Erdogan himself" (Somer 2016,

¹⁴¹ This is consistent with the view discussed in chapter 2 (ref) that understands political regime to be the formal and informal rules governing access to political power and the relationship between actors who hold power and those who do not.

¹⁴² Another interpretation of Çınar's argument would be that Islamists including the AKP are particularly prone to exercising exclusionary politics. There is however enough evidence to refute an essentialist connection between Islam and authoritarianism. In Turkey, both the Islamists and the secularists resorted to exclusion.

495). The result is an incremental rise of autocratic dynamics and structures under the AKP. These analyses enrich our understanding of the complex processes through which the AKP incrementally established control over economic structures in Turkey. It does not, however, explain why the AKP chose to instill these neo-patrimonial structures instead of furthering Turkey's democratic gains.

The approaches that focus on AKP's majoritarianism do not account for why it resorted to majoritarianism after its initial democratic agenda. The explanations that focus on AKP's successful majoritarianization of Turkish politics overlap with the first category in their belief that the AKP's economic performance is key in understanding the emergence of authoritarian dynamics in Turkey. But they also highlight the historical embeddedness of these authoritarian dynamics in Turkey. The AKP managed to stabilize the Turkish economy during the 2008 financial crisis (Çarkoğlu 2012, 514). Gumuscu (2013) illustrates how the AKP used this to deepen and further the cross-cutting social base that it enjoyed as a result of its earlier economic performance and democratic gains. Driven by its electoral successes, the AKP perpetrated a majoritarian understanding of "democracy" and politics in which the winner takes all. Turkey's majoritarian tendencies have deep roots in its republican era (Çınar 2008; Somer 2016). This approach that highlights the AKP's majoritarianism does not, therefore, sufficiently explain the political shift that occurred in Turkey between substantial democratic gains during the AKP's first term in power, and the evolution of an exclusivist game during its second term.

5.3.2 Missing the ABC of Turkey's authoritarianization: the alliances, the battles, and the critical junctures

Besides failing to account for *why* Turkey's political opponents chose exclusion and polarization, the existing explanations discussed above (i) and (ii) miss out on the most important features of Turkey's authoritarian transition. They fail to account for the polarized (a)lliances that were struck during the authoritarianization process, to identify the transition's most important (b)attles, and to highlight its (c)ritical junctures.

The existing literature fails to account for the polarization that clustered around Islamist vs. secularist alliances. The works that focus on the AKP's neopatrimonialism fail to explain why it established these ties with religious conservative actors. Similarly, Turkey's deeply rooted majoritarian tendencies surely aided its authoritarian transformation, but it does not

explain why the polarized political struggle clustered around secularist-Islamist fault-lines. It also overstates the impact of AKP's economic performance on its electoral base.¹⁴³

They remain blind to important battles of the transition. Existing explanations (both (i) and (ii) above) remain blind to the most important battles of the transition. Neither neo-patrimonialism nor the AKP's majoritarianism shed light on the legal procedures that the AKP initiated with the help of the Gülen movement to marginalize key Kemalist institutions and exclude its secular opponents. They also do not account for the unsuccessful attempt of the court to ban the AKP from power in 2008 (Çınar 2008, 113), which was a decisive battle that had important ramifications on the transition.

They underestimate the analytical value of the transitions' critical junctures. The works discussed above do not make analytical sense of the critical junctures of Turkey's transition. They, instead descriptively account for these junctures without placing them in the context of Turkey's long transition. They overlook the importance of the 2008 attempt by the constitutional court to ban the AKP from power, which section 5.1 identifies as the defining moment for the AKP's subsequent attempts to infiltrate and subjugate the judiciary. They also overlook the importance of the 2010 constitutional amendments that were a pivotal moment in the subjugation of the judiciary. Scholars and policymakers have, instead, celebrated the 2010 constitutional amendments as steps favoring democracy (Commission 2010; Özbudun 2011). While some works identify Erdogan's 2014 election as a pivotal moment in Turkey, they overlook its importance in enabling the AKP to subvert the 2015 elections which was the last window of opportunity to save Turkey's democracy (Section 5).

In contrast to the above works, the perspective in this chapter explains *why* Turkey autocratized and accounts for important aspects of *how* the process of transition unfolded. It argues that the dissent on state identity in Turkey set in motion a long exclusivist political game between the Islamists and the secularists. It was not only the origin of this exclusivist game. It also identifies the most important political disagreements of the transitions and how they unfolded (the battles), the alliances that fought these battles, and the critical junctures that incrementally set Turkey towards its 2017 autocratization.

¹⁴³ Electoral data shows that the AKP's driver for majoritarianism – its electoral base – is ideologically and not economically motivated (Çarkoğlu 2012). Both (i) and (ii) do not have an explanation for the AKP's alliance with the Gülen movement against secular political forces and state institutions; neither does it explain the continuous attempts by secular state institutions to exclude the AKP from power (Çınar 2008, 113)

5.4 The spark of exclusion: the veil debate

The contention surrounding the public appearance of the veil was the first sign of dissent on state identity. Despite the polarization that surrounded it, it was a disagreement with little direct ramifications on hard political gains for either of the actors. During the 2007 presidential elections, the AKP's candidate Abdullah Gül and the party's leader Erdogan appeared in public campaigns with their veiled wives (Çavdar 2007, par.1; Tran 2007). This alienated the secular segments of the Turkish political scene from what they saw as an infringement on the secular identity of the Turkish state. In this context, the discussions surrounding the candidates "have been much [more] about their respective wives as the candidates' own qualities" (Çavdar 2007, par.10).

The AKP's opponents coordinated to contain the threat of Islamists changing the secular character of the state. The *Kemalist* CH party led the AKP's opponents in the national assembly to stay home to prevent the nomination of Gül to the position of the president (Duran 2008, 96(Çavdar 2007, par.1; Tran 2007). In May 2007, the constitutional court validated the oppositions' move ("Turkish President Vote" 2007). In addition to these reactions, the military issued a warning against the nomination of Gül and made it clear that it would interfere if necessary to guard Turkey's Kemalist character (Çavdar 2007, par.3; Tavernise 2007).

But for the AKP, the normalization of the veil's public appearance was central to the way they envisioned Turkey's state identity. It was clearly the AKP's way of symbolically expressing their position that the Turkey they envisioned is not the Kemalist laicist Turkey that Atatürk established. For that reason, and as a clear attempt at muscle-flexing against the secularists, the AKP utilized its electoral power in the national assembly to pass a constitutional amendment that allows students to enter education institutions with the veil in February 2008 (Ayman and Knickmeyer 2008; Zeldin 2012).

For the CHP, the traditional Kemalist party, the acceptance of the veil's public visibility was fundamentally threatening Turkey's secular identity. After all, the ban on the public wearing of the veil had deep roots in the historic fight of the Kemalists against the Islamists.¹⁴⁴ The AKP's attempts at legalizing the veil in educational institutions renewed the threat after

¹⁴⁴ The controversy surrounding the wearing of the veil in Turkey has existed since the very establishment of the republic (Toprak and Uslu 2009, 45). The post-coup Turkish constitution of 1982 banned the wearing of the veil in public places including universities to protect Turkey's secular identity (46-8). The ban was however not strictly implemented in all educational institutions until the 1997 military intervention (47).

the AKP's initial years in power. The CHP, therefore, decided to involve the strongly Kemalist constitutional court which ruled against the lifting the ban on the grounds that it threatens the secular identity of the state (BBC 2008; Turkey 2008 Progress Report 2008, 7; Zeldin 2012).

The contention surrounding the public visibility of the Islamic headscarf was an issue of Turkey's symbolic state identity and not of power. It promised neither of the political actors any substantial direct political gains, except imposing its claim on Turkey's identity. While this might have arguably had concrete ramifications in various political spheres,¹⁴⁵ it was a disagreement on the symbolic identity of the state and not a disagreement on direct political gains.

5.5 The battles of exclusion, the alliances behind them, and the critical junctures of Turkey's autocratization

The battles of Turkey's transition were fought between the AKP, in collaboration with the Gülen movement, against two types of secular actors. The first was state institutions, particularly the judiciary and the military. These Kemalist institutions in Turkey utilized their historically embedded political power to exclude the AKP from power, just like they did with its Islamist predecessors. The AKP successfully fought to curb these powers by curbing their power, infiltrating them, and then purging their opponents from within their ranks. The critical juncture in this exclusionary process was the 2010 constitutional amendments which subjugated the judiciary and stripped Kemalist institutions from most of their ability to interfere in politics. The second was against an alliance of secular parties. In light of the dissent on state identity, the AKP pursued the exclusion of secular political parties and to monopolize power. Its best chance in doing so was to change Turkey's political system to concentrate power in the president and to assume the presidency. The election of Erdogan to the presidency in 2014 was a critical juncture that aided the AKP not only monopolize power, but also protect its political dominance from a secularist 'come back' in the national elections of 2015.

¹⁴⁵ The identity of the state can and did have decisive ramifications for foreign and domestic politics (Hintz 2018), but it does not offer direct political gains the way that, for instance, the change of electoral law can offer. The dissent in Turkey was on the symbolic character of the state and not on any specific policy relevant issue.

5.5.1 The Islamists vs. secular state institutions

a) The 2010 constitutional amendments and subjugating the judiciary

Shortly after the 2007 presidential elections, Turkey's chief prosecutor filed a case to close the AKP and to ban its members from political life for 10 years. His team presented the constitutional court with 10 folders containing evidence accusing the AKP of having been involved in anti-secular activities that allegedly breached the secular constitution of the Republic of Turkey (Constitutional Court Decision 2008; Özkan 2015, 80). The court's verdict was to substantially cut the state's funding to the AK Party, but it fell short of one vote to close the party and ban its members from practicing politics.

Realizing their threat, the AKP was determined to neutralize the threat of the court and the military and exclude its opponents from these institutions. After the military's threat to interfere in politics during the 2007 presidential elections, this close call by the court in 2008 awakened the AKP's fears of facing its predecessors' fate. After all, it had always been the combined orchestrated action of these two institutions, the judiciary and the military, that excluded Islamists from power. The AKP was thus keen to curb the power of these institutions to interfere in politics and to exclude its opponents within their ranks.

To do so, the AKP needed to strip the judiciary of its legal power over the political system. Whereas this curbed the power of the judiciary power to exclude the AKP,¹⁴⁶ it did not neutralize the threat of a military coup against the AKP or any other extra-legal action against it by the court. For that, the AKP needed to plant its allies and purge its opponents from these institutions. By combining these strategies, the AKP aimed to neutralize the threat of Kemalist institutions.

In 2010, the AKP utilized its majority in the national assembly to orchestrate a package of constitutional amendments that stripped the judiciary from its ability to exclude the AKP. The amendment to article 84 of the constitution shielded the AKP's presence in the national assembly from the constitutional court. The amendment allows the members of the assembly to retain their seats even if the court bans their political parties (Gönenç 2010, 3). It assured the AKP members that their electoral presence in the national assembly cannot be abolished should the constitutional court renew its attempt to ban the AKP as in its unsuccessful attempt of

¹⁴⁶ This was very important for the AKP because, historically, the court had always given the legal legitimacy and framework for military action against Islamists.

2008.¹⁴⁷ Before the amendment, the constitutional court's decision to ban a political party would have automatically nullified the presence of its members in the national assembly.

Similarly, the amendments to paragraph 4 of article 125 and paragraph 3 of article 129 protected the AKP from judicial disciplinary action against its members in the state administration. The original formulation of paragraph 4 of article 125 states that "judicial power is limited to the verification of the conformity of the actions and acts of the administration with law". The amendment adds that "in no case it can be used as review of expediency" (4). The amendment to paragraph 3 of article 129 supplements this in spirit. It abolished the immunity of public servants from judicial disciplinary actions to appeal these decisions by the court. The amendments thus freed the members of the AKP from the power of the constitutional court that had previously banned various Islamists from politics.

Curtailling the powers of the military proved trickier for the AKP. Unlike the judiciary, the power of the Turkish military lay in its ability to directly interfere in the political process.¹⁴⁸ After all, the court's actions against the AKP's Islamist predecessors only served as a legal framework for the military's intervention. Altering the constitutionally vested powers of the military would have damaged the military's image as the guardian of the secular state, but would have had little relevance to its *de facto* ability to interfere in politics.

For the AKP, neutralizing the power of the military necessitated, therefore, the outright exclusion of its Kemalist members and their replacement with allies.¹⁴⁹ The paradox of the AKP's strategy to conquer state institutions was that, to exclude members from the ranks of the military and to infiltrate the institution necessitated the collaboration of the judiciary. That is because the AKP needed a legal procedure to legitimize such purge domestically and internationally. It also needed to legally distance the party from these exclusionary attempts. By playing out one secular institution against the other, the AKP could officially stay out of the direct fire line of the military. But to do that, it, paradoxically, needed orchestrated action by the very same judiciary that it worked hard to weaken.

¹⁴⁷ The old formulation of article 84 stated that "the membership of a deputy whose statement and acts are cited in a final judgment by the constitutional court as having caused the permanent dissolution of his party shall terminate on the date when the decision in question and its justifications are published in the official Gazette..." (Gönenç 2010, 3).

¹⁴⁸ It did not on many occasions in Turkish history; sometimes it did so via a coup, and some other times by the threat of a coup.

¹⁴⁹ Or at least their replacement with neutral soldiers who would not constitute a threat to the AKP.

This paradox was clear in the 2010 constitutional amendments: Despite backing amendments that weakened judicial oversight, the AKP also suggested an amendment that brought more judicial oversight over the military. The amendment to paragraph 2 of article 125 diminishes the legal immunity of the supreme military council. Before the amendment, paragraph 2 states that “The acts of the President of the Republic on his or her own competence, and the decisions of the Supreme Military Council are outside the scope of judicial review”. The amendment allowed soldiers to appeal the decision of the military council in front of the court (4).

This amendment was however of no substantial relevance unless the AKP ensures the collaboration of the judiciary. It offered, theoretically, some legal framework to infiltrate the military, but it neither helped execute this infiltration on the ground nor purge the AKP’s opponents in the institution. Theoretically, the amendment would allow soldiers who were, for instance, dismissed on the grounds of having sympathies with Islamists, to appeal the decision of the military council in front of the judiciary. But for this to have any relevance, the AKP should first successfully push such members into the ranks of the military. Still, it would necessitate the court’s collaboration to appeal these requests if and when they occur. The amendment to paragraph 2 of article 125 did thus not have a substantial relevance in curing the military’s political might in its own right.

b) The AKP-Gülen alliance: Infiltrating the judiciary to exclude opponents

To arrange the collaboration of the judiciary, the AKP struck an alliance with the Gülen movement. While it is hard to pinpoint the exact timing of this alliance, it became certainly obvious after the military’s threat to intervene in 2007 and the court’s case to close the AKP (Armstrong 2012). The Gülen movement had a long-established substantial presence in state institutions, including the military and the judiciary (Gönül 2014, par. 8-10; Yavuz and Koç 2016, 136–38). The deal was straightforward: The Gülen grants the AKP access to its dormant circles in these otherwise Kemalist institutions. In return, the AKP serves as the movement’s ally in the formal political sphere, should the secularists decide to take action against it (Dogan 2020, 52, 55–57; Gönül 2014).

Other than their shared understanding of Turkey’s state identity and their hostility towards the Kemalists, the Gülen and the AKP had nothing in common. Both movements come from doctrinally and ideologically different traditions that dictate different political strategies and interests (Dogan 2020, introduction). The AKP had followed the steps of its predecessors

and invested in the formal political structures of Turkey. In contrast, the Gülen movement had long emphasized the importance of its silent expansion in civil society and state institutions (ibid). In other words, the AKP and the Gülen had little reason to join forces besides their shared claim on Turkey's identity. This shared claim placed them on the other end of the polarized game, against the secularists whose claim on Turkey's identity remained irreconcilable with that of the AKP- Gülen alliance.

To be sure, an explosive disagreement erupted between the Gülen and the AKP once they succeeded to substantially weaken the secularists. In 2013, when it became clear that the AKP-Gülen alliance had been already able to exclude and marginalize the most threatening secular actors, they disagreed on the distribution of power between them (Dogan 2020, 62). Knowing the societal grass-root power of the Gülen movement especially in educational institutions, the AKP attempted to pass a law in November 2013 that forces these schools to close. In December of the same year, the police and the prosecution opened a corruption case against various ministers and members of the AKP government. The AKP and Erdogan accused Gülen to have fabricated a corruption scandal and illegally eavesdropped on government officials to overthrow the AKP government. It, therefore, responded by detaining dozens of police officers and by enforcing sweeping reforms to exclude AKP opponents from the police force (Agence France 2014). The extent to which the followers of the Gülen movement were involved in this corruption probe is subject of heated debate. But the contention between the movement and the AKP was obvious to observers (Yavuz and Koç 2016). Their shared claim on state identity located the Gülen and the AKP on the same side of the exclusivist political game, but otherwise their interests very obviously diverged.

c) Institutional cleansing: Purging opponents in the military and the judiciary

Having infiltrated the judiciary and neutralized the threat it posed, the AKP secured the necessary resources to purge its opponents in the military. It arranged two legal trials which grouped various secularist figures. These trials started in 2008 (Calamur 2016; Turkey's Ergenekon plot case overturned by top court of appeals - Turkey News 2016), but they intensified after 2010. While the majority of the AKP's targets were military officers, many were also members of the CH party, Kemalist academics as well as journalists and reporters (Rodrik 2011, 100). The AKP accused its opponents of forming violent extra-legal organizations in cooperation with secular allies to provide a pretext for a coup in the early 2000s (Baydar 2012). These accusations were however largely based on flawed legal

procedures and fabricated evidence, and they were regarded as such by a sizable portion of the Turkish population (Dogan 2020, 10–11; Rodrik 2012).¹⁵⁰

These trials were effective in purging wide segments within the military institution who were hostile to the AKP. In 2011, fresh arrests provoked resignation by military officers including the chief of staff, and the heads of army and navy force (BBC 2011). Sentences in both trials were delivered over a period that extended to 2012 in the case of Sledgehammer and until 2013 in the case of Ergenekon

5.5.2 The AKP against the alliance of secular parties

a) Changing the political system: Why turn ‘presidential’

The exclusionary attempts between the AKP and secular state institutions was only one face of the polarized political game. In a parallel fashion, fierce battles mounted between the AKP and secular parties. *The central theme in these battles was the AKP’s attempt to tilt the balance of power towards the institution of the president. Because the secularists, together, enjoyed substantial electoral backing comparable to that of the AKP, the latter sought to change the balance of power between governing institutions and grant the president more powers. In Turkey’s context, this was, therefore, a decisive and clear move away from democracy and to authoritarianism.*¹⁵¹ *The AKP succeeded in defeating the alliance of secularist parties behind one candidate Ihsanoglu in the 2014 presidential elections after it changed the electoral law of the presidential office to direct popular voting.*

At first, the willingness of the CHP to organize in the national assembly to stop the nomination of Abdullah Gül as president in 2007 showed the AKP the importance of the presidential post. Historically, the president in Turkey has been elected by the parliament and had played the role of a mediator above politics and the symbolic protector of the Kemalist republican heritage (Çınar 2008, 112). After the military’s attempt to prevent Gül’s candidacy to the post on the grounds of his anti-secular affiliations, the AKP decided that direct voting would enhance its chance to run for office. In 2007, the AKP-backed constitutional amendment introduced direct voting for the head of the republic. The result was not only that Gül won the

¹⁵⁰ The court revoked the sentencing of many suspects in these trials later for lack of evidence (Solaker 2016).

¹⁵¹ Some democracies have concentrated powers in the institution of the president. But in Turkey’s context, this move, as this chapter discusses, was geared towards the exclusion of opponents. The idea that specific context-specific factors can constitute a move towards, or away from, democracy was expressed by Dahl (Dahl 1989, 109).

presidency, but the AKP was also able to successfully change the electoral procedure for electing the president to enhance their future chances of winning the presidency.

The comparable electoral backing that the alliance of secular forces and the AKP enjoyed motivated the AKP to then change the political system to a presidential one. The polarization of Turkish politics along the lines of this dissent motivated the formation of an alliance between secular forces in the political society. The result was that both the Islamists and the secularists enjoyed comparable electoral backing. Realizing this, the AKP worked towards changing the political system. Concentrating political power in the hands of a single person would allow the AKP to dilute the political relevance of the secular forces in the political society.

b) The secularist alliance and the polarization of the politics

Realizing their increasing defeat amid the AKP's success at excluding them, Turkey's secularist forces decided to join forces, despite their many ideological rifts. What united them was their will to defend Turkey's secular Kemalist identity from the AKP. Between the 2010 constitutional amendments and the 2013 protests, the AKP secured an unequivocal electoral victory in the 2011 national assembly elections. For its opponents, this was the result of the AKP's increasing success in tilting the still relatively even political landscape in its favor. To counterweigh the AKP, Turkey's secularists joined forces, notwithstanding their programmatic and ideological differences. This was mostly visible on two occasions.

The first was the Taksim square protests in 2013 (henceforth, Gezi park protests). The protests were triggered by the government's decision to remove trees from the Gezi park, but they soon turned into outbursts of discontent with the AKP. Most secularists in Turkey – both political parties and individual figures – called their supporters to join the Gezi protests. But despite this pluralism, the CHP, AKP's historic rival and Turkey's biggest Kemalist party, was the frontrunner of the Gezi alliance: Most of the Gezi protestors were not traditional CHP voters, but they voted for the CHP in the 2011 elections to oppose the AKP (Taştan 2013, 29–31).

Demonstrators were protesting the AKP's alteration of Turkey's secularism as well as its increasing authoritarianism (Atay 2013). The secularists were concerned about the AKP's ability to capitalize on “the sectarian divisions within the country [...] to hegemonize every political event” (Ete 2013, 20). They also raised concerns that “the AK Party government – and Prime Minister Erdogan in particular – represents a threat to their liberties that they tend

to associate with identity and belonging” (Taştan 2013, 33). This identity threat was at the heart of the alliance of the Gezi protests.¹⁵²

The secularist alliance that was formed during the Gezi protests was the seed for the second, even more pronounced, alliance during the 2014 presidential elections (Grigoriadis 2015, 106; Keyman 2014, 19). The secularists backed a figure who did not threaten Turkey’s secularism, but who also enjoyed respected religious credentials. The choice of Ihsanoglu, previously head of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and an advocate of Islam’s compatibility with modernism, was meant to attract electoral bases from the Islamist conservative camp, yet without jeopardizing the secularism of the Turkish state (Özbudun 2014a).

c) The 2014 presidential elections, the making of the dictator, and the fear of a secularists’ come-back

The 2014 presidential elections were carried out against the backdrop of this polarization. AKP’s Erdogan ran on a platform that promised the fundamental change of Turkey’s political system, against an alliance of secular forces who hoped their choice of candidate would weaken Erdogan’s electoral backing. While the pro-Kurdish HDP supported its own candidate, the race seriously ran between Erdogan, supported by the AKP, and Ihsanoglu, who was supported by the secularist alliance. But the secularists’ strategy backfired as it alienated CHP and MHP members who feared Ihsanoglu’s Islamic credentials would compromise the Kemalist character of Turkey (Çarkoğlu and Yildirim 2015, 59; Grigoriadis 2015, 108–9).

Assuming the presidential post was a pivotal moment for the AKP and, indeed, for the future of Turkey as well as its authoritarian transition (see Yılmaz and Turner 2019). It was the first time in Turkish history that the president of the republic explicitly affiliated himself with the electoral platform of a specific political party. This was a direct violation of the Turkish constitution that postulates in article 101 that the president of the republic “if a member of a party, shall sever his relations with his party” (The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey 2010, 25). But Erdogan and the AKP’s electoral campaign that promised to transform the Turkish political system received the support of 51.79 percent of the 74.13 percent voter turnout in the 2014 elections (Grigoriadis 2015, 106). This was key in legitimizing the AKP’s plan and

¹⁵² It is harder to evaluate the extent to which this alliance was concerned for the waning of democracy in Turkey. After all, in most times of crises, the weaker political actor clings to the legitimizing rhetoric of democracy, regardless of its political commitment to it.

a sign of the resonance of its political rhetoric among important segments of the electorate.¹⁵³ For Erdogan, this granted enough legitimacy to pursue the AKP's and his project to transform the political system into a presidential one, instead of fulfilling the presidential post in a non-partisan manner as constitutionally inscribed.

The zero-sum exclusivist game between the secularists and the AKP was responsible for the AKP's determination to change the political system. The AKP and its leader Erdogan feared a secularist come-back that could, at some point, secure secularists enough power to try to exclude the AKP from politics as they did in 2008. The parliamentary system and a non-partisan president, which had characterized the political system of modern Turkey for decades, were particularly concerning for the AKP, especially with the AKP losing the sympathy of wide segments of the population due to its increasing repression. The AKP decided, therefore, to announce their plan to transform Turkey into a "presidential system". Backed by the AKP, Erdogan continuously claimed that the parliamentary system does not serve the interests of the Turkish people and promised a "new Turkey" amid concerns of the dangers of changing the role of the president in the republic from its historical natural a-partisan figure (Carkoglu 2015, 90–91). During the 2014 presidential race, Erdogan utilized all of the AKP's resources to frame his opponents as agents of the "parallel" state who want to sabotage the future of Turkey (Grigoriadis 2015, 107).¹⁵⁴ The AKP's insistence on changing the political system was a crucial political milestone in the party's (and Erdogan's) mission to monopolize political power.

5.5.3 The end game: Preventing a secularist 'come-back', and the conclusion of the authoritarian transition

Both the AKP's fear of a potential secularist come-back, as well as the prophylaxis they administered, were accurate. In the national elections of June 2015, the AKP failed for the first time in almost a decade to secure a majority (Çarkoğlu and Yildirim 2015, 60). Instead of pressuring the AKP to enter into a coalition government with secular forces, Erdogan used his presidential powers to call for a snap election in November of the same year (Çarkoğlu and Yildirim 2015, 61; Cf. Grigoriadis 2015, 110).¹⁵⁵ The president was, after all, entitled to not only assign members of the constitutional court but also call for national assembly reelection when parties fail to secure a majority or form coalitions (The Constitution of the Republic of

¹⁵³ The direct election of the president was itself made possible by the AKP-supported changes that were passed in 2007.

¹⁵⁴ The AKP had been already employing this rhetoric to defame its opponents since the 2013 Gezi park protests (Özbudun 2014b, 158–60).

¹⁵⁵ There is even evidence that Erdogan played an important role in impeding any coalition talks (Öniş 2016, 143).

Turkey 2010, 25–26). In the November elections, the AKP regained its majority in the national assembly and successfully prevented a secularist come-back, facilitating the realization of the “new” Turkey project and the subsequent completion of its transition to authoritarianism.

The failure of Turkey’s political forces to form a coalition after the June 2015 elections was a result of the irreconcilability between the AKP and the secularists. The distribution of votes in the 2015 June elections was a chance for political actors to put aside their differences and to form a coalition government that would have received the support of a wide electoral base. But this chance did not materialize because political actors had a fundamental disagreement on the character of the state. The rise of the pro-Kurdish left leaning HD party above the 10 percent threshold, the electoral gains of the MH party, and the stability of the CHP’s electoral share offered an opportunity for coalition building to regain the democratic gains of Turkey (Öniş 2016, 146–48). But despite the fact that a coalition between the CHP-AKP would have enjoyed the broadest electoral support, ideological differences regarding the role of religion and secularism in the Turkish state prevented such collaboration (149).¹⁵⁶

The AKP’s reestablished majority in the national assembly signaled the secularists’ failure to exclude the AKP or, at least, defend itself against the AKP’s attempts to marginalize them. The 2016 attempted coup was the last, desperate effort by some circles in the military to exclude the AKP and prematurely end its term in power. On the 15th of July 2016, some factions of the Turkish military seem to have organized under the banner of the “Peace at Home Council” and to have attempted to overthrow the government (Aljazeera 2017). Unsurprisingly, they justified their move on the grounds of the AKP’s attempts to erode Turkey’s secularism (Pearson 2016). But Erdogan’s swift action when he allegedly escaped the presidential palace and voiced a call for his supporters to take to the street was key in halting the coup attempt. Violent clashes erupted between the perpetrators and civilians that ended in images of defeated soldiers in front of civilian mobilization.

But in contrast to earlier interventions against Islamists in Turkish history, the coup was neither supported nor welcomed by other secular actors. Virtually all political actors, including major secular actors like the CHP, condemned the attempt (Kinney 2016, 6). While this might reflect the secularists’ belief that Erdogan’s authoritarian tendencies could not be countered by an intervention, it could also be the result of the failure of the coup leadership to signal to the

¹⁵⁶ This is another instance that highlights the non-linear contingent nature of transitions. There were various windows of opportunity to reverse Turkey’s authoritarianization trajectory. Actors were, however, de-incentivized to do so because of irreconcilable views about the very nature of the state.

political actors that “they were in charge” (ibid). Most political actors declared their position against the coup on the next day, when politicians were more clear that such an attempt was destined to fail without the support of the military leadership.

The AKP correctly perceived the coup attempt as a unique opportunity to purge most of its remaining political adversaries. It primarily blamed its former ally, the Gülen movement, for the attempt. But no one escaped the wrath of the AKP’s purge. It included figures of the secularist camp as well as journalists, civil society activists, university professors, and Kurdish political figures (Freedom House 2018b, 2018b). That way, the AKP set Turkey on the path of concluding its authoritarian transition.

In a moment of unprecedented repression, Erdogan, in his capacity as the president of the republic, called the Turkish people to participate in a referendum that would institutionalize the vision of a “new” Turkey and conclude its authoritarian transition. On the 16th of April 2017, the referendum received more than 51 percent of the popular vote and Turkey started a new, clearly authoritarian, era (Shaheen 2017).

5.6 Conclusion

The perspective this chapter offered does not claim to explain all intricacies of the Turkish transition to authoritarianism. Despite the merits that focusing on state identity dissent and the resulting exclusion offer, it does not account for few things that are, nevertheless, important to note:

- (a) **Important intersecting regional dynamics:** Besides all the above, important regional dynamics had intertwined with the identity battle in Turkey and have surely played a role in Turkey’s transition to authoritarianism. Historically and doctrinally, the Islamist movement in Turkey that was behind the Welfare party, the Virtue party, and the AK party has close organizational and financial ties with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Shortly after the 2010 constitutional amendments in Turkey, the so-called “Arab Spring” events unfolded in the Arab part of the MENA region. In two of the most important regional players, Egypt and Tunisia, the Islamists came to power after winning national elections between 2011 and 2012. Like in Turkey, Islamists in these Arab countries sought to conquer the state. This constituted an extra layer of political support and strength to the AKP. Having strong ideological allies in these Arab countries, the AKP draws on the strength not

only of its domestic followers, but also from its regional status as the model of Islamists who for a decade succeeded in maintaining power.

(b) **The historical roots of the identity dissent:** The Islamist-secular dissent on state identity and the constellations of political actors involved have very deep historical roots that date back to the establishment of the republic. After the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk was able to establish the Turkish modern state and its institutions on the basis of a secular model that looked up to western Europe as a role model. This nation-state building project constructed itself in opposition to the earlier Islamic Caliphate, which was depicted as backward and illegitimate (Sakallioğlu 1998, 3,7). The state institutions of Turkey are to a great extent a materialization of Atatürk's western secular dream. The Alphabet, the education system, media outlets, and the military institution have all been reformed and restructured to serve the purpose of socializing the "Turk" into "a new Turk" (H. Yilmaz 2013, 2–3). Kemalists (those who followed Atatürk) were met with considerable resistance from several sections of the Turkish society who sought to uphold the Islamic character of the Turkish state. They envisioned two different doctrines to resist Kemalism and revive Turkey's Islamic identity. The first was the bottom-up approach to entrench Islamic values in society and the other sought a presence in the formal political setting. The AKP and the Gülen movement could be seen as reflecting each of these earlier trends.

(c) **The identity differences between the AKP and the Gülen:** Despite the alliance between Turkey's Islamists against the secular forces, their doctrinal and political differences later shattered their relationship. In 2013 and after the AKP had already succeeded to substantially exclude important secular state institutions and marginalize the political power of the secularist camp with the help of the Gülen movement, the relationship between the movement and the AKP started to gradually deteriorate. As discussed above, this was largely due to disagreements between both actors on how to share power after their success to partially marginalize the secularists. But there were also ideological disagreements between them. One of the first signs of their troubled relationship was the different views both actors had regarding the Kurdish question when the AKP abandoned its project to reconcile with Turkey's Kurds (Dogan 2020, 62; Gönül 2014, par.9; Yavuz and Koç 2016). But notwithstanding these disagreements, their shared conception of Turkey's identity united them against their secular opponents. They however resurfaced after they defeated the secularist camp. Similarly, the 2013 Gezi protests were fuelled at the time when widespread protests against Islamists were taking place in Egypt and Tunisia. Around the

time of the Gezi protest, the military intervened to oust the increasingly unpopular Islamists from power. In Tunisia, the increasing polarization between the Islamists and the secularists precipitated the *Errahil* crisis in the summer of 2013, which forced the Islamists to compromise on various key issues, abandon their power grabs, and reconcile with the secularists on the identity of Tunis. The events unfolding in Turkey were, thus, not only products of the internal dynamics discussed in this chapter, but also of this regional context, which remains outside the scope of this dissertation.

Despite not accounting for the above issues, integrating the Islamists-secularist dissent on state identity in the analysis of Turkey's authoritarian transition sheds light on more than the trigger of the fiercely polarized exclusivist political game. It also helps in understanding the behavior of political actors, the battles they fought, and the alliances they forged. After an unprecedented democratic experience in which the AKP endorsed Turkey's secular identity, the veil debate reawakened the tension between Islamists and secularists in Turkey. The Kemalist judiciary and the military took the lead in trying to exclude the AKP from politics. But this time, the AKP wittfully played a delicate game to systematically shield itself from the power of secular institutions, and then proceeded to infiltrate these institutions, and to exclude its opponents from their ranks. In a parallel fashion, the AKP succeeded in institutionalizing a new authoritarian political system in Turkey characterized by a personalized one-man rule backed by an electorally popular party.

The political battles that were fought in the spirit of this identity dissent led to three milestones: the 2010 constitutional amendments that tamed the judiciary, the 2014 presidential elections that shielded the AKP from any come-back of secular forces, and the 2017 constitutional amendments that institutionalized the powers of the president. The existing literature fails to account for the importance of these milestones because it does not place them in the context of identity dissent. Some even mistakenly celebrated the 2010 constitutional amendments as successful attempts to depoliticize and professionalize the Turkish judiciary. But the AKP did not professionalize these institutions; it conquered them (Somer 2017; Turam 2012).

Despite all that, the transition process in Turkey was neither linear nor predetermined. The political actors have missed various chances to save Turkey's democracy. The dissent on state identity explains why actors did not choose to seize any of these opportunities. Instead, the exclusivist game between them continued until the AKP and Erdogan succeeded in

monopolizing power and in institutionally changing the rules of the game in 2017. The secularists could have pressured the AKP to abandon its Islamization agenda instead of trying to ban and exclude the party in 2008. The AKP could have stopped at side-lining secularist unelected institutions from the political game. Both camps could have seized the 2015 elections to form a cross-party coalition instead of trying to dominate the government. All these missed chances were real and potentially destiny-changing for the future of Turkey. But political actors chose to not seize them, to further polarize and to deepen the exclusivist character of the political game in Turkey.

6. Tunisia

In 2011, Tunisians led street mobilizations and succeeded to oust Tunisia's long-standing dictator Ben Ali. Shortly after, Tunisia's Islamists and Secularists had irreconcilable claims on the identity of the post-Ben Ali Tunisia. They disagreed on how to refer to the identity of the state in the new constitution. This dissent hurdled the drafting of a new constitution and created an exclusivist polarized political atmosphere. The resulting zero-sum political atmosphere turned political disagreements during the transitional period into existential exclusivist battles. That way, the dissent on state identity sabotaged Tunisia's transition until it reached a chokepoint in July 2013. By then, disagreements on the constitutional text had already dominated the political process and political violence threatened a return to authoritarianism and jeopardized societal peace. It was only when the leaders of both camps, Rachid El Ghannouchi of the Islamists and Qa'ed Essebsi of the Secularists, met in August 2013 in Paris and decided to put an end to the division that the former described as "two nations living in one" (Jebnoun 2014, 18) that Tunisia successfully transitioned to democracy.

This chapter shows that, despite Tunisia's democratic transition, the dissent on state identity between its secularists and Islamists created an exclusivist political game that threatened the transitional process and culminated into a stalemate in the summer of 2013. It focuses on the impact this dissent had on three areas: (1) the process of drafting the constitution, (2) the evolution of the constitutional text,¹⁵⁷ and (3) the broader political context of the transition.

The main task that burdened the Tunisian transition was to craft a new constitution that receives a wide endorsement from all political actors. Because of this centrality of the constitutional text, I structure the analysis chronologically along the four drafts of the Tunisian constitution. Each of the drafts was a milestone in the Tunisian transition: The first three drafts were surrounded by extreme polarization on the clauses and formulations that describe the identity of the new Tunisian state as well as in the broader political context. The fourth and last draft enjoyed widespread support and marked the conclusion of the Tunisian transition.

¹⁵⁷ I focus on the constitution achieving a widely endorsed constitution was the main hurdle in Tunisia's transition. The constitutional text and its drafting process were also the subject of some of the most heated contentions threatening the Tunisian transition and the wide-spread agreement on the last version of it was the clearest signal of Tunisia's transition.

The study of constitutions as integral parts of transitional processes is not novel (i.a. Stanger 2004). But while many accounts of Tunisia's successful transition include explicit references to the compromises achieved in the constitutional text (Bellin 2018, 462; Brumberg and Salem 2020, 113; Erdoğan 2020, 61), few works analyze constitutional text in the context of its writing process and in relation to the wider context in which the Tunisian transition unfolded.

In contrast to solely focusing on the final constitutional text, analyzing the interaction between the (evolution of the) text, its writing process, and the broader transitional process offers deeper insights into the Tunisian transition (see Brown 2018). The dissent on the identity of the state between secular and Islamic forces severely disturbed these three dimensions of Tunisia's transition: It aroused sturdy disagreements on fundamental clauses prescribing the identity of the state in the constitutional text, impeded the process of writing the constitution, and produced a zero-sum political game that polarized the battles that appeared in the general context of the transition.

Section 1 of this chapter outlines the dissent on state identity in post-Ben Ali's Tunisia and delineates its relevant political actors. Section two discusses what existing explanations miss and how the approach used in this chapter complements them. Section three structures the analysis from the ousting of Ben Ali and until the political deadlock in the Summer of 2013 along the constitutional drafts. It analyzes how dissent on state identity hurdled the constitutional text, polarized its writing process, and created an exclusivist political game between the Islamists and the Secularists. Section 4 shows how resolving this dissent was the turning point towards Tunisia's successful democratic transition. Section 6 concludes the chapter.

6.1 What is the dissent and who are the relevant actors?

Despite the existence of different ethnicities in Tunisia, the main fault line in Tunisian history has been the Islamist-secularist divide regarding the character of the state (Perkins 2014, 11–12). While Tunisia has a sizeable non-Arab population who renewed their calls for more cultural and linguistic rights after the fall of Ben Ali (see Di Tolla and Francesca 2017), the question of non-Arab identities had played no role in the difficulty or success of the transition. After the fall of Ben-Ali, the question of cultural, linguistic, and citizenship rights of the non-Arab population did not cause much discussion during the period of transition. The struggle in

Tunisia did not stem from disagreements on who belonged to the demos – the boundaries of the political community. The dynamics of the transition revolved, instead, around the deep division between the secularists and the Islamists.

The relevant political actors representing these different claims on the identity of the state during the Tunisian transition were political parties. After the ousting of Tunisia's long-serving dictatorship Ben Ali, hundreds of political parties were formed as a response to the newly liberalized political sphere. Unlike many of their counterparts in the region, the Tunisian state institution, and particularly the military, were not deeply politicized. That destined these institutions to a relatively apolitical role during Tunisia's transition. Instead, the newly established political parties and their social bases were the main players in the Tunisian transition.

The Islamists were led by Elnahda, the most prominent Islamic movement and party in Tunisia. It was established in 1981 as the "Islamic tendency party", an offspring of a more underground group named "Islamic Action". Elnahda's thought and organizational structure are modeled on the transnational movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood. Its long-established hierarchical organization and international network made Elnahda more capable than any other Islamist actor to represent the Islamists' claims and interests during the transition. Particularly, its electoral success, capacity to mobilize, and support base made Elnahda the perfect actor that is capable of representing the Islamists' claim on the identity. Of equal relevance was Elnahda's ability to impose the compromises it accepts on other Islamist political actors, particularly, on the Salafists.¹⁵⁸ It did so by convincing these actors of either the ideological gist of these compromises, or of their pragmatic necessities; it also had the power to marginalize some Islamists from power when it needed to.¹⁵⁹ Elnahda was thus the most organized Islamist actor and party that enjoyed substantial support from wide segments of the Tunisian society. After the ousting of Ben Ali, Ghannouchi, the leader of Elnahda, returned to Tunisia, and the movement became one of the most prominent actors in the transition and continues to play a pivotal role in Tunisian politics until this day.

The secular parties were led by the party Nida Tounis and to a lesser extent by the Tunisian general labor union (henceforth UGGT). After Ben-Ali's ouster, various secular parties formed; these parties had little to unite them other than their insistence on Tunisia's civil

¹⁵⁸ Netterstrom (2015) offers a valuable insight into Elnahda's leadership struggles to convince its own lower-rank members of their compromises.

¹⁵⁹ This was the case after August 2013 when Elnahda was pressured to outlaw the *Ansar Al Shar'ia* movement.

modernist secular character and their subsequent opposition to Elnahda's attempt to alter this character. These parties were relevant actors because their combined weight in the NCA allowed them to counter Elnahda. It was, however, not until the establishment of Nida Tounis in April 2012 that these forces were rallied under one banner. Nida Tounis supplemented the existing secular forces with the resources and political expertise of old-regime members. All this, accompanied by the organizational capacity of the UGGT, enabled the secularists to oppose Elnahda politically both on the streets and in the NCA.

Nida Tounis was established in April 2012 and was able to rally various secular political actors, including segments of the old regime, under its banner by April 2012 at the latest (Boubekeur 2016, 110;116). But because it was established after the NCA elections, it officially occupied no seats in the assembly. It relied therefore on the alliances of other secular parties to present the secularist claims in the constituent assembly.¹⁶⁰ As a labor organization, the UGGT remained a relatively indirect actor in the dissent. It aided the secularists' cause by mobilizing street protests and strikes on various occasions. But it also portrayed itself in many cases as a neutral actor who is concerned with the interest of the country in stability and a successful transition by calling for various rounds of national dialogue throughout the transition.

There are historical reasons behind the prominence of these political actors in Tunisia. Unlike the case of Turkey and many of its closer North African neighbors, the protagonists of Tunisia's secularism have been civilian forces. The Tunisian military has not been historically politicized like its Turkish counterpart. One reason for this is that Tunisia's war of independence and the subsequent state-building were not carried out by military forces but by civilian secular forces that were present in the bureaucracy and labor organizations. The presidents of Tunisia were precisely these secular bureaucrats who realized the danger that Islamist movements pose on their view of the state and its secular character. Because these protagonists of secularism are civilian, they constituted a political power in the political society and within Tunisia's largest labor union – the UGGT. The regional and international presence of the MB since its establishment in 1928 in Egypt empowered its local branch Elnahda in Tunisia. The prominent presence of the MB-modelled movements in charitable organizations in civil society allowed them to expand their social bases and ideology.¹⁶¹ It also allowed

¹⁶⁰ These alliances were called blocs in the NCA. Some blocs were alliances between smaller parties while others were dominated by bigger ones.

¹⁶¹ The wide-spread presence of Islamists in civil society has been documented in many Middle Eastern and north African states.

Elnahda to maintain its social bases despite Ben-Ali's decision to ban the movement in the early 1990s. This historical background structured the relevant political actors in the Tunisian dissent on state identity along civilian secular lines and Elnahda.

The prominence of the Islamist-secularist fault-line in Tunisia is also historically grounded. While the historical evolution of the dissent on state identity in Tunisia requires a book on its own, few reasons are worth noting: Similar to those of many of its Arab neighbors, the modern identity of the Tunisian state has been a product of a complex process of synthesis, imitation, and rejection of European ideas, and particularly of French *laïcist* ideals. Although never officially part of the Ottoman Empire, Tunisia had been challenged by the same (bi-)products of colonialism that were prominent in its neighboring countries. Under indirect French control, European ideas and the socio-economic transformations brought the old socio-political and economic orders under severe pressure (Perkins 2014, 17). By the early 20th century, the Tunisian society had- like in many of its neighboring countries- crafted a wide array of responses to the disintegrating social order and to the French colonial domination. All of the following responses are affected by European-style modernity and are indicative of the burgeoning sense of national belonging, yet in different manners. Some *intellegencia*, beneficiaries of French education, adopted a secular “modernist” outlook and advocated a Tunisian state that is based on secular- or more accurately, *laïcist* French modernism. Others resorted to religious revival and reform which “exerted at least as strong a pull as did European progressivism” and which advocated a Tunisian state that is based on religious and traditional authority (68-70).¹⁶²

During the Tunisian transition, the secularist-Islamist divide was the most prominent fault-line dividing political forces. It created a polarized and exclusivist political game between the Islamists led by Elnahda on the one hand, and the secularists led by Nida Tounis, on the other.

6.2 Dissent on state identity: A supplementary explanation

This section highlights the shortcomings of the existing literature on the Tunisian transition. After that, it shows how incorporating the variable of state identity supplements and

¹⁶² These responses are far from peculiar to Tunisia. Very similar processes had taken place both inside and outside the boundaries of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. The resulting dissent on the nature and identity of the state is similar in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey.

speaks to some lines of inquiry in the general literature on transitions and particularly on the Tunisian transition.

Sections 2.1 through 2.3 discuss the literature that analyzes the democratic transition in Tunisia. They show that this literature celebrates its ultimate success and overlooks the reasons that brought it to the verge of total collapse in 2013. This literature is divided into two broad lines of inquiry. The first (1) focuses on the compromises that were struck between the Islamists and the secularists and how they led to successful democratization, and more broadly, on the role of religion in transitions. The second (2) tries to understand the Tunisian transition in light of the various hypotheses that are derived from the “transitology” literature.¹⁶³

Both lines of inquiry focus on the success of the Tunisian case and overlook the Tunisian transitional crisis that brought it to the verge of a resort to authoritarianism or worse. They miss the chokepoints of the Tunisian transition and provide little to understand how and why the process of transition unfolded the way it did in Tunisia. Some scholars from both camps were even quick to declare Tunisia a success story shortly before its transitional crisis in 2013 (i.a. Stepan 2012).¹⁶⁴ These works are not blind to the struggles of the Tunisian transition, but they fail to grasp the fundamental disagreement on the character of the state, its detrimental impact on Tunisia’s transition, and how it influenced the transitional process.

6.2.1 The Islamists compromise in Tunisia

The works that focus on the Islamist-secular compromise largely speak to two broader hypotheses: (a) The inclusion-moderation and (b) the twin toleration hypotheses. The first states that anti-system political movements and those that are on the margins of the political process moderate their views when they are included in the political process. The twin toleration hypothesis expects all transitions to be faced with the challenge of addressing the relationship between the state and religion. To democratize, societies will need to find a formula in which the state grants religion the freedom to operate in civil society, and religion detaches itself from state structures (Stepan 2000).

(a) In the Tunisian case, the works that build on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis show that Elnahda moderated its views and compromised on key issues when it was finally included in the official political process, after years of exclusion from Ben Ali’s regime (Angrist 2013; Netterstrøm 2015). That way, the compromise that was responsible for Tunisia’s transition stems from the ability of the Islamists to moderate their views as a result of their inclusion in the political process. Others argue that the

¹⁶³ I refer to “transitology” in the broad sense of the term: the systematic study of the reasons, modes, and processes of regime transition.

¹⁶⁴ These will be discussed in detail below.

Tunisian case defies this inclusion logic; Cavatorta and Merone (2013) insist that the Tunisian Islamists moderated their views because they were excluded from the official political process for a long time under Ben Ali's rule.

The inclusion-moderation explanation raises three problems:

- **First, it treats compromise as endogenous to the Tunisian case and, therefore, overlooks the crisis of the Tunisian transition.** If inclusion led Elnahda to moderate its views, what explains its reluctance to “moderate” and the subsequent near-collapse of the transition process in the summer of 2013?
- **Second, the inclusion-moderation offers a one-sided account of the transition in Tunisia.** While it could be argued that the Islamists offered the lion's share of the compromises, the secularist camp compromised on key issues as well. Regardless of the number of compromises, both actors were surely responsible for both the political deadlock in 2013 as well as the democratic transition in 2014.
- **Third, Elnahda had already moderated its views decades before the ousting of Ben Ali.** Moderation is a relational category; it refers to a shift from a previously held “radical” view to a more “moderate” one. Elnahda's situation contrasts this view; Elnahda had already endorsed democracy, collaboration, as well as Human and women rights in the 1980s (Stepan 2012, 96–99). In this way, Elnahda's compromise cannot be attributed to a moderation process that accompanied their inclusion in the transition process.

(b) The second hypothesis of the Islamists-secular compromise, the twin toleration hypothesis, explains that the compromise that resulted in the democratization of Tunisia is a result of the ability of political actors to solve the hard equation of religion's relationship to politics. Thanks to the history of consensus-building between the different political forces in Tunisia, they were able to achieve a *twin toleration*. The years of deliberations between the various opposition forces in Tunisia enabled them to achieve the winning equation in which religion leaves the state while the state grants religion the freedom to organize in civil society (Stepan 2012, 89–90).

The twin-toleration hypothesis does not accurately capture the empirical reality of Tunisia. The consensus in Tunisia did not reflect a twin toleration in which the state and religion negotiated their boundaries but an agreement on the necessary overlap and inevitable intertwinement of both. While the transition was, indeed, made possible by the agreement struck between different political forces on the position and boundaries of interaction between the state and religion, neither did religion “leave the state”, nor did the state grant religion the free hand to organize in civil society. The Tunisian state, as inscribed in its constitution, is a sponsor and protector of religion. It is also entitled to ensure the impartiality of religious institutions vis-à-vis political matters. Islam remains not only the

state's official religion, but also an important identity marker and a system of ideals inscribed in the Tunisian constitution. The compromise between the secularists and the Islamists was not much about the boundaries of religion and politics or the place of religion in public life, but on the way and extent to which religion identifies and characterizes the post-Ben Ali Tunisian state.

6.2.2 “Transitology” and the “usual suspects”

There are different strands of the “transitology” literature that stress different (and sometimes contradictory) hypotheses regarding the success of Tunisia’s transition. For instance, Boubekeur (2016) argues that instead of leading to a traditional *pacted transition*, the negotiations between the Islamists and the members of the old regime in Tunisia resulted in the monopolization of the post- Ben Ali political scene. Schmitter and Sika (2017) argue that the transitions of the Arab Spring were troubled because they unfolded in settings that are less favorable than those of third-wave transitions. They highlight, nevertheless, that within this generally disparaging context, Tunisia and Egypt were the countries “most viable for democratic transitions” (445).¹⁶⁵ Nader Hashemi (2013) revisits an older current in the study of transitions and argues that Tunisia’s class structure, particularly Elnahda’s representation of a democratic middle-class, is responsible for its successful democratization. Following more recent hypotheses in the study of transitions, some argue that Tunisia’s apolitical military – or the lack of the “khaki” option (Brumberg and Salem 2020, 113) – accounts for Tunisia’s anomaly of successful democratization (Bellin 2018, 448; Erdoğan 2020, 63–66; Greene and Jefferis 2016). This hypothesis usually rests on a comparison between Tunisia and Egypt (i.a. Bellin 2018, 447–48; Stepan 2012, 94).

These factors do not explain the polarization that brought Tunisia to the brink of civil war in 2013. Retrospectively, the lack of a strong military, the middle-class constituency of Elnahda, and the comparatively favorable context of Tunisia’s transition contributed to Tunisia’s successful democratization. But notwithstanding these favorable factors, Tunisia was on the brink of the abyss in the summer of 2013.

The “transitology” literature does not explain how Tunisia dodged this doomful fate in the summer of 2013. Despite its transitional crisis in 2013, Tunisia managed to dodge this unfortunate fate and concluded a successful democratic transition in 2014 after intensive reconciliation talks. It remains an “anomaly” in its geographic context (Masri 2017).

The analyses discussed above contribute to our understanding of Tunisia’s successful transition. But they neither aid us in understanding how this process unfolded on the ground nor in appreciating the contingency of its success.

¹⁶⁵ While it briefly mentions Elnahda’s compromise in Tunisia, the article mainly reflects on the Arab Spring in light of the “usual suspects” that influence the outcomes of transitions.

6.2.3 Supplementing existing explanations

This chapter builds on and connects three lines of investigation that exist in the literature:

The first is **(a) a nuanced account of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis**. In his seminal work on Muslim Brotherhood modeled movements, Nathan Brown argues that whether and how movements on the margin of the political system invest in the political process depend on the rewards for such investment and the risks associated with remaining on the margin of the political system (Brown 2012, 9). Brown's "inclusion-politicization" hypothesis encourages a comparative investigation of Elnahda's inconsistent behavior during the transition: How did Elnahda's politicization process lead to its polarizing behavior from their electoral success in 2011 until the Errahil political deadlock in the summer of 2013?¹⁶⁶ More importantly, how did this give way to its various compromises during the later months of 2013 and the subsequent role these compromises played in the success of the transition in Tunisia in 2014?

The explanation offered in this chapter highlights that a political game that is characterized by irreconcilable claims on the identity of the state motivates actors to play an exclusivist polarized political game. The dissent on state identity between the Islamists and the secularists in Tunisia motivated Elnahda to capitalize on its electoral success and exclude its opponents from the transitional process. In other words, between the ousting of Ben Ali and Tunisia's transitional crisis, the political system presented Elnahda with an opportunity to dominate the political process and to exclude its opponents. The irreconcilability of the secularist and the Islamist claim on the identity of the state at this time created a zero-sum political game in which the opportunity was to exclude or get excluded. After the leaders of both camps met in August 2013 and decided to end this irreconcilability, political actors, particularly, Elnahda, compromised on central key constitutional phrases as well as on various political battles during the subsequent rounds of national reconciliation talks. That way, the dissent on state identity politicized Elnahda into exclusion while resolving this dissent politicized it into "moderation"- to invest in a democratic outcome.

The second relevant line of investigation in the literature highlights **(b) the understudied role that religion plays during transitions**. Stepan and Linz (2013) conclude their reflections on the Arab Spring transitions by pointing towards religion, particularly Islam, as an understudied variable in democratization theory. Inspired by the role religion played, they inquire whether religion can play a positive role during processes of transition.

One way in which religion (could) interfere with transitions is when one or more relevant political actors attempt to identify the state with religion. Tunisia's Islamists certainly did. This chapter

¹⁶⁶ This is the point where members resigned from the NCA en masse protesting political violence and Elnahda's infiltration of the transition.

shows that in the case of Tunisia, religion had no consistent impact on the process of transition. At some point, religion was intertwined with dissenting claims on the identity of the state. In this constellation, religion was an integral part of an exclusivist game that halted Tunisia's transition. But later on, Tunisia's Islamists, led by Elnahda played a central role in the reconciliation process that led to Tunisia's successful transition. The ways religion interacts with processes of democratic transition is worth investigating. The analysis below shows that religion plays a relevant role in transitions when it is intertwined with claims on the identity of the state.

The third questions **(c) the conditions that motivate secular democratic actors to prefer a return to despotism instead of supporting democratization during transitional periods.** Stepan's later work (2018) stresses that the behavior of secular democratic parties is of pivotal importance. It illustrates how in some cases the democratic secular forces become part of a "constituency of coercion" that prefers to halt democracy "because they are afraid that free elections will be won by Islamists who threaten them even more than the existing secular authoritarian regime" (5).

Below, this chapter shows that because Elnahda's claim on state identity was fundamentally different from that of the secular forces who wanted Tunisia to be a civic state secular state, the secularists in Tunisia chose to resort to polarization and to contemplate some form of a coup and a return to the state-security state in 2013. The reason Tunisia dodged this fate is that both political actors chose to compromise on their positions regarding the identity of the state when their leaders secretly met in August 2013.

The exclusive dynamics that result from a dissent on state identity is a common denominator to these above lines of investigation. Taken together, these lines of inquiry discussed above point towards important questions and inquiries that are addressed by the approach in this chapter. By focusing on the impact of this dissent on the process of writing the constitution, the evolution of the constitutional text, and the broader transitional context, the remaining of this chapter illustrates how this dissent produced a transition crisis in Tunisia, and how it got resolved.

6.3 The way to exclusion: Dissent on state identity and Tunisia's transitional crisis

This section traces the impact of the dissent on state identity on the evolution of the constitutional text, the discussions surrounding each draft, and the broader battles that were fought throughout the period between these three drafts. It shows how the dissent on state identity between the secularists and the Islamists polarized the constitutional writing process in the NCA, leading up to the political stalemate of July 2013. That way, I structure the analysis

chronologically with a focus on the constitutional drafts and their deliberations in the NCA as milestones of the Tunisian transition.

The Tunisian constitution passed through 3 drafts before its finally endorsed version: the very first draft in December 2012, the April 2013, and the June 2013 drafts. Each of these drafts was surrounded by explosive discussions in the NCA on how to phrase and codify the character of the Tunisian state in the text. Before the final draft that was crafted after the reconciliation between the Islamists and the secularists, no draft was able to successfully mitigate the irreconcilable claims of these actors on state identity. In fact, each of these drafts evoked polarized fights in the NCA; the last of which in June 2013 triggered a wave of resignations of seculars in the NCA.

The disagreements on the character of the state in the constitution and its writing process revolved around two particular issues: (i) the position of Islam as a defining character of the state— as opposed to the “civic” character that the secularists demanded. The second (ii) is the status of human and women rights that the Islamists worked hard to confine by religion while the secularists fought to liberate from any confinement.

Despite revolving around these two points (i) and (ii), the dissent on state identity in the constitution and its writing process manifested itself in quarrels about different constitutional clauses at different points in time. (i) revolved around whether to include a direct reference to *shari’a* in the first draft of the constitution in 2012, it centered around whether to refer to the teachings of Islam as a constituent element to the whole constitutional text in the permeable in the second draft in April 2013. In the third draft of June 2013, a disagreement on the newly introduced clause guaranteeing the freedom of conscience as well as the extent to which the constitution guarantees the civic nature of the state in June 2013 were other manifestations of the same disagreement. (ii) The contention surrounding human and women's rights played out in different disagreements as well. While early disagreements were on whether to refer to women as the “complements” of men in the constitution, later disagreements revolved around whether to have an explicit clause stating the equality of both men and women.

6.3.1 The first sign of the trouble: prologue

Whereas the ghost of the historic identity-dissent between the secularist and the Islamist have always lurked in the background of the Tunisian political process, it came to the forefront only after the NCA elections in 2011. Despite the political difficulties and the various street

confrontations that Tunisia witnessed between January and the first democratic elections in October 2011, the general atmosphere was one of relative unity. Most political forces united in protesting the close relationship between the transitional government installed after Ben Ali and the old regime and called for the reshuffling of the government and the drafting of a new constitution by an elected assembly. Three demonstrations known as Kasbah 1, 2, and 3 gathered thousands of people and resulted in the resignation of the transitional government and the establishment of the High Authority for the Realization of the Objectives of the Revolutions. This high authority organized the elections of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

This apparent national unity changed shortly after the election of the NCA that brought the *Troika* government to power. While more than a hundred political parties emerged right after Ben Ali's ouster, Elnahda was the party to secure most of the seats (89 out of 217) in the NCA. Elnahda promised compromises and consensus-based politics. This convinced two of the larger secular parties The Congress for the Republic (henceforth, CPR) and Ettakatol to enter in a coalition government with Elnahda (the *Troika*) despite their pre-election declaration to not collaborate with Islamists (Haugbølle et al. 2017, 18). The first sign of trouble was soon to follow. the first statement Hamadi Al Gibaly, the Secretary-General of Elnahda, after the establishment of the government, is that Elnahda entered an era of the sixth caliphate. This was, of course, seen by the secular political forces as an attempt by Elnahda to change the identity of Tunisia and establish an Islamic state (Alany 2017, 210–11). The hopes for a consensus-driven political process that characterized the pre-election period had changed after Elnahda's domination of the constituent assembly elections.

In the NCA, the dissent was on state identity and not on the boundaries of the political community or the identity of the Tunisian people. There was no disagreement on the identity of the Tunisian people, nor on the boundaries of its political community. All political forces agreed from the very beginning that the constitution should reflect the Islamic identity of the Tunisian *people*. They also agreed that this identity is open to the heritage of other civilizations. This agreement had been evident since the very first session of the NCA until the conclusion of the transition in 2014 (The Constituent Assembly 2012c, 155, 2012a, 121–28, 2012d, 171).¹⁶⁷ The dissent was rather on the character the state represents: whether Islam is a source of legislation, whether it is a constituent pillar of the constitution, and whether the constitution

¹⁶⁷ Political actors never disagreed on the identity references of the Tunisian people or on who belongs to the political community.

guarantees the civil non-religious character of the state. During the NCA's first session, Sobhi Ateeq, Elnahda's spokesman, stated clearly that Islam has been oppressed by Ben Ali's regime and emphasized that "the new constitution has to be based on Islamic principle" and that Islam is "the main identity reference of the Tunisian people" (The Constituent Assembly 2012b, 67). Other political forces echoed this understanding. The secularists asserted that "no one can deny the Arabic and the Islamic identities of this land"; Ettakatol, one of Elnahda's secular partners in the *Troika* government, similarly highlighted that "the reference (*Almarje'ia*) is the affinity that our [the Tunisian] people have towards the teachings of Islam" (75).¹⁶⁸ Similarly, both the Islamists and the secularists agreed that this Islamic identity is open toward surrounding civilizations (67, 79). In this way, political actors agreed that Islam is the main cultural and identity reference of the Tunisian people, and that it does not hinder borrowing some aspects of other civilizations.

The dissent on state identity was clear during the first session of the NCA that took place on the 28th of February 2012. In that session, the political blocs¹⁶⁹ convened to present their general goals in the NCA and visions for the drafting process. Elnahda asserted that because "Islam did not witness in its entire history anything like a separation between the sacred and the temporal" references to Islam should not be "mere polemics" but should rather "guide core state legislations" and set the "building blocks of the state" (67). Other political forces saw the relationship between Islam and the state in a different light. For instance, the democratic bloc stressed that *Almarje'ia* of Islam is complemented by another reference to "the civic nature of the state, freedom of belief, and the freedom of conscience" (72). Ettakatol expressed a similar belief that "we [Tunisians] need a civic state with all the meanings the word bears"; this civic state needs to guarantee "a complete equality of men and women" and "the freedom of belief and conscious" (76), without restricting such guarantees by any mention to the specificities of the Tunisian people. This shows that whereas political forces shared the view that Islam is a basis of the cultural and civilizational identity of the Tunisian people, they harbored very different views regarding its place in the state: Whereas Elnahda believed Islam to define the character of Tunisia, other political forces claimed that a "civic" should characterize the identity of the Tunisian state.

¹⁶⁸ Identical views were expressed by various political blocs: *Al Mo'tammar* (The Constituent Assembly 2012b, 75) *Al Horeya Walkarama* (78), *Al'areeda Alsha'bya* (83), and *Al Horeya Waldemocratya* (78).

¹⁶⁹ Due to various vote fragmentation among the many parties that were established after the fall of Ben Ali, parties created various coalitions or "blocs" in the NCA.

The subsequent sessions clearly showed that the secularists and Elnahda have very different views on Tunisia's state identity. This manifested itself in two disagreements even before the publication of the first constitutional draft. The first surrounded Elnahda's supported phrase that rendered women as "complementary" to men (The Carter Center 2014, 84–85). The second was Elnahda's early flirtation with the idea of including a direct reference to *shari'a* in the constitution (The Carter Center 2014, 80). Both issues were quite contentious and marked the early symptoms of the dissent on state identity between the seculars and the Islamists in Tunisia.

Elnahda eventually agreed to refrain from referencing *shari'a* in the constitution and to abstain from assigning women a complementary role in society. But the status and rights of women in the constitution remained a long-lasting issue of contention (Marks 2014, 22–23).¹⁷⁰ The first draft of the constitution featured a similar clause that assigned men and women complementary roles in society, yet with no explicit reference that women are the complements of men. Unlike the status of women in the constitution, the direct reference to *shari'a* in the constitution did not constitute as much of a long-lasting contention since Ghannouchi decided to abstain from mentioning it in the constitution.¹⁷¹ In a lecture delivered at the Brookings Institute in May 2013, Ghannouchi qualified Elnahda's compromise because "the constitution has to contain only what all people agree about" (2013, 14:40-15:00). He stressed that Elnahda "could have formed [its] government by getting the support of independents, but we [Elnahda] chose to govern in a coalition" to evade ideological polarization (7:00-8:20). He believed that Elnahda's concession will serve as a basis for the co-existence of Islamists and secularists (9:00-10:00).

Finally, the first sign of polarization of the broader context of the transition became evident after the *Troika* government came to power. Because of the mounting zero-sum political dynamic, Elnahda utilized its newly won position in the national assembly and the government to exclude opponents and appoint their followers in all key state institutions. Elnahda was under the impression that if it fails to dominate the political scene, the secular coalition under Nida Tounis will work to exclude it from the political scene. This process came

¹⁷⁰ The contention around the role of religion in the new Tunisian state had taken various other forms.

¹⁷¹ As discussed below, some members still advocated an explicit reference to *shari'a* during the NCA sessions, but these calls were not widespread.

to be known as the “Ikhwanization” of the state, which was also paralleled elsewhere in the Arab world (Alany 2017, 210).¹⁷²

6.3.2 The August 2012 draft: What does Tunis stand for and the evolution of an exclusivist game

a) What Tunisia embodies: Dissent on state identity

The first draft of the Tunisian constitution was issued in August 2012. It was the work in progress of the various subcommittees of the NCA to arrive at a general understanding of the constitutional project. The text was still at its very infant stage and did not constitute a real attempt at a draft of the constitutional document. In fact, it was named “the project of a constitutional draft” to indicate its character as a work in progress.

Elnahda and its secular opponents disagreed on two issues during the NCA sessions that were scheduled to discuss this infant text in October 2012. The first was the references to the Islamic and the civil characters of the state. The second was a disagreement on the universality and status of Human and women's Rights in the constitution.

The disagreement on the Islamic vs. civil character of the Tunisian state played out in two constitutional clauses. The first was the opening statement of the second paragraph of the permeable which lays out the constituent principles on which the whole constitution rests. In the August draft, this sentence declared “the core principles of Islam” as one instituting element of the whole constitutional text (The Constituent Assembly 2012e, 3). During the discussions that followed in the NCA, members of Elnahda argued that Islam is not adequately entrenched in the permeable of the constitutional draft. One member warned that a “superficial” reference to the core principles of Islam is not enough. He highlighted that the Ben Ali regime had ignored a similar phrase in the previous constitution and emphasized the need to entrench Islam in the constitution so that it underlies all the clauses as well as to include a clause that explicitly reads “Shari’a is a source of legislation” in the permeable (The Constituent Assembly 2012c, 156).¹⁷³ Various members of the secular parties protested a reference to the core principles of Islam as “constituent” elements of the constitution without an equal assertion of the “civil” character of the state (The Constituent Assembly 2012a, 121;136, 2012c, 158, 2012d, 173). One member from the *Democratic Bloc*, for instance, suggested replacing “constituting on the

¹⁷² In this book, I discussed a similar process by the AK party in Turkey. The most visible example of this trend after the Arab Spring was the behavior of Egypt’s Justice and Development party.

¹⁷³ Various other members of Elnahda expressed similar views regarding Islam, but they rarely argued for the inclusion of *Shari’a* (The Constituent Assembly 2012a, 123;155).

core principles of Islam” by “holding on (*tamasok*) to the teachings of Islam” (2012a, 128); another protested the lack of adequate reference to a constituent power of the “civil” state (2012a, 136).

The second was the first clause of the general principles section which read “Tunis is an independent sovereign state; Arabic is its language and Islam is its religion” (The Constituent Assembly 2012e, 4). Elnahda’s position was identical to its position regarding the phrase in the permeable; its members advocated adding Islam as the state’s religion and a source of its legislation. The secularists argued for the necessity of including a direct reference to the “civil” character of the state in the first clause (2012a, 121; 132). One member of Eltakattol bloc protested that the “civil” character of the state was not included in the general principles and advocated for including it in the first clause to read “Tunisia is a free, independent, and a civic country. Arabic is its language and republicanism is its political system” (2012c, 155).

The disagreement on the universality of Human and women’s rights was also featured in two clauses. The first was whether to explicitly mention the universality of Human Rights in the permeable and Tunisia’s ratification of related treaties. While Elnahda advocated against such references, its secular opponents stressed the importance of doing so. This disagreement emanated from the dissent on state identity. Elnahda was against granting Human Rights a universal character in the constitution because, as El Naggar, a prominent Elnahda member, puts it during the discussions in the NCA “it subordinates all other sources of Human Rights [...] we have the Quran which is the highest source of all these rights yet we do not include it in the constitution, so how come we include the universal Human Rights declaration” (2012a, 138). The secular members, on the other hand, protested that the general principles section and the permeable lack a reference to the totality of Human Rights “as indicated in the universal declaration” (136), and stressed the necessity of codifying Tunisia’s “ratification of Human Rights treaties” (The Constituent Assembly 2012c, 151).

The second was whether to add a clause explicitly stating the equality between men and women in the basic principles section. Secularists and Islamists disagreed on the position of women in the constitution because they harbored different visions of the identity that the state embodies. Whereas Elnahda, despite its earlier compromise on the issue during the workings of the sub-committees, protested such inclusion, various members of the opposition advocated for a constitutionally vested gender equality. Elnahda argued that the constitution should not

include a special reference to women's rights; instead, one member argued that it should include a clause detailing "family rights" instead (2012c, 155). Others protested the removal of the clause that assigned a "complementary role" men and women play in the family (2012a, 129).¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, members of the opposition blocs emphasized the need to include a clause stating that "women and men are equals in rights and duties", or at least stronger commitments to women's rights (2012d, 161). Some oppositional members, referring indirectly to Elnahda, accused "some political parties" of trying to strip women of their rights acquired under the personal status code (172-173). These disagreements on the status of women and Human Rights in the constitution emanated from the very different views Elnahda and the secularists had on the character of the state. The Islamists believed that the state sponsors family rights and sub-ordinate Human Rights to religion; the secularists believed that the state should guarantee absolute equality of women to men and place Human Rights above all else, even religion.

Elnahda and its secular opponents had irreconcilable claims on the character of the post-Ben Ali Tunisian state. This fundamental disagreement made achieving a consensual new constitution hardly possible without a substantial compromise by political actors on these claims. But such a compromise would be a threat to the political future of both Elnahda and its secular opponents. For both actors, a compromise on their claim would have meant living in a Tunisia that does not represent its authentic symbolic identity.

b) Political exclusion heightened by violence

This dissent on state identity polarized the wider context of the transition and installed a zero-sum exclusivist game between the Islamists and the secularists in Tunisia. This context rendered attempts at reconciliation near impossible. It also clustered the political scene in Tunisia around two polarized camps. In this dreadful context, the assassination of the secular politician Chokri Bela'id was the cherry on top of the poisoned political cake.

The exclusivist dynamics that arose from the dissent on state identity sabotaged the first attempt at national dialogue in Tunisia. In October 2012, while heated discussions were taking place in the constituent assembly, the UGGT launched a round of national dialogue to ease the mounting political tensions. Elnahda convinced its partner the CPR in the *Troika* government to boycott the national dialogue, refusing to sit at one table with Nida Tounis (Boubekeur 2016,

¹⁷⁴ This clause was reinserted in the following draft that was issued in April 2013.

114–16; The Carter Center 2014, 26). Elnahda justified its position by arguing that it refuses to enter negotiations with segments of the old regime that are represented in Nida Tounis. But its readiness to enter into political negotiations with other political actors that were affiliated with the old regime such as some members of the UGTT points to another conclusion. Elnahda viewed any negotiations or compromise with Nida Tounis to be a step towards its exclusion from the political process. Any dialogue with the secular forces would have necessarily included some compromise on the issues that pertain to the identity of the Tunisian state and that were contentiously fought in the constituent assembly as discussed above. Amid heightened criticism of the *Troika* government, entering the national dialogue that is organized by the secular-leaning UGTT meant for Elnahda that it would be forced to give more concessions. To sit at one table with the secularists would mean that Elnahda is ready to compromise on its claim on the identity of the post-Ben Ali Tunisia. The dissent on the identity of the state between Nida Tounis and Elnahda has, thus, predestined this early national dialogue attempt to fail.

The political struggle outside the NCA clustered also around the polarization between Islamic and secular actors. Elnahda continued the process of “Ikhwanization” of the state by wide-reaching power-grabs or what some called “conquering the state” (Somer 2017). Elnahda used the legitimacy and access to power that its electoral victory granted to exclude its political opponents where and when it could, empower its allies, and guard other more radical Islamists. Its reluctance to police the more radical Islamist groups and its readiness to support the closure of art exhibits testifies to the extent to which Elnahda was ready to go in order to entrench an Islamic identity in the “new Tunis” (cf. Bellin 2018, 463; cf. Boubekeur 2016, 114). Moreover, Elnahda excluded its smaller secular partners in the *Troika* government from the decision-making process. This behavior had already been clear since May 2012 when Elnahda’s Prime Minister Al Jebali extradited the former Libyan Prime Minister without the authorization of the CPR President Marzouki. Elnahda followed a similar pattern when it appointed or nominated governors and the heads of various national institutions as well as when it conducted negotiations with foreign institutions such as donors “without consultation among the [T]roika” (Boubekeur 2016, 114).

The secularists, despite their different ideological orientations, joined forces to counterweight the Islamists. In December 2012, Nida Tounis established the Union of Tunisia (UFT) so that to oppose Elnahda and its allies (Boubekeur 2016, 116). In addition to the various street mobilizations that were mobilized by the secular forces in opposition to the increasing

Islamization of Tunisian politics, they accused Elnahda of using the groups that were formed during the revolution that came to be known as LPR to carry out violent attacks on the protestors (The Carter Center 2014, 27).

The polarization between the Islamists and the secularists heightened after the assassination of Chokri Belaid in February 2013. The assassination of Belaid, an outspoken critic of the *Troika* government, and particularly of Elnahda, evoked a belief among secularists that Islamists are ready to use militant tactics to silence their opponents. Belaid himself accused Elnahda of “giving the green light” to political assassinations one day before his death (Hauslohner 2013). As a response, the UGTT called for a nationwide protest and strike to protest political violence, while Belaid’s family openly accused Elnahda of complacency in his killing (Chrisafis 2013). The resulting street protests revived the revolutionary slogan of “the people demand the toppling of the regime”, echoing the demands that were made by members of Nida Tounis (BBC 2013b; Knecht 2013). Angered by the assassination, some protestors attacked Elnahda’s headquarters at various places across the country (Hauslohner 2013). The assassination of Chokri Belaid was not the reason behind the mounting political crises,¹⁷⁵ but it was certainly a trigger and a paramount milestone in the evolution of the transitional crisis in Tunisia.

Elnahda’s rejection of its own Prime Minister’s proposal to defuse the crisis by replacing the *Troika* with a technocratic government shows that more than the government was at stake (BBC 2013b). While sacrificing the coalition government in which Elnahda is *de jure* only one of three partners seems like a fair sacrifice in return for the de-escalation of the crisis, such a compromise would result in a reduced hegemony in the NCA. In turn, it would decrease Elnahda’s influence on the process of drafting the new constitution. Whilst Elnahda sensed that submitting to any compromise would correspond to a first step on the road of its exclusion from the political process, for Nida Tounis and its secular allies, a continued Islamist hegemony in the *Troika* and the NCA threaten their exclusion from the political process and the religious transformation of the post- Ben Ali state. Polarized disagreements regarding the legitimacy of the *Troika* were certainly one ramification of Belaid’s assassination. But the polarization between the Islamists and the secularists was deeper than their disagreement on the government or its failure to protect oppositional figures.

¹⁷⁵ It is imperative to mention reiterate here that the political assassinations in Tunisia played a crucial role in triggering the crisis but were not its main causes. To be sure, the political crisis in Tunisia did not resolve by bringing the killers of Belaid or Brahmi to justice, but by resolving the dissent on state identity.

The subjects of disagreement in the constitutional draft as well as the behavior of the relevant political actors after its publication and their polarization into Islamists and secularist camps show that their identity disagreement was an integral part of the mounting political crisis in Tunisia. The disagreements on the balance between the reference to the identity of the state in the constitution and the status and universality of Human and women's rights stemmed from the actors' different conceptions of the ideals that the state embodies. Until the assassination of Belaid, the broader political context was one in which Elnahda continued to conquer the state and the secularists continued to politically rally under the banner of Nida Tounis and mobilize against Elnahda. Regardless of whether Elnahda played any (in)direct role in the assassination of Belaid, the secular forces refused any solution short of a new government and some voices called for new elections (AlJazeera 2013b; Ben Belqasem 2013). They joined forces to withdraw 90 members from the constituent assembly in protest of the assassination (Amara 2013b), signaling their refusal to participate in the transitional process as long as it is dominated by Elnahda. Elnahda declined to offer concessions even if suggested by their own head of government. The evolution of the constitutional text, the process of its discussion, and the broader political context taken together point to the mounting polarization between secularists and Islamists that is, as Shadi Hamid notes, a product of the disagreement on how "[...] the future of these countries [...] should look like" (Hauslohner 2013).

6.3.3 The April 2013 draft: Continued dissent, the intensification of exclusion, and the failure to reconciliation

The second draft of the constitution was published on the 22nd of April 2013. Like its predecessor, the draft fell short of enjoying a consensus from both the Islamists and the secularists. The irreconcilability of the Islamists' and secularists' claims on the identity of the state made it impossible to arrive at a constitution that pleases both. The result was an intensification of the exclusivist political game in which each camp worked towards dominating the political game and excluding the other.

a) The failure to resolve the dissent: Continued dissent

The dissent on state identity continued to evoke contentious disagreements on the status of Human and women's Rights in the second draft of the constitution at was published on the 22nd of April 2013, shortly after the assassination of Belaid. The second draft of the constitution failed to resolve the disagreement between Elnahda and the secular opposition regarding equality between men and women as well as regarding the universal character of Human

Rights. Instead, the April draft juxtaposed in its basic principles section both Elnahda's and the secularists' views. Whereas the draft explicitly states that "men and women have equal rights and duties and are equal before the law" (The Constituent Assembly 2013e, 3), it describes the role of men and women as "complementary in the building of the society and the state" (4). Consequently, Nida Tounis and its allies in the NCA echoed the same concerns they voiced after the first draft (Ben-Brek 2013a; Bou-Abdallah 2013; Marks 2014, 6).¹⁷⁶ As will become clear after the subsequent draft of June 2013, Elnahda maintained that absolute equality between men and women and women's rights could be better achieved by referring to the religiously endowed family rights.

In a similar vein, the April draft did not resolve the contention surrounding the position of international agreements, particularly the ones that concern Human Rights and whether to acknowledge the universal character thereof. Similar to the case of women's rights, the April draft juxtaposed the secularists' position with that of Elnahda. Article 21 of the basic principles places international agreements higher than the law but lower than the constitution (The Constituent Assembly 2013e, 5). This would have, theoretically, allowed legislators to dodge Tunisia's international obligations towards both Human Rights and the rights of women.¹⁷⁷ To be sure, while the draft of the constitution cites Islam and "the principles of universal Human Rights" as constituent principles of the constitution, it limits this universality to what "is in character with the *specificities of the Tunisian people*" (2).

b) Political battles fought to annihilate: the intensification of exclusion

The broader political battles during this period were fought in light of these irreconcilable views on state identity and in the context of exclusivist political dynamics. Besides the constitutional struggle, four battles were fiercely fought and polarized; some of these battles were also fought within the constitution:¹⁷⁸ disagreements on whether the constitution establishes a presidential or a parliamentary system (Al-Galasy 2013; see: Ben-Brek 2013a; Bers 2013; Bou-Abdallah 2013), a disagreement on the election law and its date (Erdoğan 2020, 53), disagreements surrounding the creation of a constitutional court and its

¹⁷⁶ These concerns were shared by international organizations (Human Rights Watch 2013).

¹⁷⁷ Tunisia is a signatory of various international treaties to protect Human Rights and to guard women against all forms of discrimination.

¹⁷⁸ The disagreements surrounding the LPR and the constitutional court's mandate were not featured in the April draft but were in fact featured in the subsequent June 2013 draft.

mandate, and a disagreement on whether to outlaw the LPR groups (Ben-Brek 2013b; see: Boubekeur 2016, 118; Democracy Reporting International 2018, 6).

These battles are common to transitions and could have, theoretically, been resolved within a democratic process. But the exclusionary dynamics that the drastically different views on state identity sparked turned these battles into zero-sum games:

Because it was the most organized political force in Tunisia at that time, Elnahda called for a parliamentary system as it recognized that its chances to dominate the next parliament are high. In contrast, the secular parties of the UFT, and among them Nida Tounis, insisted on a presidential system because it constituted their only chance to rally behind a widely popular public figure who would stand a chance against Elnahda's presidential candidate (Marks 2014, 26–28). The disagreement on the sequencing of the electoral process reflected a similar mutual fear of Elnahda and the UFT of an unlevelled political process that favors the winner of the first electoral procedure. Knowing that its chances are high to dominate the parliament, Elnahda called for sequentially prioritizing legislative over presidential elections. The secular coalition feared the unfairness of any subsequent elections under a parliament dominated by Islamist forces and called for holding the presidential elections first (see also M'rad 2015, 85–87).

The UFT opposed Elnahda's attempt to immunize the laws that were passed by the NCA during the transitional period from the oversight of the constitutional court because this immunity was aimed to exclude members of Nida Tounis from political office. Elnahda wanted to immunize the law that it later proposed in the NCA, which would have restricted members of the old regime from practicing politics (Aljazeera 2013). It feared that this attempt, as well as other laws it works to pass by its sizable existence in the NCA, would later be overturned by its opponents in the constitutional court. The members of Nida Tounis recognized the negative consequences of this move on their political future and successfully prevented Elnahda from including this clause in the April draft.¹⁷⁹ Finally, Elnahda disagreed with the secularists who saw a necessity to outlaw the LPR groups because, for Elnahda, the LPR constituted a handy street force that would be useful if it ever needed to counter-mobilize against the street protests of secular opponents while maintaining only vague links to Elnahda.

¹⁷⁹ As will be discussed in the next section, Elnahda included a whole section of transitional clauses in the subsequent June draft, in which they immunized the NCA's legislations for three years after the establishment of the constitutional court

The secularists considered the LPR the secret militant wing of Elnahda and called for its dissolution (Boubekeur 2016, 118).¹⁸⁰

The irreconcilable claims on state identity that the Islamists and the secularists harbored did thus not only hurdle the constitutional drafting process; it also motivated them to fight battles intended to exclude each other. The attempts to juxtapose both visions in the constitution were therefore satisfying to neither. Also, the disagreements between Elnahda and the secular forces on the political system, on the mandate of the constitutional court, and on the dissolution of the LPR were not discrepant policy preferences that could be resolved within a democratic system. They turned rather into existential disagreements because the actors involved had two visions of state identity that could not coexist.

c) Reconciliation destined to failure

In the context of fundamental disagreements on the identity of the state, attempts at national reconciliation could not hinder the mounting political deadlock that crystallized in July 2013. Countless attempts were initiated by political actors to mediate and ease the political tension. But until the initiation of the later National Quartet-sponsored national dialogue, no attempt succeeded at resolving the exclusionary political atmosphere of Tunisia's transition.

Nevertheless, some of these earlier rounds of dialogue successfully addressed issue-specific disagreements between political actors. Even though these played no role in preventing Tunisia's transitional crisis, they facilitated the later work of the Quartet's national dialogue by resolving some less fundamental yet important transitional issues between the Islamists and the secularists. For instance, the national dialogue that was initiated by Elnahda and CPR had brought Nida Tounis and Elnahda to the same negotiating table for the first time, often behind closed doors. It also succeeded to strike agreements on issues "such as semi parliamentary rather than a presidential system, the sequencing of legislative and presidential elections and the electoral law" (Boubekeur 2016, 118).¹⁸¹ It, nevertheless, failed in garnering and agreement the situation of women's and human rights, nor the civic and religious characters of the state in the constitution.

¹⁸⁰ The issue regarding the dissolution of the LPR had been ongoing since the 2011 elections (The Carter Center 2014, 64).

¹⁸¹ The disagreements on some of these issues, such as the sequencing of the elections and the electoral law, reappeared later.

6.3.4 Towards a political deadlock: The June 2013 draft and Errahil crisis

The resolution of these issue-based disagreements did not prevent a political deadlock between the Islamists and the secularists. In July 2013, the secularist forces resigned *en masse* from the NCA, signalling their refusal to take part in a transitional process dominated by Elnahda. These resignations were accompanied by various street protests and sit-ins as well as sporadic clashes between Islamists and secularists.

While the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, a leftist politician and a vocal critic of Elnahda, was the direct trigger for the political deadlock, it was not the cause behind it. The deadlock stemmed rather from a continued dissent on what the state symbolically embodies. This resulted in a stalemate of the constitutional writing process. The 2013 constitutional draft expressed some of the issue-based agreements that were struck during the earlier round of national dialogue.¹⁸² But the failure of the Islamists and the secularists to compromise on their irreconcilable claims on the identity of the state continued to polarize and hurdle the constitutional writing process, bringing it to a stalemate.

The constitution continued to evoke disagreements on particularly two issues: The first is whether the state represents an Islamic or a secular identity. The permeable of this draft asserted that the constitution is instituted on, among other things, “the teachings of Islam” (The Constituent Assembly 2013f, 1); this was critically seen by Nida Tounis and its allies. The basic principles session also indicates that “[...] the state guarantees freedom of belief and conscience [...]” (3);¹⁸³ this was long viewed critically by Elnahda. The second issue was that of the newly added transitional law section. For the first time, the June draft institutionalized Elnahda’s earlier efforts to thwart the constitutional court’s ability to rule against any law that the NCA legislated during the transitional period for the duration of three years after the establishment of the court (34-35). That way, Elnahda could immunize its legislative attempts to exclude Nida Tounis.

¹⁸² It envisages a semi-parliamentary system with balances between the powers of the president and the prime minister (The Constituent Assembly 2013f, 15–23). It also avoided any reference to women's rights in the general principles and included equality between men and women in the rights and duties section (3-5). In addition, despite the resilience of the article that positions international agreements higher than the law but lower than the constitution (5), the draft omitted the earlier restriction to the universality of Human Rights that confined it within the “specificities of the Tunisian people” (1). The draft also reflected a new consensus on the creation and composition of the constitutional court (27-29)

¹⁸³ Elnahda’s agreement to include this clause after the National Quartet’s dialogue is considered one of its most historic compromises.

These issues sternly polarized the general sessions of the NCA that were dedicated to discussing the June draft and therefore halted progress on drafting a consensual constitution. The first discussion session was put to a halt after various secular members of the NCA protested the inclusion of the transitional justice section in the constitution. The session, which was scheduled on the 1st of July 2013, was interrupted as soon as Al Habib Khedr, the General Rapporteur of the constitution and a renowned Elnahda member, started presenting the constitution. They accused him and Elnahda of sneaking non-consensual clauses in the transitional justice section. The president of the NCA Moncef Marzouki was forced to abruptly pause the session, which was briefly resumed later to no less polarization (BBC 2013d). On the next day, an independent secular member of the assembly voiced his absolute refusal of the transitional clauses and accused Elnahda's general rapporteur of "hijacking" the constitution writing process to tailor it to their favor (The Constituent Assembly 2013b, 962).

Over the next weeks, the debates in the NCA polarized further. On the following day, for instance, an independent secular member of the assembly voiced his absolute refusal of the transitional clauses and accused Elnahda's general rapporteur of "hijacking" the constitution writing process to tailor it to their favor (The Constituent Assembly 2013b, 962). Days later, one of Elnahda's NCA members criticized the clause that assigns a civic character to the state and accused the secular forces of being "keener" on "oppressing the religious identity than on perpetrating a democratic state" (2013c, 1081). He argued that the secular forces aim to reinstall "[the] past tyranny and exclusions" (1082). On the same day, Reem Mahgoub, a renowned member of the Afaq Tounis opposition party warned that the constitution does not guarantee a civic state. She accused Elnahda of intentionally threatening the secular character of the state by keeping a statement in the preamble that institutes the whole constitution on the "teachings of Islam" (1076).¹⁸⁴ Al Habeeb Khedr defended this formulation and insisted that it had been a product of "the national dialogue consensus" (1080). He also defended the problematic transitional justice section and particularly its restriction on the constitutional court that makes it unable to rule against the constitutionality of the legislations that the NCA passed during the transition (ibid).¹⁸⁵ This restriction on the constitutional court played a critical role in fuelling the resignation of some secular opponents from the NCA after the first session on July the 1st

¹⁸⁴ Another member accused Elnahda of trying to impose "a religious state that is tailored to Elnahda" (The Constituent Assembly 2013c, 1075, for similar views see also 2013d, 1190).

¹⁸⁵ Khedr's position was briefly iterated by his vice few days earlier (The Constituent Assembly 2013a, 956).

and was an integral part of the secular protest against the “transitional clauses” section (Deutsche Welle 2013).

The assassination of Mohamed Brahmi on the 25th of July 2013 was the last strike that unleashed the full-fledged political deadlock between what Hatem M’rad (2015, 1) describes as “two irreconcilable camps”: the two irreconcilable conceptions of state identity. In the context of the mounting polarization since Belaid’s assassination and the failure of the June draft to evoke a consensus in the NCA, Brahmi’s assassination constituted a total “the rupture of trust” between the secularists and the Islamists and ended any dreams about a swift reconciliation (M’rad 2015, 26). The Tunisian secularists considered Brahmi’s assassination that had directly followed the mounting political deadlock in the NCA a sign of Islamists’ willingness to take the political battles outside of the political process. Following Brahmi’s assassination, the secular opposition, led by Nida Tounis, formed the “national salvation front” alliance that emphasized “national unity and [the] particular Tunisian identity” as opposed to Elnahda’s “foreign ideology” that is controlled by the transnational Muslim Brotherhood (Boubekeur 2016, 117). They mobilized rallies and called for street sit-ins who chanted “down with the Islamists” in front of the NCA to protest against the Elnahda-dominated-government’s lack of action to stop Brahmi’s assassination, while Brahmi’s family directly accused Elnahda of the assassination (AlJazeera 2013a; Amara 2013b). Even more, influenced by their Egyptian counterparts, some youth coalitions in Tunisia’s national salvation front organized signatures of citizens on a paper calling to overthrow the government (Beaumont 2013; Gall 2013).

Elnahda responded by accusing the secularists and their alliances of “pushing us [Tunisia] into the unknown, whether it is chaos, fighting, civil war, or the return of tyranny” (BBC 2013c). Elnahda was not willing to compromise on the hard-won seats that they occupied in the elections of October 2011 in the NCA. Elnahda’s Prime Minister Ali Larayedh highlighted that Elnahda is “against all calls to dissolve the government to create a vacuum” (BBC 2013c). More assertively, Ghannouchi stated that “Tunisia will not follow the Egyptian scenario ... We [Elnahda] will hold on” (Amara 2013b).

The political deadlock was not the *result* of Brahmi’s assassination;¹⁸⁶ it was rather about two political camps that could not envision a state that would encompass both of them. The quick arrest of the assassin did not prevent the growing political crisis (cf. Financial Times

¹⁸⁶ The Tunisian opposition did not view the killing of Brahmi as more political or threatening than the killing of Chokri Belaid. In fact, the perpetrator of both deeds was identified as the same person who belongs to a Salafi radical group (Amara 2013a).

2013). Because the disagreement they had was so fundamental, it was unresolvable by rounds of national dialogue. Issue-based disagreements were resolved only to reappear or to give way for new equally polarized ones. The dissent on state identity in Tunisia was the crack in the back of its transition.

6.4 The Great Compromise: Resolving the dissent and the democratic transition

6.4.1 The turning point in Paris: Resolving the dissent

The first and most crucial step towards the resolution of Tunisia's political deadlock and its democratic transition was the secret meeting between Ghannouchi and Essebsi on the 15th of August 2013. Due to its secrecy, it remains impossible to discern all the issues that were brought up during the meeting. However, the accounts of both Ghannouchi and Essebsi of this meeting reveal that they agreed on the criticality of the situation and the need to end the political polarization between the two views on the identity of Tunis. Essebsi, the leader of Nida Tounis, clearly confirms that the meeting was generic; it did not result in any "pacted" "deal" but rather on "the necessity to end the political deadlock" (Nesma T.V 2013). Ghannouchi stressed that this meeting "marked the start of the roadmap towards national unity that resulted in a constitution"; he insists that this meeting ran against the will of some political forces that want perpetuate Tunisia's divide into "a religious nation and a modernist nation" (Nesma T.V 2014). This secret meeting was, therefore, the founding stone towards resolving the most polarizing issue in the Tunisian transition: that the secularist and Islamist forces had drastically different conceptions of Tunisia's character.

One can also infer that the issues that both political figures continuously identified as substantive challenges to the transition process were among the issues discussed in their meeting. In an interview in December 2013, Essebsi responded to the question about the main fault lines between his party and Elnahda saying that "[t]here are ideological differences. They are for a religious state, and we are for a civil state. They have tried in the constitution to change the structure of the society. They want an Islamic society, and we are against that." (Weymouth 2013). Similarly, when asked about the role Islamic identity plays in dividing Tunisians in an interview in 2014, Ghannouchi said that the "coexistence of those two views [the secularist and the Islamist] of the role of Islam in the Tunisian society is not easy; as if the society is made up of two nations living as one nation" (Jebnoun 2014, 18). One can, thus, deductively conclude

that these different views on the identity of the state were among the issues that were necessary to discuss while both leaders agreed on the necessity to pave a way out of the political crisis.

The August meeting between Ghannouchi and Essebsi activated two interconnected processes that were essential for the resolution of the deadlock and the successful transition. The first was the political actors' willingness to offer substantial political compromises and concessions on previously stern positions. Until this meeting, the lack of this willingness destined earlier national reconciliation attempts to either failure or, at best, limited success in addressing specific issues but not to dodge the evolving political crisis. In this meeting, Ghannouchi and Essebsi agreed that the only way to resolve the political crisis is to offer enough compromises to render their previously held claims on the identity of the state reconcilable.

The second process was a consequence of the first. In the direct aftermath of this meeting, various political actors worked to provide political mechanisms that channel such willingness to compromise into concrete political processes. Two of these mechanisms worked in tandem to resolve the Tunisian transitional crisis. The first was the nationwide national dialogue that was sponsored by the Nobel-prize-winner National Quartet. The second was the so-called "consensus committee" inside the NCA that was tasked with the previously impossible task to reconcile different views on contentious constitutional clauses.¹⁸⁷

Both mechanisms were, in principle, not new to the Tunisian transitional scene; but they were politically successful only in light of the above-mentioned meeting. It was only after the charismatic leaders of both camps decided to work towards a compromise that finally a national dialogue initiative succeeds to reconcile the polarization in the Tunisian political scene. Also, the "consensus committee" had already existed since April 2012, but remained ineffective in reconciling the views of the secularists and the Islamists. Until August 2013, the committee had no legally binding power in the NCA. This meant that the compromises that political forces arrived at in this committee were void of meaning for the constitutional text as they were overlooked by the political factions in the NCA.¹⁸⁸ But after Ghannouchi met with Essebsi, the member of the NCA agreed to change its internal law to grant this committee a legally binding power.

¹⁸⁷ This committee was already established in 2012.

¹⁸⁸ For instance, the phrasing in the June 2013 draft that institutes the constitution on the teachings of Islam was one product of this committee; it nevertheless, as discussed above, evoked very explosive disagreements in the NCA.

Working together, both mechanisms delicately orchestrated a political consensus on the Tunisian constitution, securing concessions that were previously thought impossible. Through the “consensus committee” the secularists and the Islamists negotiated and provided concessions that enabled the committee to arrive at consensual clauses that were legally binding on both factions. When arriving at a consensus proved tricky, the Quartet’s national dialogue served as a benchmark for the members of the consensus committee to resort to (M’rad 2015, chap. V Section C). Despite the national dialogue’s reluctance to discuss the disagreement on specific constitutional clauses, its choice to instead guide the works of the consensus committee within the NCA was indispensable for the agreements that were struck in the consensus committee (The Carter Center 2014, 8). As Ghannouchi admits: “the dialogue made it easier to de-escalate the situation, which opened the way for the NCA to resume after interrupting its sessions in the summer of 2013” (Jebnoun 2014, 26–27).

This coordinated work secured compromises on the political actors’ claims on state identity in the constitutional text, paving the way towards Tunisia’s democratic transition in January 2014. Shortly after this meeting and even before the official launch of the national dialogue, the committee had already been able to strike a consensus between the Islamists and the seculars on one of the contentious issues in the permeable. It secured an agreement to change the reference to the teachings of Islam from a “constituent” principle on which the constitutional text is based to principles that the Tunisian people “cling” to (M’rad 2015, chap. V Section B-C). In the final version of the constitution, which was endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the NCA members, Elnahda endorsed the new reference to the teachings of Islam in the permeable. The new phrase states that the constitution is an “expression of Tunisians’ clinginess (*tamasok*)” to the teachings of Islam instead of the earlier reference that constituted the whole text on these teachings. The secularists have accepted the same expression in regards to the reference to the Universal Human Rights (The Constituent Assembly 2014, 2). Elnahda has also accepted article 6 which guarantees the freedom of conscience and faith whilst the seculars accepted its extension that gives the state a guardian role to “*to protect the sacred and to avert its demise*” (3). Elnahda also dropped its earlier attempt to include a clause in the “transitional law” section that would have immunized the legislations of the NCA for three years after the establishment of the constitutional court.¹⁸⁹ The constitution has also kept the spirit of the earlier June draft insofar as it continues to dodge a direct reference to the equality of men and women in the permeable and the basic principles

¹⁸⁹ There is no account of a contention on the restriction of the constitutional court’s oversight.

sections. Instead, it maintains vaguely contradictory references to the equality between men and women and the importance of the family in other sections.

6.4.2 Depolarization and the irrelevance of some battles

In addition to its role in this consensus forging process on the constitutional text, the Quartet's national dialogue was also able to resolve the transitional battles that had been fiercely polarized in light of the previous exclusivist political game. It resolved the most explosive power struggles such as the legitimacy of the Troika government and the sequencing of the elections. The dialogue consolidated agreements on the sequencing of the legislative and presidential elections and a semi-presidential political system (M'rad 2015, chap. IV–VI). Despite the sensitivity of the *Troika* government and its importance to the Islamists, the national dialogue was able to secure its long-awaited resignation, which tilted the power balance away from Elnahda and, arguably, facilitated further concessions from the Islamists.

The contention surrounding the Troika proved, however, the hardest to resolve among the issue-based disagreements. The secularists had consistently called for the resignation of the Troika, especially in times of heightened contention with Elnahda. Elnahda responded by highlighting the electoral legitimacy of the NCA and, subsequently, of the Troika. It even threatened the internal cohesion of the movement when it refused to accept its head of government's proposal to resign. During the Quartet's dialogue, Elnahda feared that sacrificing the Troika would compromise one important asset it had during the most decisive weeks of the transition; it, therefore, accepted to sign the Quartet's road map on the condition to be "certain about the role and profile of the head of government to be appointed, his precise powers and the nature of the [governments'] control of the [NCA]". It also demanded the preservation of the NCA and a guarantee for the return of the resigned members (M'rad 2015, chap. III section D). The Quartet struck a secret deal with Elnahda that satisfied the latter's demands without offering explicit guarantees.¹⁹⁰ Besides, it secured the return of the members who had resigned to the NCA. Elnahda consequently signed the Quartet's roadmap and accepted the concession to forego the *Troika* government that it had consistently battled to withhold.

In light of the new political atmosphere and the gradual transformation of the exclusivist political game to a more inclusive one, many of the earlier explosive battles lost their relevance. The legal status of the LPR, the mandate of the constitutional court, and the contention

¹⁹⁰ The content of this informal agreement remains unknown to this day (M'rad 2015, chap. III section D).

surrounding banning members of the ancien regime from political power, lost their relevance and did not constitute part of the political process. The new political dynamic the resulted from the meeting between Essebsi and Ghannouchi and the subsequent processes diminished the importance of these struggles. The fundamental disagreement between the secularists and the Islamists on the very character of the state they competed to govern produced exclusionary zero-sum political dynamics that motivated them to exclude one another. For both factions, the new political atmosphere crystallized the very real possibility of a coalition government that would necessitate their collaboration. The result is that some political battles lost relevance and disappeared from the political discussion.¹⁹¹

On the 26th of January 2014, The Tunisian constitution was put to a vote. It secured 200 against 12 votes in favor. With that, Tunisia concluded its long democratic transition. Later in the year 2014, free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections were held. Unlike earlier elections, the polarization between two camps – Islamists and secularists – waned. Elnahda secured around 27 percent of the votes, Nida Tounis around 37 percent, and other political parties gained substantial seats in the parliament. In December, Essebsi was voted as the first democratically elected president of the Republic of Tunisia.

The meeting between Ghannouchi and Essebsi was a turning point in the Tunisian story. The two political processes it set in motion, combined, were the driving forces behind Tunisia's democratic transition in 2014. The infrastructure of these processes had already existed in the Tunisian political context, but was activated by this pivotal meeting. Without these, the Tunisian story would have continued to move towards a dramatic ending. To be sure, until the start of the national dialogue, the political deadlock kept mounting and showed no sign of subsidence. The dissent on state identity amongst the Islamists and the secularists continued to haunt the political process until October 2013. After the assassination of Brahmi and until the beginning of the national dialogue talks in October 2013, the secularists continued to criticize Elnahda for its Islamist agenda, accused it of leniency towards violent jihadists, and pressured it to take a harder stance on the responsible Salafi groups (Amara 2013c; Amara and Heneghan 2013; Schäfer 2015, 20). In an interview with the Washington Post after an attack on the U.S.A embassy in Tunisia, Essebsi, the head of Nida Tounis, accused the government of “allow[ing] tens of thousands of people to [gather] around the embassy and then they sent very little police force” (Weymouth 2013). Yet, even after the secularists had succeeded to force Elnahda to

¹⁹¹ As discussed above, the constitutional clause that would have prevented the constitutional court from practicing oversight over these laws was also removed from the constitution.

outlaw the Ansar Al Shari'a group in August 2013 (BBC 2013a), El Ghannouchi still argued that "Salafists are Tunisia's sons just like communists and liberals are [...] we must not eliminate it from society" (Al Arabiya 2013). The political stalemate continued in Tunisia despite the UGTT's call for a national dialogue as early as July 30th. From the assassination of Brahmi in July until October of the same year, the constituent assembly failed to relaunch its sessions. Nida Tounis called for several general strikes and street protests against Elnahda and the troika and was able to convince the UGTT of supporting its calls (The Guardian 2013). The last of these calls was just one day before the national dialogue talks started (Associated Press 2015). This situation swiftly changed since the start of the national dialogue that was preceded by the secret Ghannouchi-Essebsi meeting and supplemented by the "consensus committee" in the NCA. These dodged Tunisia a political deadlock that could have resulted in the exclusion of one force and a resurgence of authoritarian rule or, worse, the disintegration of the political order and civil war.

6.5 Conclusion

The Tunisian case neatly illustrates the role that irreconcilable disagreements on state identity play in halting democracy and in providing a political atmosphere conducive to authoritarian rule;¹⁹² it also shows that resolving such dissent was an integral part of its successful democratic transition. In the summer of 2013, many anticipated either some form of an unlikely coup, or a collapse of the political order and protracted civil violence. In other words, the political forces in Tunisia were scenarios that occurred in its neighboring countries. Tunisia's favorable structural factors compared to its Arab neighbors, such as the apolitical role of the military and the degree of international support and internal cohesion might have posed Tunisia to a more promising outcome. Tunisia was, however, not far from the fate of its neighbors in 2013.

Transition processes are multifaceted. By examining the interaction between the constitutional process in Tunisia, the texts it produces, and the wider political context, my approach sheds light on the polarizing effect that dissent on state identity has on both the constitutional process and the wider political context. Not only were the different views of state identity a subject of explosive battles in the constitution, but they also turned political differences into existential disagreements. The Islamists and the secularists believed that one faction's win does not only resemble a political win. Instead, one actor's win was the annihilation of the other. Only by examining this interaction between the different

¹⁹² It did not only bring the Tunisian transition on the brink of collapse, but had also continuously motivated both the secularists and the Islamists to dominate the political system and pursue the exclusion of the other. As shown above, it motivated Elnahda to inflate and conquer all state institutions. The secular opposition responded by collaborating with their allies in state structures to pressure Elnahda; they also contemplated an "Egyptian scenario" when the crisis mounted.

dimensions of the Tunisian transition, can we better grasp the fierce battles that were fought between Elnahda and its opponents in Tunisia; this also allows us to comprehend the reasons behind the seemingly swift compromise in the Spring of 2013 and how the National Quartet was able to strike agreements on previously explosive political issues. When Ghannouch and Essebsi met in Paris in August of 2013, they laid the grounds for the historic compromise; they agreed on the necessity to put an end to the division between “two nations within one country”. With the help of the “consensus committee” that translated concessions to legally binding agreements on constitutional clauses, the Quartet’s national dialogue was a platform for a comprehensive solution. The zero-sum political atmosphere gave way to a healthier one and both factions chose to abandon their irreconcilable claims and collaborated towards a democratic transition. On the 26th of January 2014, the final version of the Tunisian constitution passed with an overwhelming majority, making Tunisia the “anomaly” of the Arab World.

7. Discussion

Chapters 4 through 6 showed that when relevant political actors have opposing claims on the identity of the state, they play an exclusivist political game that is conducive to authoritarianism. A consensus on state identity is, therefore, conducive to democracy. Chapter 4 established the general validity of this hypothesis. By examining periods of regime transition in Turkey and Tunisia, chapters 5 and 6 showed how dissent on state identity led to exclusion and authoritarianism in Turkey and Tunisia's transition crisis in 2013. Chapter 6 also illustrated that reconciling the dissent on state identity was the turning point in Tunisia's transition to democracy.

Section 1 of this chapter discussed how the reconceptualization of the identity dimension of the state (see chapter 3) enabled this work to locate a critical division between the relevant political actors in Turkey and Tunisia.¹⁹³ Section 2 shows that this was important not only for regime-type outcomes, but also helps explain important empirical phenomena during the Tunisian and Turkish transitions. Section 3 discusses whether and which of the findings in this dissertation are generalizable to a larger number of cases. It argues that the hypotheses of this dissertation are generalizable to different extents. Section 4 details the relevance of these findings to existing theories. Section 4 engages with two prominent counterarguments and shows that they do not refute the argument of this dissertation. Section 5 shows the theoretical, methodological, and empirical limitations of this dissertation and proposes agendas for future research to alleviate these shortcomings.

7.1 Why a new concept: Capturing fragmentations that old concepts overlook

Existing definitions and conceptualizations of state identity are not able to capture the division on state identity – or the lack of what Rustow (1970) calls “national unity” – in either of these cases. These existing conceptualizations view the identity of the state to either be an expression of homogeneity (usually ascriptive), an expression of who belongs to the political community, or how different groups are democratically represented in the state. According to these concepts, disagreements on the identity component of the state thus occur when there is

¹⁹³ Division here refers to opposing claims on the identity of the state that are fundamentally contradictory to the point where they are irreconcilable. I called this throughout the last chapters “dissent on state identity”.

a lack of homogeneity, a disagreement on who belongs to the political community, or a lack of democratic representation.

Following these concepts, Turkey and Tunisia would have strongly cohesive societies and the ‘national unity’ that Rustow emphasized as critical for democracy. Except for some segments of the Kurdish community in Turkey, both cases are largely homogenous and have no major tensions regarding who belongs to the political community. In light of existing conceptualizations, we should expect Turkey and Tunisia to be spared the bitterness, polarization, and violence that the literature warns against when ‘national unity’ (Rustow 1970), or ‘social cohesion’ (N. R. Miller 2003), is threatened (see chapter 2). Depending on how one views the extent of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, one could hypothesize further that Turkey would exhibit an explosive fault-line regarding the inclusion of the Kurds in the political community.

The empirical reality during the examined periods in Turkey and Tunisia refutes these expectations that stem from existing conceptualizations of state identity. In Tunisia, a lack of ‘national unity’ was rather characteristic of the transition process until Summer 2013. The political process was divided to the point where radical Islamists assassinated two leftist politicians and the secularists contemplated a return to a police state (see chapter 6). Turkey was also severely polarized during a long period between 2007 and its autocratic transition in 2017. The secular state institutions attempted to ban the AKP from political power and the AKP responded by carrying out a protracted process of marginalizing secular parties and conquering these institutions (see chapter 5).

Shifting the focus from the boundaries of the political community and homogeneity towards the symbolic identity of the state allows us to better understand the lack of national unity in Turkey and Tunisia. In both cases, the tension regarding the identity of the state was neither between heterogeneous groups, nor on who belongs to the political society. In Turkey and Tunisia, the main fault-line regarding the identity of the state was ideational. Islamists and secularists pursued their incompatible views on the identity of the state.¹⁹⁴ In Turkey, the political process started to turn bitter and polarized in 2007 when each actor tried to impose its view regarding whether the state tolerates the public appearance of the Islamic headscarf. This tension might seem issue-based; but it reflected a more fundamental rift regarding state identity. This sparked a long polarized process in which each actor sought to exclude the other from

¹⁹⁴ Chapter two defines that as having contradictory claims on state identity.

politics. In Tunisia, the bitter polarization between political actors during the transition was regarding whether the new constitution reflects an Islamic or secular identity. Much of this tension was on very symbolic clauses in the constitution that would not have had imminent political ramifications for either of the actors.¹⁹⁵ In Turkey and Tunisia, the differing views on the identity of the state.

7.2 Dissent on state identity and the process of transition: What did it explain?

The main fault-line was on the identity of the state: Despite the existence of various other fault-lines in Turkey and Tunisia,¹⁹⁶ chapters 5 and 6 showed that the fault lines clustered around the dissent on state identity. In both cases, the political struggle unfolded between secularist and Islamist actors who had irreconcilable claims on the identity of the state. This is despite the existence of various other political and socio-economic cleavages. In Turkey, perhaps the most visible of these other cleavages is the one concerning Turkey's Kurdish population. But despite the contention surrounding the issue between different political actors in Turkey, it did not constitute a major fault-line during Turkey's transition to authoritarianism. In Tunisia, scholars have noted other socio-economic and political cleavages that were entrenched in society.¹⁹⁷ But despite that, the struggles during the transition did not cluster around class or socioeconomic cleavages. They rather clustered around the divide between Islamists and secularists regarding the identity of the post-revolution Tunisia.

By overlooking the fault-line surrounding state identity, many scholarly evaluations erred in evaluating the political events in both Turkey and Tunisia. While earlier evaluations stressed the collaborative atmosphere between Tunisia's political actors (Angrist 2013; Stepan 2012), the political game between secularists and Islamists turned out to be very explosive because they claimed contradictory state identities. In Turkey, in contrast to those who celebrated it as a model for Middle Eastern democracy, it turned out to be a very fragile democratic experience that was already in jeopardy when the AKP resorted back to Islamist claims. The dream of the Turkish "model" gave way to the nightmare of current-day Turkey.

¹⁹⁵ The political relevance of these symbolic disagreement becomes clear only when understanding them in the context of state identity dissent.

¹⁹⁶ These include socio-economic ones, and in the case of Turkey, a fault-line regarding Kurdistan.

¹⁹⁷ Class divisions were particularly stressed in the literature (Allinson 2015; Merone 2015), even though ethnic ones were also highlighted (Di Tolla and Francesca 2017).

Both of the cases analyzed in this dissertation were subjects of misplaced scholarly optimism as scholars overlooked the explosive fault-lines surrounding the dissent on state identity.

The dissent on state identity explains why disagreements on symbolic issues were fierce: In Turkey and Tunisia, some of the most fiercely fought battles that were decisive for the outcome of regime-type cannot be explained without accounting for the dissent on state identity between political actors. These battles revolved around issues of symbolic identity; they had, nevertheless, a very visible effect on the behavior of political actors and the advent of authoritarianism. In Tunisia, the symbolic fights that were heatedly fought on the phrasing of the character of the state in the permeable and basic principles of the constitution halted the transition process at many junctures. On several occasions, these disagreements resulted in mass resignations from the National Constituent Assembly and stalled the constitution-drafting process. The attempt of political actors to exclude one another from the post-Ben Ali Tunisia threatened not only democratization and a return to authoritarianism, but also civil peace and political order.

Similarly, the resurfaced dissent on state identity between the AKP and the *Kemalists* in Turkey was the spark that spiraled into a protracted exclusivist game that subsequently led to its authoritarian transition in 2017.¹⁹⁸ The 2007 presidential elections witnessed the first sign of trouble when the wives of AKP's candidate Abdullah Gul and that of its leader Erdogan appeared in headscarves in public political events. This coincided with the AKP attempting to allow the public wearing of the "veil" in educational institutions. This disagreement on the public wearing of a symbolic thing such as the headscarf was the start of a long series of exclusivist battles between the secularists and the Islamists. It explains the court's attempt to ban the AKP from power in 2008 and the subsequent political transformations that the AKP initiated to bring the judiciary and the military under its control.

Dissent on state identity polarized issue-based disagreements: While, naturally, not all political struggles emanate from disagreements on state identity, a dissent on state identity polarizes the political context in which political struggles are fought. The evolution of the political process in both cases showed that some of the harshly polarized political battles fade away without resolution. In Turkey, the evolving dissent on state identity polarized the political struggles as they unfolded. That way, a protest against the removal of park trees in 2013 became

¹⁹⁸ As shown in chapter 5, this dissent manifested itself during the 2007 presidential elections in which the issue of the public visibility of the headscarf was a central point of contention between the AKP and the secular state institutions.

a mass protest against the Islamist agenda and the increasingly authoritarian practices of the AKP. After a few months, the general polarization of Turkish politics abandoned the Gezi Park scene and relocated to the 2014 presidential elections.

In Tunisia, the dissent on state identity between the Islamists and the secularists erratically polarized the broader political struggles. Chapter 6 shows how the Islamists and the secularists fiercely disagreed on the mandate and composition of the constitutional court. As the Islamists dominated the NCA, they wanted to shield the legislation it passed from any future interference from the secularists shall they manage to secure followers in the constitutional court. But this issue failed to appear in subsequent discussions after the meeting between Essebsi and Ghannouchi set the grounds to resolve the state identity dissent.

This shows that whereas the issues themselves bared a great deal of disagreement, the surrounding polarization was not issue-specific. It was rather a manifestation of a deeper and perhaps more fundamental disagreement. Locating the underlying fundamental disagreement between political actors helps us thus better assess and understand some of the erratically polarized issues during transitions.

Political alliances formed along the lines of the dissent: Both cases also showed that, during transitions, political alliances are likely to form along the lines of different claims on the identity of the state. when dissent on the identity of the state exists, political actors will form alliances with those who share their claim on the identity of the state, even if they do not share the same political goals. Alliances that are formed on the grounds of similar identity claims become, however, fragile once they succeed in overpowering their opponents. In both cases, Islamists and secularists formed two polarized alliances to counterweight one another, notwithstanding their doctrinal and ideological differences. In Turkey, the AKP allied with the *Gülen* movement despite their very different political goals and doctrines. The secularists joined forces behind *Kemalist* state institutions and electorally behind the CH party, despite their different political goals. In 2013, many different secular political forces joined the *Gezi* park protests against the AKP. But the Islamist's alliance broke when they became sure of the waning power of the secularist. In 2013, the AKP tried to close the schools that are run by the *Gülen* movement and the movement responded by supporting the infamous corruption probes against AKP officials in the same year. The secularist alliance has also divided with some marginal forces supporting the 2016 coup attempt and the majority rejecting it.

In Tunisia, Elnahda was reluctant to distance itself from the Salafists and used them as a political base despite their doctrinal differences. The secularists joined forces under the banner of Nida Tounis despite their stark ideological and political differences. But when both actors decided to compromise to dodge the fate of their neighbor Egypt, these alliances did not survive. Elnahda distanced itself from the AST, the biggest Salafi group, and listed them as a terrorist organization. The secularist alliance also resolved and they supported different candidates at the subsequent presidential elections in 2014 as well as different platforms in the parliamentary elections. Accounting for state identity better the prediction and understanding of alliance formation and dissolution in the contexts in which the identity of the state is in question.

The constellations surrounding state identity were decisive for the outcome of the transitions: The analysis showed that when there is a discord regarding the identity of the state, political actors seek to exclude one another from politics. In Tunisia, this resulted in a critical, yet largely overlooked, crisis in July 2013, which threatened a return to authoritarianism. When Ghannouchi and Essebsi met in Paris in August 2013 and decided to end their disagreement on state identity, Tunisia's exclusivist polarized atmosphere gave way to a successful democratic transition. In Turkey, it resulted in protracted attempts by secular and Islamist actors to exclude each other until the AKP succeeded to exclude other actors, turning Turkey into the authoritarian regime it is today.

7.3 Which findings are generalizable and to what extent?

The analysis in the previous chapters provided confirmative evidence for different hypotheses that were laid out in chapters 2 and 3. One important question is whether (and which) findings are generalizable? This question concerns both the generalizability of the empirical findings discussed above and of the hypotheses of this dissertation. This dissertation cannot generalize the empirical observations highlighted in the last section beyond the two cases of Turkey and Tunisia. The findings however confirm the generalizability of these three hypotheses to different degrees. Before discussing the different evidence in support of the generalizability of the hypotheses, a brief reiteration of these hypotheses is in order.

The three hypotheses reiterated: First, that dissent on state identity is positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy (H1). Second, that the relationship in H1 is causal and mediated by exclusion: Dissent on state identity leads to

exclusion and, therefore, to authoritarianism (H2). Third, dissent on state identity can be on an ideational content; it can occur in homogenous communities without disagreement on the community's boundaries (H3). Taken together, the analyses in chapters 4 through 6 show the following:

The generalizability of H1: The statistical analysis of the BTI data in chapter 4 shows that H1 is generalizable. In 129 countries, dissent among relevant political actors on the identity of the state is strongly associated with an increased likelihood of authoritarianism. In addition, a dissent on state identity is associated with weak democratic institutions in democracies.¹⁹⁹ The effect of dissent on state identity is comparable to that of the extent market competition exists on the likelihood of authoritarianism. In contrast, a consensus among relevant political actors on the identity of the state increases the likelihood of democracy. This effect is greater than that of good economic performance and comparable to the existence of competition in the market. Moreover, dissent on state identity negatively affects the existence and performance of institutions that are important for democracy in all 129 countries, regardless of whether they are democracies or dictatorships.

Strong evidence suggesting the generalizability of H2: The association between dissent on state identity and indicators of exclusion in a large number of countries, coupled with evidence confirming this relationship in the two case studies strongly suggest the generalizability of H2. They do not, however, confirm such generalizability.²⁰⁰ Chapter 4 showed that dissent on state identity is strongly associated with the inability to manage the intensity of conflict and cleavages; it is also closely associated with the extent anti-democratic actors influence politics.²⁰¹ The analyses of the Turkish and Tunisian transitions in chapters 5 and 6 showed how dissent on state identity leads political actors to exclusion.

The empirical validity of H3 in two cases and its general validity to theory: Turkey and Tunisia illustrate that, in some cases, it is useful to employ the conceptualization of state identity that I offered in chapter 2. As discussed in section 1, the dissent on state identity in Turkey and Tunisia was ideational in content. In both cases, the identity conflict during the transition was neither on who belongs to the political community, nor stemmed from diversity.

¹⁹⁹ The results in chapter 4 show that dissent on state identity is associated with a lesser extent to which the ground rules that are important for democracy, such as rule of law and institutions that are important for democracy, exist in society irrespective of regime type.

²⁰⁰ This and other limitations of the findings are discussed below.

²⁰¹ Chapter 3 discusses how these variables suggest exclusion in the BTI data. They are however no direct measures of exclusion; this limitation is also explicated below

It was rather on whether the state symbolizes an Islamic or secular identity. Both cases serve, therefore, as empirical evidence in favor of seeing the identity of the state as symbolic. Besides that, chapter 2 showed how this work's conceptualization of state identity is theoretically superior to existing ones, and especially for the investigation of state identity's relationship to regime type.

This dissertation shows, therefore, that its hypotheses are generalizable, each to a different extent. Here, I provide anecdotal evidence of how this dissertation's approach can be usefully employed to understand the phenomenon of democratic backsliding in further cases.²⁰² The purpose of the following brief anecdotes is *not*, however, to dilute the complexity of each case or to downplay the importance of structural, regional, and domestic contexts in which these cases exist. It is rather to shed light on the potential spots that the approach proposed by this dissertation could make visible.

The rise of anti-democratic actors in existing democracies as well as the increasing polarization and weakening of democratic institutions have attracted substantial scholarly attention (Bermeo 2016; Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg 2017). One common aspect among many of these anti-democratic actors has been that they harbor a different view of the identity of their states. In the U.S, for instance, many observers have indicated that Trump represents a specific political current that disagrees with other political forces on the ideals that the U.S represents (Korostelina 2016, 2; Mason 2018; Restad 2020, 2–4). One of my former professors and a renowned Egyptian novelist, diplomat, and political scientist went as far as to declare Trump's America to be “very similar to the Egypt [he] left” in 2013 (Fishere 2020).²⁰³ In Fishere's words, the United States is special because it holds the ideals of individual freedom, equality, and fairness “as self-evident and commits to pursuing them”. Donald Trump envisioned a different U.S – one that represents different ideals. Fishere's view might be overly optimistic of the American ideals.²⁰⁴ But it is surely the case that since the elimination of some ethnic elements from its identity, the U.S represents ideals of multiculturalism, equality, and that the pursuit of happiness is a moral obligation (Declaration of Independence 1776; Huntington and Dunn 2004, 67). Trump's term in power has indeed set a precedent in claiming

²⁰² The relevance of this dissertation for the field of democratic backsliding is discussed in the next section. The purpose here is to highlight how this dissertations' perspective could be usefully applied generally and in cases that were not analysed in the previous chapters.

²⁰³ There, a dissent on state identity similar to the one in Tunisia evoked polarization and exclusion between Islamist and secular forces

²⁰⁴ To be accurate, the United States of America had represented a different identity during the first half of the 20th century (see Huntington and Dunn 2004 for a complete discussion).

a different identity for the U.S. The “Muslim ban” and the anti-immigration policies and rhetoric as well as the wall enacted along the American-Mexican border symbolize the claim to new set of ideals that contradict modern American ideals of multiculturalism and equality.

Other examples from democracies also testify to the tensions anti-democratic actors bring to their state identities. In France, the National Rally advocates for a different France. In their view, France’s identity “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” is reserved for mostly Christian “ethnically” French. This contradicts the “voluntary commitment to the republic and to political values associated with it” that has been the main tenet of French identity since the 1789 revolution (Safran 1991). Similarly, the Alternative for Germany political party (AFD) sees the identity of the state in a way that is irreconcilable with the post-second world war German identity. In the post-war years, the state in Germany had faced the challenge of reordering the identity of the German collective after its horrific experience with Eugenic superiority under Nazi rule. To avoid falling back to ethnically (or genetically) defined identity, the western powers collaborated with German thinkers to anchor Germany’s identity in a set of basic humanitarian ideals that were inscribed in its post-war constitution – what some called *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) (Müller 2007). These ideals are opposed to the AFD’s pursuit of a ‘normal Germany’ that embodies ‘ethnic Germans’.²⁰⁵ Many of the AFD politicians are, however, of non-German origins (Reuters 2017). This shows that the AFD’s claim is not on the actual boundaries of the political community but rather on the symbolic identity of the state. In India, Modi has relentlessly worked to change “the idea of India” to embody a nationalist Hindu identity (Sahoo 2019, 94). But despite the clear exclusion of Modi’s opponents and the democratic backsliding of India (i.a Ganguly 2019), Modi did not redraw the actual boundaries of the community (Dasgupta 2019). Modi’s claim has been on India’s symbolic identity, but with very real consequences for India’s democracy.

The above anecdotes show that incorporating the approach of this dissertation that focuses on how opposing claims on the identity of the state affect regime type can be generally useful. These examples clearly illustrate some interaction or association between a dissent on the identity of the state and exclusion and consequent impact on political regime. The example of the U.S specifically illustrates that the discord on the identity of the state does not need to stem from religious differences. While Trump’s behavior, clearly, empowers White ethnic nationalism, his claims on state identity are better described as a move away from the American

²⁰⁵ German readers will be familiar with ‘*Deutschland aber normal*’ (Germany but normal) slogan of the AFD. They must also be familiar with the AFD’s claim regarding *Ethnopluralismus*.

ideals of multiculturalism and equal opportunity than a move towards ethnic or religious identifications per se. The examples from Europe and India show how dissent on the symbolic identity of the state interacts with conceptions of ethnicity and religion while remaining symbolic. In all cases, incorporating the variable of state identity can shed light on important political developments beyond the cases examined in this dissertation.

7.4 Relevance to Theory

In light of the discussion above, this dissertation is relevant for 5 theoretical discussions: (1) **theories and definitions of the state**, (2) **the factors that are conducive to different regime types**, (3), **the relationship between the state and regime type** (4) **regime transitions** or more commonly ‘transitology’, and (5) **democratic backsliding and autocratization**. These are the main fields of theorizing that this dissertation speaks to. In addition, some empirical patterns in both cases could, if generalizable, prove useful for other fields of study. I do not intend to exhaustively deal with these potentially relevant fields here, but I conclude this section by a discussion on the relevance of both cases to the **Inclusion-moderation hypothesis in reference to Islamist actors**.

7.4.1 State identity and theories of the state

The arguments in this dissertation are relevant for both approaches and theories of the state that do not consider identity an integral dimension of the state as well as for theories that do view the state as an expression of some ‘collectivity’. The approaches that do not consider identity a dimension of the modern state exist in both camps of the classical divide regarding (the extent of) state autonomy. Pluralist and liberal theories did not see the state as an autonomous actor and rather focused on political actors and how they compete to advance their interests on the level of the state (Bentley 1955; Held 1989; Kariel 1968). But because these approaches do not consider the state as an entity that bears an identity but rather as an empty arena of contestation, they overlook the importance of how different political actors view the identity of the state. The ‘bringing the state back in’ movement (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985), which criticized the pluralist tradition for overlooking the state as an actor, has surprisingly ignored the identity of the state to the same extent. State identity has, thus, been overlooked by some in both camps of the debate regarding the autonomy of the state.

This dissertation highlights that accounting for the concept of state identity is important for both camps. By approaching the state identity concept from a neo-Weberian lens, this

dissertation views state identity as a definitional element of the state that is also linked to political actors: State identity is part of the state, yet political actors can have claims on this identity. The cases of Turkey and Tunisia showed that, regardless of the extent of autonomy one grants to the state, the constellation of claims on the identity of the state affects important political dynamics. It shaped the way political actors interact and influenced the alliances they formed. In both cases, an analysis of competing interests and power competition that does not take the dissent on state identity into consideration would not account for these polarized exclusivist dynamics and alliances. Because of its explanatory relevance, the works that overlook the identity component of the state need to find ways to incorporate it in their analyses of politics. This is regardless of whether they focus more on the state as an actor or on other political groups that interact and compete under the structures of the state.

This work is also important for state theories that view identity as an integral dimension of the state. Its alternative conceptualization of state identity offers substantial advantages over existing conceptualizations (see chapter 2). Understanding state identity as symbolic enables it to capture a wider range of empirical variations than existing concepts do.²⁰⁶ This is because the concept of state identity is not only able to capture instances when the state's identity reflects the boundaries of the community, but also when state identity reflects an ideational content. Second, the proposed conceptualization does not predetermine the content of state identity. It does not predetermine state identity as a representation of (ascriptive) homogeneity and unity, nor a specific class identity. The concept of state identity that this dissertation proposes is, therefore, more holistic and better able to capture the full range of variations in which state identities exist.²⁰⁷

7.4.2 State identity in the study of regime-types and their requisites

The statistical models in chapter 4 showed how the structure of claims on the identity of the state predicts the type of political regime. It illustrated that tensions between political actors on the identity of the state are conducive to authoritarianism. An agreement on it is conducive to democracy. The analysis also confirmed a strong relationship between dissent on state identity and indicators of exclusion and polarization.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ The assumption here is that it is desirable for concepts to capture the widest range of empirical variations.

²⁰⁷ The advantages offered by this alternative conceptualization of state identity has also important implications for empirical investigations of the state and its relation to political regime that will be discussed in this section below.

²⁰⁸ The case studies supplement these findings by confirming the causal relationship between dissent on state identity and authoritarianism via exclusion.

This finding is relevant for the literature that examines the factors and conditions that make one regime type more likely to occur than another. With few exceptions, this literature has sought to uncover the “requisites” of democracy independent from the study of the equivalent conditions that are conducive to authoritarianism (Cutright 1969; Inglehart and Welzel 2009; Lipset 1959; Møller and Skaaning 2012; Neubauer 1967; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Welzel 2020).²⁰⁹ That way, the field remains unsure which independent variables influence the dependent variable *regime-type* and is, therefore, in need of studies that examine variables relevant for both democracy and dictatorship.

The large-N study in this dissertation illustrated the relevance of dissent on state identity to both democracy and authoritarianism. Dissent on state identity statistically was strongly associated with authoritarianism in 129 cases. Likewise, a consensus thereon was associated with democracy. This effect is higher in magnitude and statistical significance than that of indicators for good economic performance. It is also comparable to the effect of competition in the market on regime type.

7.4.3 The relationship between the state and political regime

In recent years, an increasing interest evolved in examining the relationship between the state and the political regime (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014b; Fukuyama 2014, 2018; Hanson 2018; Mazzuca and Munck 2014; Møller and Skaaning 2012). These works examine how different state variables affect regime type. It is however heavily tainted by a democracy bias. This democracy bias affects both the concept of state identity and the research designs that scrutinize its relationship to the type of political regime: As chapter 2 showed, existing literature either examines the relationship of the state to democracy, or equates the identity of the state to democratic representation. This literature needs, therefore, to sharpen its conceptualization of the identity of the state and to overcome its over-focus on the relationship between the state and democracy and examine, instead, the relationship between the state and political regime.

The analysis in this dissertation contributes to the literature on “state factors” by employing a sharper definition of state identity. The analysis operationalized state identity in a

²⁰⁹ There are few works that simultaneously investigate the conditions conducive to authoritarianism and democracy (see for instance Barrington Moore 1966). Some works investigate the conditions that are conducive to authoritarianism (see for instance Ezrow and Frantz 2011b, chap. 2). But these works tend to rather specifically focus on conditions that allow authoritarian regimes to gain power (Frantz 2018, chap. 6), or conditions that allow *different* variations of authoritarianism to occur (Frantz and Ezrow 2011; Svobik 2012, chap. 3, 5, and 6).

way that does not overlap with democracy or democratic representation (see chapter 3). The BTI dataset conceptualizes state identity in a way that reflects the agreement (or lack thereof) on the conception of the nation-state and official access citizenship.²¹⁰ This does not disaggregate the disagreements cases in which the identity of the state reflects the boundaries of the community from those in which this identity reflects an ideational content. But it detaches state identity from any type of political regime. This work thus provided conceptual clarity regarding the relationship between the state and the type of political regime. It conceptualized and operationalized state identity as a dimension of the state the does not conceptually overlap with characteristics of democracy or authoritarianism.

7.4.4 The study of Transitions

This dissertation is relevant for the study of regime transitions in two ways. **First, it brings the state identity back in the study of regime transitions.** State variables have largely been left out of the study of transitions. While Rustow (1970) emphasized the importance of ‘national unity’ for democratization, he did not conceptualize it in reference to the state. Moreover, empirical works have largely overlooked the effect of national unity (or lack thereof) on the process of regime transition. This dissertation brings back this forgotten variable of ‘national unity’ to the study of transitions. It views this question of unity or lack thereof as a question pertaining to a consensus or discord on the identity of the state. That way, it brings a state variable back in the study of transitions.

Second, bringing state identity back bridges structural and agent-based variables in the study of transitions.²¹¹ The study of the outcome of transitions has been largely divided between explanations that focus on structural variables and those that focus on the decisions of political actors.²¹² With the advent of what Huntington (1993) called the “third wave of democracy”, the quest for finding structural requisites for democracy had given way to more agency-focused approaches which focused on the *process* of democratization (Bermeo 1997; Colomer 2000; Przeworski 1986; P. Schmitter 2014, 72; Stepan 1997; Vanhanen 1990; White 1994). Despite Rustow’s (1970) clear formulation that national unity is the “only background

²¹⁰ The BTI does not handle citizenship in its democratic sense, but solely in its legal and formal sense.

²¹¹ I do not claim that this is the only variable that bridges this gap between structuralism and agency.

²¹² Teorell (2010) categorizes this literature differently; he differentiates between “structural”, “strategic”, “social forces”, and “economic approaches” to democratizations (chapter 2). These categories are however not mutually exclusive; what he calls the “social forces” approach which focuses on class structure can be classified as a structural approach. For the sake of the discussion at hand, I choose to classify this literature between those who argue structural variables are responsible for the outcomes of transitions and those who believe that the outcomes of transitions are determined by the choices of actors.

condition” of democracy, a core assumption of this “transition paradigm” (Carothers 2002) was that structural factors do not matter much in explaining transitions to democracy (Carothers 2002, 8; O’donnel and Schmitter 1986, 3–4; P. Schmitter 2014, 75–76).²¹³ The initial euphoria that characterized what became known as the “transitology” was tamed by the realization that only a few countries that were considered “transitioning” actually achieved successful democratization (Carothers 2002, 9; Haggard and Kaufman 2016, 126). This realization has fueled the resurgence of approaches that suspected structural factors to be responsible for the success or failure of democratization attempts (Carothers 2002, 16; Geddes 1999; Haggard and Kaufman 2016, 129). Except for rational choice economic approaches (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2003),²¹⁴ few attempts have been made to bridge structural-based explanations with agency-based ones.²¹⁵

The analysis of Turkey’s and Tunisia’s transitions shows that the behavior of political actors – their claims on a structural variable (the state) – affects the overall structure in which political competition takes place. This, in turn, affects the behavior of political actors and motivates them to exclude one another. As chapters 5 and 6 illustrated, in the context of state identity dissent, disagreements on non-existential political issues become zero-sum and exclusivist. Accounting for the variable state identity helps, therefore, acknowledge the role of both agency and structure as well as the interaction between them in affecting processes of transition.

7.4.5 Dissent on state identity in the study of democratic backsliding and autocratization

Since the constellation of claims on state identity is relevant for regime type, studying it is also relevant for the recent literature on democratic backsliding and autocratization (Cassani and Tomini 2020; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019; Maerz et al. 2020).²¹⁶ Studying the effect of state identity dissent on democratic backsliding is particularly relevant in light of Levitsky and Ziblatt’s (2018) argument recent pivotal work on “how democracies die”. They

²¹³ In Schmitter and O’Donnel’s understanding (1986, 2), this is because times of transitions fall outside the periods of normal stable politics.

²¹⁴ Here, I agree with Toerell (2010, 26) that this approach bridges combine structural elements with the agency of individual actors. In contrast to Acemoglu and Robinson, it remains, however, unclear how much agency does Boix grant individuals under structural economic restraints. In all cases, this approach remains – in Toerell’s terms – “too preoccupied with conflicts over income distribution” (12).

²¹⁵ Toerell (2010)) presents, however, an approach that combines almost all approaches to the study of democratization.

²¹⁶ David Waldner and Ellen Lust (2015) make a similar point regarding the relevance of existing theories of democracy for studying the phenomenon of democratic backsliding.

argued that “mutual tolerance” is one of the “soft guardrails” that “prevent day-to-day political competition from devolving into no-holds-barred conflict” (101-2). The analysis in chapters 5 and 6 showed how dissent on state identity is detrimental to mutual tolerance. The case of Turkey showed how dissent on state identity can derail politics into polarization and exclusion. When the Islamists and the secularists in Turkey started to have opposing claims on what Turkey stands for, they created a fiercely polarized game in which they tried to exclude one another from politics.

On a normative level, scholars have been concerned with how to safeguard and save existing democracies (Graham, Miller, and Strøm 2017; Mounk 2018). While existing literature has focused on guarding institutions (Bermeo 2016, 14–18; Ginsburg and Huq 2018; Mounk 2018, pt. III),²¹⁷ The respective transitions of Tunisia and Turkey to democracy and authoritarianism showed us that conditions that make democracy possible also need safeguarding. In both cases, the collapse of a fragile consensus on the identity of the state between political actors resulted in dire consequences for democracy. During Ben Ali’s time in power, Tunisia’s political forces reached a consensus on the secular identity of the state and adherence to universal principles of Human Rights (Jebnoun 2014). Even directly after Ben Ali’s fall, a general atmosphere of national unity occupied Tunisia. But as soon as the Islamists and the secularists started having irreconcilable claims on the constitutional text regarding the identity of the state, they turned this hopeful atmosphere into one of exclusion and polarization. This endangered not only democratization but also civil peace in the summer of 2013. Turkey’s democratic experience during the AKP’s first term in power came in light of the party’s willingness to strip its image from Islamism and embrace secularism (Baran 2013, 2). But this consensus faded, giving way to dissent on the identity of the state and, subsequently, autocratization. That way, integrating a consensus on state identity in the list of democratic safeguards can prove useful in combating democratic backsliding.²¹⁸

7.4.6 Turkey and Tunisia’s Islamists: The inclusion moderation hypothesis

This dissertation has important consequences for the above 5 fields of theorizing. In addition to that, some further empirical patterns in the cases of Turkey and Tunisia could prove useful to more theoretical discussions. For instance, both cases suggest that constitutions matter during transitions. They also show that the historical evolution of the cases reveals the content

²¹⁷ Even though some focus has been paid to individual and collective action (Bermeo 2016, 16; Della Porta 2020).

²¹⁸ Above, I showed how locating dissent on state can shed light on important phenomena in contexts where democracy is backsliding.

of the fault-line on state identity as well as the actors involved. These further ‘potential fields of relevance’ neither directly stem from the three hypotheses of this dissertation, nor are supported by the empirical evidence of the previous chapters. While an exhaustive discussion of this indirect relevance lies outside the scope of this dissertation,²¹⁹ this discusses the relevance of the study of Islamist actors in both cases to the **inclusion-moderation hypothesis**.²²⁰

The inclusion moderation hypothesis claims that radical anti-system actors will moderate their views when they are included in the formal political process (Tepe 2019). The inclusion-moderation hypothesis has also been employed to examine whether Islamist actors moderate their views when they get included in the systemic political process (Schwedler 2007, 2011). Two main debates have been prominent in works that examine Islamists within the inclusion-moderation lens. The first is whether inclusion leads to tactical or attitudinal moderation (Bashirov and Lancaster 2018; Karakaya and Yildirim 2013). Tactical moderation is usually seen as tactical and more superficial than attitudinal moderation that includes a ‘real’ change in the worldviews of Islamists (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013, 1323–25). The second debate is whether inclusion leads to moderation in particular, or rather to a general change in political behavior that does not necessarily correspond to moderation. In his work on Islamist movements in the Middle East, Nathan Brown (2012, 9) proposes an approach that focuses on *politicization* instead of moderation. He shows how Islamists change their tactics depending on the opportunities that inclusion in the systemic political process offers.

The findings of this dissertation showed that the feelings and attitudes of Islamists do not matter for the outcome of transitions. In Turkey, the beliefs and attitudes of the AKP regarding the identity of the state were irrelevant for its initial democratic gains. The AKP was also the first Islamist actor to successfully dodge exclusion from undemocratic secular state institutions. This changed when the AKP started to behave like Islamists around the 2007 presidential elections. Only then did they trigger exclusion and polarization with these secular institutions. In Tunisia, Elnahda’s leadership has faced substantial challenges in convincing its rank and file members of the compromises it offered on key constitutional clauses such as the one regarding the freedom of conscience (Netterstrøm 2015). Many of these rank and file

²¹⁹ The next chapter discusses nevertheless discusses how such a discussion can serve as a starting point for further research.

²²⁰ . In both cases, the Islamist actors involved (the AKP and Elnahda) have been regarded as having a ‘moderate’ version of Islamism.

members still voices their criticism of various constitutional clauses up until the very last NCA session in which the constitution received a majority vote (see chapter 6). The attitudes and beliefs of these members did not matter as long as they voted in favor of the constitution. With their vote in favor of the final version of the Tunisian constitution, these actors refrained from making a *claim* on the identity of the state.

But it is important to note that Elnahda and the AKP are a particular type of Islamists. Both are political parties are part of a broader movement that is strictly hierarchical. The centralized decision-making structure in hierarchical movements such as Elnahda dilutes the importance of whether the members of these movements are ideologically convinced of the political decisions of the movement's leadership. In Tunisia, once Ghannouchi decided to strike a compromise with the secularists and to endorse the resulting constitution, the rest of the movement followed suit. While this centralization is more prominent in Elnahda than in the AKP, Erdogan's decision to make the case of Islamism visible during the 2007 presidential elections surely influenced the behavior of the AKP's rank and file. The strict hierarchy of these political actors offers insight as to why, in both cases, behavior, rather than attitudes, mattered. This hierarchical structure of this 'model' of Islamist actors offers both opportunities and dangers and sheds light on the importance of leadership decisions in these movements.

7.5 Critical reflections: Counter arguments and limitations

Chapters 5 and 6 discussed counterarguments and competing explanations to the hypotheses of this dissertation. They showed how the hypothesis in this work supplements missing spots in existing explanations. Two overlapping counter-arguments have been, however, recurrent and are worth further explication. The first **(a) is that the political tension and exclusion in both cases stemmed from competition for power and not from identity conflicts**. Relatedly, another counter-argument would see **(b) disagreements on the state were the rhetorical components rather than central to how the transitions unfolded**. These arguments have not only been suggested by some scholars as discussed in both chapters, but have also been the subject of some discussions I had with colleagues during my work on this project.²²¹

²²¹ I am thankful to my supervisors Oliver Schlumberger and Nathan Brown for the countless discussions that helped me better engage with several counter-arguments. I am also thankful to my colleagues in the research group Comparative and Middle East Politics at the Institute of Political science at the Eberhard-Karls University of Tuebingen for the many thought provoking discussions in the regard.

This section summarizes these counterarguments and shows that the fact that actors compete for power does not dilute the importance of this work's hypotheses. It also recalls evidence from both chapters that confirm that dissent on state identity was central to the transition process in both cases and cannot be dismissed as mere rhetorical manoeuvres. Finally, this section discussed the limitations of this dissertation.

a. Counter argument: The polarization and exclusion between political actors in Turkey and Tunisia emanated from the pursuit of power and not from dissent on state identity. In its most straightforward formulation, this alternative explanation suggests that the political processes in Turkey and Tunisia could be explained without taking the constellations on state identity into consideration. In both cases, Islamists and secularists fought for concrete material political gains. In Turkey, the early attempts by state institutions to exclude and ban the AKP stemmed from their unwillingness to submit power to a new political actor after decades of hegemony in alliance with older political parties such as the CHP. In Tunisia, the political opening after the ousting of Ben-Ali triggered a traditional competition between the Islamists who were previously excluded from the political process, and members of the old regime who gathered under the banner of Nida Tounis until they finally found a power-sharing agreement. This argument poses a challenge to the one presented in this book in so far that it claims to present an explanation to the regime-type outcomes in Turkey and Tunisia *without* accounting for the dissent on state identity.

This dissertation does not compete with the explanation that puts power at the center of politics: it rather highlights a factor that affects *how* this competition is managed: The underlying assumption of this dissertation is that power is at the heart of all politics. In all regime types and polities, political groups have competing interests. They pursue power to further their interests and agendas. The question is thus not whether the behavior of political actors is shaped by power consideration. The inquiry is rather about what factors affect the *rules* that govern such competition and how the pursuit of power is structured. The analysis in this dissertation showed that the structure of claims on the identity of the state influences how competition takes place. When political actors have irreconcilable claims regarding what the state represents – when there is dissent on the identity of the state – they play a zero-sum game to exclude one another.

b. Counter argument: identity disagreements were sheer rhetorical manoeuvres rather than central to how the transitions unfolded: Could identity disagreements have been the language of the struggle but not its subject? After all, political groups use identity rhetoric to achieve political goals. Following that logic, state institutions in Turkey had to play the secularism card in their attempt to ban the AKP from politics in 2008. In the same vein, the AKP's revival of the veil debate could be seen as a rhetorical attempt to attract voters who were increasingly alienated from the old political elite. In Tunisia, one could view the dispute between the Islamists and the secularists on elements of the constitution that refer to the identity of the state as attempts to use the identity card in pursuit of power. For instance, as discussed in chapter 6, power battles concerning the legitimacy of the Troika government, the composition and mandate of the constitutional court, and election laws were fiercely fought beside the struggle regarding identity in the constitutional text. A challenge to the explanation offered in this dissertation would be a view that sees identity struggles as the language in which these power battles in both cases were fought.

The empirical reality of both transitions confirm however that dissent on state identity was very central to the transitions and cannot be reduced to mere rhetorical elements: 4 empirical observations demonstrate the centrality of claims on state identity in both transitions:

The first is the timing of the exclusivist game and the sequence in which its battles unfolded. In both cases, a seemingly democratic atmosphere was interrupted and reversed with the advent of dissent on the identity of the state. In Turkey, a newly established democratic regime that was regarded as a model in 2002 quickly gave way to polarization and exclusion once the issue of the headscarf became thematic in the 2007 presidential elections campaign. The presidential race was, of course, a pursuit of political power. But instead of managing this competition democratically, the *Kemalist* camp chose to try and exclude the AKP from politics altogether in 2008. The sequencing and timing were even more pronounced in Tunisia. After a brief atmosphere of national unity after the fall of Ben-Ali, the political game polarized when discussions surrounding the identity of the state dominated the constitutional drafting process. The subsequent battles in pursuit of power unfolded parallel to the polarization regarding identity in the constitution. But the turning point in the trajectory of the transition was when agreements were struck on the constitutional text in light of Ghannouchi's and Essebsi's secret Paris meeting. Other conflicts were only possible to resolve after this meeting and in light of the evolving resolution of the Islamist-secularist divide regarding the identity of the state. The timing of

the exclusivist game and the sequence of events testify to the centrality of the identity divide to the conflict.

Second, the political process and its battles were polarized between actors who have different claims on the identity of the state. In Turkey, this was particularly visible during the 2014 presidential elections in which all major secular parties rallied behind one candidate – Ihsanoglu – against the Islamist candidate Erdogan. In Tunisia, disagreements on political battles such as the electoral law, the constitutional court, and even street mobilizations were fought between a secularist and an Islamist camp. Moreover, the structure of alliances in both cases testifies to the importance of the identity struggle as a core component of the overall political skirmish rather than just being a rhetorical manifestation. In Turkey, the AKP allied with the Gulen movement despite their political differences. The competing political aspirations of the Gulen and the AKP were clear from the beginning, but they came only second in importance after their shared will to exclude and marginalize the secularists. In Tunisia, the secular party Nida Tounis gathered otherwise competing actors in the secularist camp under its banner. It coordinated an alliance between democratic seculars who were willing to come under the same banner as prominent members of the old regime to counter the Islamist camp. On the other hand, Elnahda refused to distance itself from the more radical Salafi movement Ansar Al Shari'a as it provided Elnahda with a supporting social base to counter the secular camp. In both Turkey and Tunisia, the structure of the competing factions and the alliances testify to identity being central to the political struggle.

Third, battles on the identity of the state were explosive. Tense battles on the identity of the state were more pronounced in Tunisia. The transitional process was primarily polarized by disagreements on symbolic issues pertaining to the identity of the state during the drafting of a new constitution. There, secularists and Islamists disagreed on whether the constitution guarantees *universal* human and women rights or whether it constricts these rights within the bounds of religion. They also fiercely disagreed on whether the permeable of the constitution refers to Islam as a constituting element of the whole constitution. These battles were not marginal; they triggered long hours of stark controversy in the constituent assembly, which halted the transition at various points. Despite this more pronounced manner in which identity battles were visible in Tunisia, chapter 6 showed that similar battles were fought directly on the identity of the state in Turkey. Whether the state tolerates the public appearance of the veil in educational institutions was an issue that polarized the

political scene in Turkey. When the public prosecutor attempted to ban the AKP from politics, the case was based on the AKP's violation of the *Kemalist* secular identity of the state. That battles were fought directly on the identity of the state shows that dissent on state identity was more than just a rhetorical element to the political fight.

7.6 Limitations and further research

This dissertation suffers from theoretical, methodological, and empirical limitations. In many ways, it triggers many more questions than it answers. The goal of this work has been to highlight the effect a discord on the identity of the state has on the type of political regime. This, as discussed above and in chapter 2 necessitated the reconceptualization of state identity. By focusing on this goal, however, this work (intentionally) left some subsequent investigations unanswered. In the following, I take a critical reading of the shortcomings of this dissertation and highlight questions that were left, even if intentionally, unanswered. This does not only serve as a ground for further research but also throws light on the theoretical, methodological, and empirical limitations of this work.

On the theoretical level, this work argues that the constellation of claims on the identity of the state affects regime type, but does not explore whether some state identities are more conducive to authoritarianism or democracy. While this work accurately shows the conceptual problems that arise in the literature that *defines* state identity as the representation of groups democratically,²²² it does not theoretically explore whether the content of state identity is relevant for the type of political regime. State identity should not be *defined* in terms of a specific political regime. But are some state identities inherently more prone to authoritarianism or democracy? The analysis in this dissertation focused on how the constellation of claims by political actors on the identity of the state is related to regime type. It does not however address the question of whether some state identities are more conducive to democracy or authoritarianism.²²³

The theoretical contribution in this work provides also little insight into the more complex constellations between the state's symbolic identity, the boundaries of the political

²²² Chapter 2 showed that these problems also arise in some works that differentiate 'civic' from 'ethnic' nationalism as well as in the concept of the 'state nation'.

²²³ Chapter 2 briefly discussed how, in some cases, the content of state identity could reflect some ideals that we commonly associate with democracy. It emphasized, however, that this does not conceptually justify the literature's conceptual conflation between state and political regime. Despite that, a legitimate question remains: Are some state identities prove, even if they are conceptually distinct from democracy, more conducive to democracy?

community, and values. It focused on highlighting that the state does not always represent the boundaries of the political community but can also represent a set of ideals or values. It argued that in the cases where the state embodies the boundaries of a specific community, this embodiment remains symbolic and does not necessarily reflect the ‘real’ boundaries of the community (chapter 2 section 3). Focusing to do so, this work fell short of examining the possible interactions between how the actual boundaries of the community are drawn and their symbolic representation on the level of the state. In the cases where the state embodies a set of ideational principles, this work does also not examine the interaction between the boundaries of the political community and these values that are expressed on the level of state identity.

In light of these theoretical shortcomings, further works should more closely investigate the relationship between state identity and the boundaries of the political community. Concretely, research should theorize more about (a) whether the content of state identity (what the state represents) affects the type of political regime, (b) whether the actual boundaries of the political community and how these boundaries are exercised affect the state’s symbolic representation of these boundaries, and (c) do the boundaries of the political community and how they are drawn affect the principles that some states represent. To do so, further investigations should avoid conflating the boundaries of the political community with state identity; they should also evade the flaws that stem from equating state identity with democratic representation. In that light, the theoretical argument in this work, despite the discussed shortcomings, could serve as a starting point for these further investigations.

On the methodological level, this work suffers from two shortcomings. The first is that the BTI data does not disaggregate the boundaries of the political community from state identity. Chapter 3 discussed how the variable ‘state identity’ measures both agreement on citizenship and on the dominant conception of the state. While it also argued that this shortcoming is very unlikely to affect the overall validity of the inference (see chapter 3), it could not rule out that ‘state identity’ was inaccurately coded in some of the cases based on this lack of disaggregation. This would mean that the effect of agreement or dissent on state identity on regime type could potentially be over or underestimated in the statistical analysis. Despite the unlikeliness of this happening, this dissertation cannot rule it out since the BTI data set does not disaggregate between these two aspects.

The second methodological shortcoming is that the statistical analysis in chapter 4 did not establish a threshold score for the variable ‘state identity’ that indicates when a dissent

occurs. Instead, the analysis in chapter 4 gave equal weight to each point variation in the variable ‘state identity’.²²⁴ While the theoretical framework defined dissent on state identity as a condition of severe discord, the analysis in chapter 4 treated it implicitly as a matter of degree. This treatment was statistically justified because, in the BTI data, the variable ‘state identity’ is linearly related to the dependent variables tested (see appendix). Also, the data set relies on expert evaluations for these scores and, with the lack of disaggregation discussed above, any imposed threshold would have been arbitrary and would have diluted the accuracy of the analysis. Nevertheless, the lack of an adequate engagement with the question of whether dissent on state identity is a matter of degree or type in chapter 4 constitutes a shortcoming.

The third shortcoming is that this work does not point towards a systematic methodology to either uncover the content of, or the claims on state identity. The small-N comparative case studies relied on the obvious centrality of state identity during their respective transitional periods. The histories of both cases also give a clear indication of the content of the fault-line regarding state identity (Islamist-secularist). But where to look for the identity of the state, and how to know which claims do political actors have on this identity? This dissertation does not offer generalizable answers to these questions.

Further research should, therefore, (a) find ways to methodologically disentangle the indicators of agreement (or lack thereof) on the boundaries of the community from those that measure such agreement on state identity. This could be done by re-approaching the methodological engagement with measurements of ‘state identity’ in the BTI data. It could also be done by ridding data-sets that measure state fragility from their democratic biases and reorienting them towards a more accurate measurement of state identity. Future works should also (b) develop a more reliable and standardized measurement of disagreements/agreements on state identity. This could be achieved by developing better indicators of division in societies that do not overlap with the extent of their homogeneity or heterogeneity.²²⁵ Further studies should also focus on (c) uncovering where to look for state identity and how to identify claims on it.

Again, this work could be a useful starting point for these further methodological enhancements. The first step towards better methodological operationalization is to get the

²²⁴ As discussed in chapter 3, the independent variable ‘state identity’ can take a score from 1 until 10. The analysis in chapter 4 tested the association between an increase of 1 point in the score of ‘state identity’ and the type of political regime.

²²⁵ Which would be better achievable if we successfully disentangle state identity from other neighbouring concepts (see point a).

concept right. This dissertation offers a more accurate account of the concept state identity that could serve as a basis for its methodological disentanglement from other concepts. This would, in turn, allow further works to sharpen the measurement and indicators of state identity as well as the claims on it. In addition, chapters 5 and 6 suggest constitutions and history as two potential places to look for state identity as well as for actors' claims on that identity.

On the empirical level, this work also suffers from three shortcomings. First, while it acknowledges that state identity can sometimes *symbolically* reflect the boundaries of the political community, both states it examined represent an ideational identity. This leads to the second shortcoming that in both cases the dissent on state identity was, consequently, a dissent on the ideals that the state represents. That way, this dissertation did not examine dissent on state identity in cases where the state's symbolic identity is about the embodiment of a specific political community. Existing literature accounts for the effect of disagreements on the boundaries of the political community. But this dissertation does not examine these cases in light of its proposed reconceptualization of the identity dimension of the state. Third, while the large-N analysis, coupled with anecdotal evidence discussed above, confirm that the hypotheses of this dissertation are not limited to the cases in which religion takes a place in claims on state identity, both Turkey and Tunisia are cases in which religion was central to question about state identity. The findings of this dissertation show that the hypotheses hold in all cases, irrespective of world region or religion.²²⁶ But it does not test whether disagreements that intersect with religious claims on state identity more readily develop into an irreconcilability of claims on state identity.

Further empirical research is therefore warranted particularly in regards to (a) the replication of the findings from Turkey and Tunisia in cases where state identity mirrors the boundaries of the political community. Of equal importance is to (b) further investigate whether religious claims on state identity easily develop into discord and dissent on state identity. Finally, (c) further comparative designs that combine different variations of state identity, as well as different sources of state identity dissent, could prove most useful in addressing these shortcomings.

²²⁶ Chapter 4 showed that in 129 countries.

8. Conclusion

Section 1 in this concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments and findings of this dissertation. Section 2 recaps its core theoretical and empirical contribution. Section 3 reflects on the current situations of Turkey and Tunisia. Section 4 concludes this dissertation by suggesting testable hypotheses and questions that should guide future research..

8.1 This dissertation in a nutshell

The state is an identity bearer. While this identity is hard to analytically capture,²²⁷ chapter 2 showed how existing conceptualizations of this identity dimension of the state are inadequate. It introduced a new concept that focuses on the symbolic identity of the state (state identity). The analysis showed that when relevant political actors have opposing claims on the state's symbolic identity, they play a zero-sum game in which they pursue the exclusion of their opponents and the annihilation of their chance to access or meaningfully compete for power in the future. This results in authoritarianism.

Three hypotheses were investigated: First, dissent on state identity is positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy (H1). Second, the relationship in H1 is causal and mediated by exclusion: Dissent on state identity leads to exclusion and, therefore, to authoritarianism (H2). Third, dissent on state identity can be on an ideational content; it can occur in homogenous communities without disagreement on the community's boundaries (H3).

The analysis combined a large-N statistical analysis of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index data with a small-N comparative analysis of Turkey and Tunisia. The statistical analysis in chapter 4 established the general validity of the relationship between dissent on state identity and regime type. In 129 countries, dissent on state identity was positively associated with authoritarianism and negatively with democracy. This effect on regime type proved superior to that of economic strength and comparable to that competition in the market. The analysis presented also preliminary evidence supporting the hypothesized causal mechanism that links dissent on state identity to exclusion and, therefore, to authoritarianism. Dissent on state identity was a statistical predictor of a higher influence of anti-democratic actors and a lesser

²²⁷ See chapter 2 section 3.

ability to manage conflict and cleavages in society. These results support the main argument of this dissertation; dissent on state identity is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy (H1 and H2).

The small-N comparative study empirically illustrated the inadequacy of existing conceptualizations in capturing division and fragmentation on state identity in homogenous societies. In Turkey and Tunisia, dissent on state identity was on the idea that the state embodies and not on who belongs to the community. By tracing the process of regime transition in Turkey and Tunisia, chapters 5 and 6 argued that dissent on state identity led to exclusion in both cases. In Turkey, dissent on state identity between the AKP and secular political parties and Kemalist state institutions resulted in protracted attempts to exclude one another from politics. These attempts were aimed at annihilating opponents and nullifying their access to or any significant exercise of power. Tunisia was on the brink of meeting the same fate, but the decision of the leaders of both the secular and Islamist forces to end their opposing claims on state identity spared it from a return to authoritarianism.

Examining the regime transitions of Turkey and Tunisia revealed, moreover, how bringing state identity back in the study of transitions can not only explain regime type outcome, but also shed light on its decisive events and dynamics of transitions. In Turkey, dissent on state identity accounts for the shift from the democratic gains of the early 2000s to exclusion and polarization during the AKP's second term in power. It also accounts for the battles, alliances, and the critical junctures of Turkey's autocratization. In Tunisia, dissent on state identity explains why the constitutional writing process was severely polarized, sometimes over purely symbolic disagreements. Examining the broader context of state identity dissent in addition to the evolution of the constitutional text and its drafting process highlighted important aspects of Tunisia's transition. The analysis of the transcribed sessions of the National Constituent Assembly between 2011 and 2014 demonstrated that the primary fault-line in the constitution was on the symbolic identity of the state and whether it represents a secular or an Islamist character. While other important disagreements existed, the polarization and exclusion surrounding them ended after the resolution of the division on state identity. This accounts for the often overlooked political deadlock that Tunisia's transition witnessed in the summer of 2013 and how this crisis turned into a successful transition to democracy in 2014.

Taken together, the statistical analysis and the case studies confirmed that dissent on state identity is a strong predictor of regime type. Dissent on state identity leads to exclusion,

and therefore, is conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy. Dissent on state identity can occur in homogenous societies with no disagreements on who belongs to the community. This confirms that the concept of state identity presented in chapter 2 is more accurate than existing ones, especially in capturing divisions on the identity that the state expresses.

8.2 The contribution

8.2.1 Theoretical contributions

The alternative conceptualization of state identity and the supporting evidence in the empirical chapters contribute to 5 important theoretical debates:

The first is **theories of the state**. It proposes a new understanding of the identity component of the state. This new understanding (the concept of state identity) enables it to investigate the relationship between different constellations of claims on state identity and the type of political regime.

The inquiry into this relationship is relevant to the study of **the factors that are conducive to different regime types**.²²⁸ Different constellations of state identity (whether political actors dissent on it or not) are conducive to different regime types. It is a factor that affects the structure of competition and the type of political game political actors play. It has been, therefore, an important missing variable in the study of the factors that are conducive to different regime types.²²⁹

The third is **the inquiry into the relationship between the state and political regime**. This dissertation showed that the lack of opposing claims on state identity is positively linked to democracy. But while recent works focus largely on one regime type – democracy – this dissertation has analyzed the relationship between state identity and both authoritarianism and democracy. Moreover, this dissertation offered an alternative conceptualization of state identity that is superior to the conceptualizations offered by this literature.

It is also relevant to the study of **regime transitions** in two ways. First, (a) it brings back the forgotten variable of the state in the study of transitions. It showed how the usually overlooked variable of ‘national unity’, which the ‘transitology’ literature triumphed as the

²²⁸ Here as in this dissertation, I treat regime-type as a binary category of either democracy or authoritarianism.

²²⁹ Here as in this dissertation, I treat regime-type as a binary category of either democracy or authoritarianism.

only precondition for democracy, can be conceptualized in reference to the structure of claims on state identity. That way, (b) the configuration of claims on state identity is a variable that bridges agent-based and structural approaches to transitions. It links the behavior of actors to the structure of the state and how they interact to influence regime-type outcomes.

Finally, it contributes to the inquiry of **democratic backsliding and autocratization**. Dissent on state identity leads to exclusion and authoritarianism (chapters 5 and 6);²³⁰ it is conducive to authoritarianism and is associated with the weakening of various ground rules and institutions that are important for democracy (chapter 4). The case of Turkey also shows that dissent on state identity played a critical role in turning its democratic system into an authoritarian one. Normatively, this points towards a potentially relevant factor in the study of the current concerning wave of democratic backsliding and autocratization

8.2.2 Empirical contributions

The findings of this dissertation contributed to the understanding of 4 empirical phenomena:

First, it sheds light on an important variable that is a strong predictor of regime type in 129 countries. Chapter 4 showed that dissent on state identity predicts authoritarianism whereas an agreement thereon increases the likelihood of democracy. It also showed how constellations of state identity affect the performance and strength of institutions that are important for democracy in all regime types. Finally, the analysis confirms that dissent on state identity is associated with some indicators of exclusivist politics.

Second, it sheds light on how fragmentation and division occur in homogenous societies. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss severe polarization and division in two relatively homogenous societies. In Turkey and Tunisia, dissent on state identity did not stem from heterogeneity or ascriptive cleavages. It rather emanated from two opposing claims on state identity.

Third, it traces the long process of autocratization in Turkey, explains why it occurred, and identifies its most important battles, alliances, and critical moments. The analysis explained how and why Turkey became authoritarian despite its earlier celebration as the model for Middle Eastern democracy. Chapter 5 showed how the literature missed important steps in the way towards the authoritarianization of Turkey because it overlooked the context of division and fragmentation on state identity. It also showed how scholars have even considered

²³⁰ It played an important role in the drift away from democracy in 2007 Turkey and its authoritarian transition in 2017 (chapter 5).

some of these steps towards autocratization steps towards democratic consolidation as they overlooked the context of state identity divisions.

Fourth, **it explains why Tunisia witnessed a crisis in 2013 before successfully democratizing in 2014.** Chapter 6 argued that the literature did not account for Tunisia's severe crisis in the summer of 2013 because it has been blind to the dissent on state identity between the Islamists and the secularists. It illustrated how this dissent halted democratic transition and culminated in a deadlock that threatened not only the transition but the whole political order. It was the meeting between the leaders of both camps in August 2013 Paris that resolved the dissent on state identity and served as the basis for further compromises under the Nobel-Prize winner National Quartet.

8.3 Turkey and Tunisia now: Between hope and concern

In Turkey, while there is no doubt that Erdogan, backed by the AKP, managed to secure the upper hand in Turkey's political scene. The inter-Islamist power struggle that evolved after they succeeded in excluding the secularists from any real chance to contest power further diminishes the likelihood of a reverse wave of democracy in Turkey. But recent developments invite some hope. Recent public opinion findings suggest that there is a growing segment of the Turkish population that does not fall into this deep cleavage between *Kemalism* and Islamism. This segment aspires towards a democratic representative system with widespread inclusion and depolarized politics (Seren Selvin Korkmaz 2021). Attitudes are, however, as shown in this dissertation not relevant for regime-type outcomes *unless* they are translated into political action. The future of Turkey might, thus, depend on the ability of these segments to politically organize and seduce segments from both the secular and Islamist factions who are increasingly alienated from Turkey's authoritarian turn.

In Tunisia, whereas the longevity of the democratic experience invites optimism, two issues invite caution. The first is that differing attitudes towards the identity of the state remain latent between Islamists and secularist forces.²³¹ The recent tensions between the current Tunisian president Qais Saed, backed by some secular segments, suspended the parliament, and Elnahda testify to the fragility of Tunisia's democracy. While this "hick up" does not seem to have put Tunisia back on the road to authoritarianism yet, it remains concerning in light of the lessons

²³¹ As chapter 6 illustrated, some clauses that are related to state identity in the constitution could be open for different interpretations.

learned from Turkey's authoritarianization. There, a sincere democratic experience during the AKP's first term in power spiraled into fierce authoritarianism in 2017. In light of the division between Islamists and the secularists, a decade was enough to transform Turkey from a model of Muslim and Middle Eastern democracy to the nightmare of personalist authoritarianism.

The second invitation for worry is the dissatisfaction that wide segments of the Tunisian youth have with the new democratic system, particularly its economic performance (Gabsi 2019; Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Tür 2018). This is of course partially the result of the high – and in many aspects unrealistic – promises that the revolution against Ben-Ali made. Whereas political scientists know that democracy does not necessarily bring economic growth or a better administration (P. C. Schmitter and Karl 1991, 87), democratic movements usually promise a whole wide range of socio-economic and political gains. In Tunisia, like in many other Arab countries that experienced popular mobilizations for change, revolutionary actors promised bread and social justice. While the freedoms that come with democracy can enable actors to pursue these goals, it does not grant them. In a socio-economically challenging context, failure to improve socio-economic issues can alienate important societal segments from the new democratic system. This can pose a challenge to the longevity of the system.

8.4 Testable hypotheses and further research

The hypotheses and findings of this dissertation point towards various venues for further research. The previous chapter discussed the future research that is necessary to enhance the validity, and widen the scope, of this dissertation's theoretical, methodological, and empirical findings. This section proposes more explorative research agendas that build on the empirical findings. First, it proposes three ways to empirically falsify this dissertation's arguments. It then alternates between offering testable hypotheses and proposing questions that could guide future research in three areas: The study of political transitions, future transitions in the MENA region, and the general relationship between state identity and regime type.

8.4.1 How can future research falsify the arguments of this work?

The arguments of this dissertation could be falsified on two levels: **On the general level:** A positive relationship (or a lack of any relationship) between dissent on state identity and inclusion, or democracy, would falsify the generalizability of the argument established in

chapter 4.²³² **On the level of the cases:** In Turkey, a turn towards more inclusion and democracy in a context of Islamist-Kemalism dissent on state identity would put the main argument of this book in question. Similarly, a renewed dissent on state identity between secularists and Islamists without a subsequent rise in exclusion would serve as evidence against the arguments made in chapter 6.

Future research can, therefore, continue to test the validity of this dissertation's argument by keeping a watchful eye on both the cases of Turkey and Tunisia and on the general relationship between state identity dissent, exclusion, and regime type. The occurrence of any of the above observations would question the validity of the analysis offered in previous chapters.

Nevertheless, three core pillars of the argument need to be considered for a valid falsification of the argument (see chapter 2, section 4): (1) Dissent on state identity is a state of discord and not a simple issue-based disagreement on an identity-related policy. (2) Opposing visions of state identity lead to exclusion when political actors have opposing claims on state identity – when these visions translate into political action.²³³ (3) The actors involved need to be relevant political actors.

8.4.2 How can future research build the findings?

a) The findings of the cases in other transitions

Chapter 7 discussed how the dissent on state identity explained important empirical phenomena during Turkey's and Tunisia's transitions. Based on that, I propose bold hypotheses to be tested in other cases:

- **Different constellations of claims on state identity predict the outcome of transitions:** a consensus on state identity is necessary for democratization.
- **A consensus on state identity needs to be achieved before successful democratization:** disagreements on state identity cannot be managed via democratic mechanisms.
- **The fault-lines of transitions are between actors who have opposing views of state identity:** Issue-based political disagreements during transitions will take place between actors who have opposing views of state identity.

²³² That dissent on state identity between relevant political actors leads to exclusion and is, therefore, conducive to authoritarianism and deleterious for democracy.

²³³ The argument in this book is, therefore, not about individual feelings regarding the state or its identity.

- **Political alliances form between forces who share similar views of state identity:** In the context of dissent on state identity, alliances will be structured along the fault-line regarding state identity.
- **Disagreements that result from state identity dissent are explosive and exclusivist:** disagreements on issues that affect state identity are particularly explosive and lead to exclusion.
- **Constitutions are important to locate dissent on state identity:** Because dissent on state identity is a fundamental disagreement, it is likely to manifest in disagreements on fundamental legal documents such as constitutions.

b) Testable hypotheses for the MENA region

The two cases that were examined in depth in this dissertation were from the MENA region. In light of the comparable elements in the historical trajectories of the MENA countries, broad but cautious generalizations could be drawn from the cases of Turkey and Tunisia. In the following, I present two prognostic hypotheses for countries of the MENA region. These hypotheses are to be, however, dealt with extreme caution. Despite broad historical similarities, countries in the region have quite distinct, and in many cases even contradictory, political trajectories. The following is however *likely* to be, to one extent or another, generalizable for the region based on the analyses in this dissertation.²³⁴

Political change in the region will likely have to address divisions on state identity. In Turkey and Tunisia, the dissent on state identity had been historically rooted in the very processes of state-building. Some works have also emphasized historical commonalities of many Middle Eastern states, particularly in terms of identity evolution (Karpas 2001). This, in addition to anecdotal evidence after the 2011 uprisings in Syria, Libya, and earlier in 1989 Algeria shows that the region is likely to witness tensions regarding state identity in times of political change.

Religion will likely play a role in issues of state identity in the region. Whether in the form of a struggle on the Islamic vs secular character of the state or in the form of different sectarian claims on state identity, regime transformations in the region will have to uncomfortably meddle with religion. While this is not peculiar to the MENA region,²³⁵ the historical context

²³⁴ Again, these generalizations are to be taken and interpreted with extreme caution. They are based on the deductive reasoning of the author in light of what has been discussed in this dissertation.

²³⁵ Although some have argued that Islam is exceptional because it does not differentiate between the sacred and the temporal (Lewis 1993). This view has rightfully been criticized for its ahistorical view of Islam as well as for its

in which states of the MENA region evolved suggests that contemporary ideas regarding what the state represents will be closely intertwined with religion (Zubaida 2010). In cases such as Syria and post-Saddam Iraq, the dissent on the identity of the state runs not only between secularism and Islamism, but also interacts with sectarian divisions. In Libya, religion and tribalism are core elements of general disagreement on the state. Religion will, therefore, play a role in different claims on state identity.

c) Agendas for future large-N studies

The findings in chapter 4 call for further large-N studies on the socio-political effects of different constellations of claims on state identity. The answers to the following questions will provide a deeper insight into the full explanatory power, but also the limitations, of the state identity variable in political analysis:

- This dissertation showed that dissent on state identity does not occur necessarily in diverse societies. But how does diversity interact with (dissent on) state identity? Are diverse states more prone to disagreements on the symbolic identity of the state?
- How does dissent (or consensus) on state identity affect other state dimensions? Does it impact the state's monopoly on the use of force or its ability to provide public provisions?
- The case studies showed that dissent on state identity leads to polarization and intense conflict. Can dissent on state identity lead to violence and state collapse?
- Finally, are the answers to these questions the same regardless of the content of state identity – regardless of whether the state symbolically represents the boundaries of the community or an ideational content?

empirical invalidity (Fish 2011; Lockman 2009). More convincing works have argued that the historical evolution of the region is a more adequate place to search for reasons behind the centrality of religion (Zubaida 2010).

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Appendix: Data Handling and Statistical Validity

1 The general purpose

This appendix complements the large-N statistical analysis in this dissertation. Chapter 4 develops a statistical model that tests the influence of state identity on regime type by employing a logistic regression model. It complements this analysis by developing various multivariate linear regression models to test the influence of state identity on the status of democracy as well as 2 indicators of exclusion. These statistical models require the analysis and the data to meet some criteria to be valid. This appendix discusses the following:

- What are the requirements for linear and logistic regressions?
- Did the models in chapter 4 meet these requirements?
- How did the analysis deal with instances where the requirements were not met?

The diagnostics below show that all the models developed in chapter 4 are statistically valid. The logistic regression met all the requirements. The models that were developed using linear regression violated some of the assumptions and therefore necessitated some amendments and transformations.

2 Logistic Regression

2.1 Assumptions of Logistic Regression

The regression model “Model I” in chapter 4 was developed to test the impact of the predictors “state identity”, “basic administration”, “output strength”, and “market-based competition” on the dichotomous dependent variable “democracy/autocracy”.

Logistic regression requires the following three specifications to be met in the data:

First, it necessitates a linear relationship between the independent variables and the log of the odds. The log of the odds is one of the output values of logistic regression in the program SPSS. It is calculated by taking to log function of the odds ratio. Logistic regression does not necessitate that the independent and the dependent variables are linearly related, but it requires the independent variables to be linearly related to these log odds.

Second, no collinearity should exist among the independent variables. This is to ensure that there is no interaction between the predictors. If two or more predictors are correlated, the results cannot accurately predict the isolated influence of either of them on the dependent variable. Logistic regression requires

no collinearity between the predictors.

Third, the errors should be independent of one another (no autocorrelation). This is relevant, particularly during longitudinal analyses. Logistic regression requires no correlation between the errors (residuals) at point T0 and point T1 in time. The analysis in chapter 4 is not longitudinal. A lack of autocorrelation is therefore of secondary importance for this dissertation.

2.2 How do I test the assumptions for Model I?

Box-Tidwell test of linearity between independent variables and the log odds: Box-Tidwell is a manual statistical test for the linearity between the independent variables and the log of odds. The test is carried out by including the interaction of each predictor with its natural log in the regression analysis. If the result is significant, then the assumption is violated (Field 2013, chap. 19).

As figure 1 shows, these interaction variables are not statistically significant when included in the logistic regression model “Model I”. The linearity assumption between the predictors and the log of odds is therefore met.

Figure K: Test of linearity between predictors and the log of odds for Model I (Box-Tidwell)

		Variables in the Equation					
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Q1.2 State identity	2.393	3.539	.457	1	.499	10.948
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.267	.526	.256	1	.613	1.306
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	-4.197	2.389	3.085	1	.079	.015
	Q11.1 Output strength	-6.694	3.806	3.094	1	.079	.001
	Q7.1 Market-based competition by logmarketcompet	1.245	.874	2.029	1	.154	3.472
	Q11.1 Output strength by logeconomicdev	2.340	1.335	3.070	1	.080	10.379
	Q1.2 State identity by logstateid	-.994	1.203	.682	1	.409	.370
	Q1.4 Basic administration by logadminreco	.086	.281	.094	1	.759	1.090
	Constant	20.360	11.499	3.135	1	.077	695294047.1

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Q1.2 | State identity, Q1.4 | Basic administration, Q7.1 | Market-based competition, Q11.1 | Output strength, Q7.1 | Market-based competition * logmarketcompet, Q11.1 | Output strength * logeconomicdev, Q1.2 | State identity * logstateid, Q1.4 | Basic administration * logadminreco.

[V]ariance [I]nflation [F]actor to test collinearity: The VIF measures the extent to which the variance of the estimated regression coefficient is inflated because of a correlation between the predictors. A VIF value above 5 indicates problematic collinearity (Penn State University 2021).

The VIF value of the predictors does not change with the change of the dependent variable or the type of regression. The results in the graph below are therefore valid for the subsequent models and will therefore not be repeated in the subsequent diagnostics for the other models.

Figure 2 shows the VIF values of all the predictors. The values for all predictors are within the acceptable range (<5).

Figure L: Collinearity statistics for the predictors (valid for all models)

		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Q1.2 State identity	.675	1.481
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.261	3.830
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	.291	3.437
	Q11.1 Output strength	.410	2.437

Durbin-Watson to test for autocorrelation: The Durbin-Watson statistics test whether the residuals of the regression are correlated in any manner. The values of Durbin Watson are always between 0 and 4. Values close to 0 indicate a negative autocorrelation, values close to 4 indicate a positive autocorrelation. The closer the value is to 2, the more it is indicative of not autocorrelation (Universität Innsbruck n.d., 10).

Figure 3 shows that in “Model I”, the value of the Durbin Watson test is 1.99, Taken

together, these tests show that the logistic regression model in chapter 4 meets all the

Figure M: Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation in Model I

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.812 ^a	.659	.648	1.231537510	1.991

required criteria of logistic regression. negating autocorrelation.

3 Linear Regression

This section discusses the requirements (assumptions) of multivariate linear regression. It then tests these requirements on all the models that employ this type of regression. It also discusses the steps that were taken when any of the models violated these assumptions.

3.1 Assumptions of Linear Regression

Linear Multivariate Regression has 5 ground requirements that the data need to meet (Hahs-Vaughn and Lomax 2020, chap. 7):

First, linear regression assumes that the independent variables (predictors) and the dependent variable(s) are linearly related. The regression coefficient becomes misleading if these variables are not linearly related (i.e.: have a U or S shape relation).

Second, similar to logistic regression, linear regression assumes no multicollinearity between the predictors.

Third, the residuals of the regression model need to have equal variance (homoscedasticity).

Fourth, the residuals need to be normally distributed.

Fifth, the observations need to be independent (no auto-correlation)

3.2 How do I test for these assumptions in all models?

Comparing means to check for linearity: In the SPSS statistical package, linearity between two variables could be checked by comparing their means. The outcome is in the form of an ANOVA table. If “deviation from linearity” is statistically significant at the 5 percent level ($p > 0.05$), then the two variables are *not* linearly related.

VIF for multicollinearity: This is already tested among the predictors. The results are above in figure

2. No multicollinearity exists between the predictors.

Glejser test for homoscedasticity: To carry out the Glejser test, I regress the predictors on the absolute value (Abs.) of the residuals. If the predictors are statistically significant to these residuals, then the requirement of homoscedasticity is violated.

Plotting the residuals to test normality: the best way to test whether the residuals are normally distributed is to plot them and check visually whether they approximate the famous bell.

Durbin-Watson statistics to test for auto-correlation: The Durbin-Watson value of each model is included in chapter 4. All models have an acceptable value that is very close to 2, indicating no auto-correlation.

3.3 Model II diagnostics: The dependent variable “democracy status”

In chapter 4, I argue that the inclusion of the control variables “basic administration” and “output strength” violate some assumptions of multivariate linear OLS regression. Before omitting these variables, the model violated the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity. The diagnostics shown below illustrate the violation and how omitting these two variables corrected them.

Since Model II is one of the main models in chapter 4 that test the general validity of H1, it was more adequate to omit the violators instead of re-coding the variables or carrying out a data-transformation. Such a transformation would have diluted the meaning of the effect a-unit increase in the predictors has on the dependent variable.

Below, I show how the model before recoding violated the linearity and the homoscedasticity assumptions and how recoding the predictors fixed that. After that, I show how the model with the recoded predictors meets the rest of the requirements of multivariate linear regression.

The linearity assumption

Figure 4 shows that, before recoding the predictors, the variable “output strength” did not have a linear relationship with the dependent variable. Figure 5 shows that, after recoding, all predictors were linearly related to the dependent variable.

Figure N: The violation of the linearity assumption between the predictor "output strength" and the variable "democracy status"

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SI Democracy Status * Q11.1 Output strength	Between Groups	(Combined)	244.628	8	30.578	11.977	.000
		Linearity	198.406	1	198.406	77.712	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	46.222	7	6.603	2.586	.016
	Within Groups		306.371	120	2.553		
	Total		550.999	128			

*Figure O: All other predictors are linear to the variable "democracy status" in Model II***ANOVA Table**

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SI Democracy Status * Q1.2 State identity	Between Groups	(Combined)	229.610	8	28.701	10.716	.000
		Linearity	205.133	1	205.133	76.592	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	24.477	7	3.497	1.306	.253
	Within Groups		321.390	120	2.678		
	Total		550.999	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SI Democracy Status * Q1.4 Basic administration	Between Groups	(Combined)	239.345	9	26.594	10.154	.000
		Linearity	216.995	1	216.995	82.856	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	22.351	8	2.794	1.067	.391
	Within Groups		311.654	119	2.619		
	Total		550.999	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SI Democracy Status * Q7.1 Market-based competition	Between Groups	(Combined)	333.339	9	37.038	20.249	.000
		Linearity	310.452	1	310.452	169.731	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	22.887	8	2.861	1.564	.143
	Within Groups		217.660	119	1.829		
	Total		550.999	128			

The assumption of homoscedasticity

Figure 6 shows the Glsjer test for the regression model before recoding the predictors. The statistics show that the variable “basic administration” violated the requirement of homoscedasticity ($p=0.018$). The variable “market-based competition” was also very close to violating the assumption ($p=0.056$).

A quantitative data transformation is usually prescribed to fix the problem of heteroscedasticity. Such a transformation would have however diluted (if not abolished altogether) the meaning and interpretation of the variables. There are different ways to statistically conduct data transformation. All data transformation techniques result in score transformations away from the original

values.

For this reason, I opted in favor of a manual qualitative transformation of the data. By recoding all the predictors in the same manner to only have values between 1 and 3, the analysis retained the meaning of a 1-point increase in each of these predictors. This enabled the interpretation presented in chapter 4.

Figure 7 shows that, after recoding the predictors, the model meets the assumption of homoscedasticity.

Figure P: Gljser test shows the violation of homoscedasticity before ommitting the variables in Model II

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.423	.295		1.433	.155
	Q1.2 State identity	-.047	.044	-.111	-1.083	.281
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.134	.056	.397	2.401	.018
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	-.107	.055	-.302	-1.930	.056
	Q11.1 Output strength	.098	.053	.245	1.857	.066

a. Dependent Variable: Absresid

Figure Q: Gljser test confirms the assumption of homosedasticity after omitting the variables from Model II

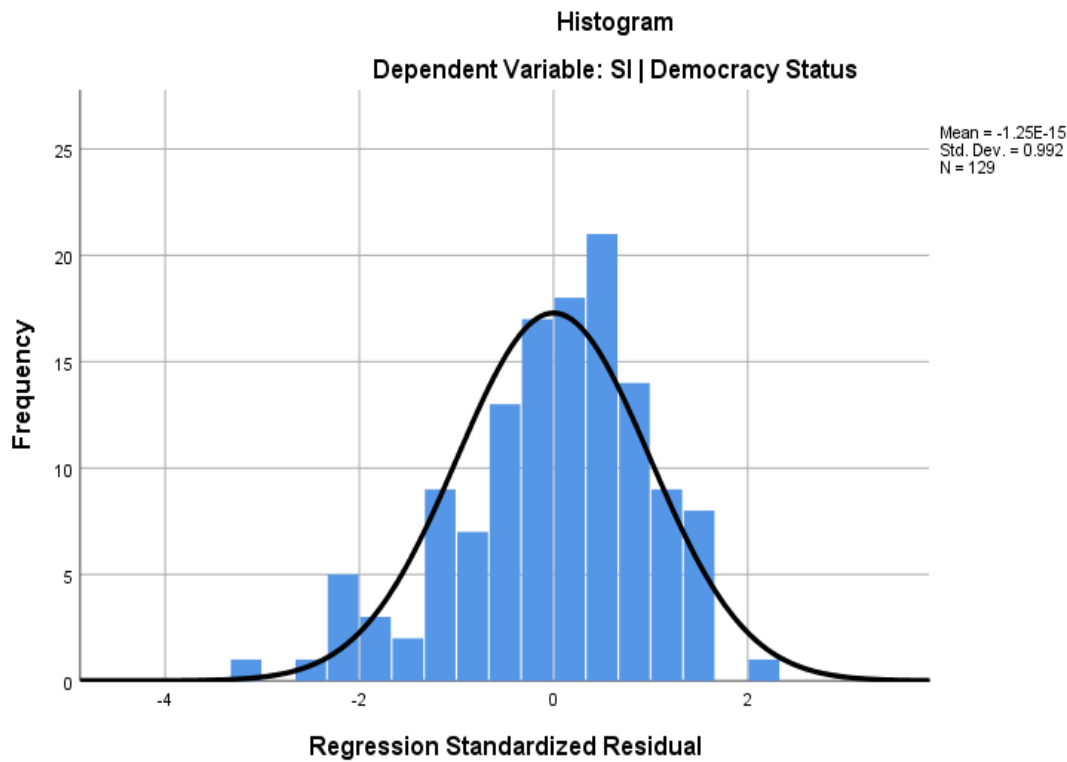
Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	.772	.300		2.573	.011	.178	1.365	
	Q1.2 State identity	.002	.043	.004	.043	.966	-.083	.087	.778 1.285
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	.032	.036	.091	.902	.369	-.039	.103	.778 1.285

a. Dependent Variable: Absresid_Dvdmocstatus

The normal distribution of the residuals

The plot in figure 8 shows that the residuals of the recoded model approximate a normal distribution curve.

Figure R: The normal distribution of the residuals model II



3.4 Model III diagnostics: Regression on the dependent variable “cleavage/conflict management”

The diagnostics below show that the model fulfills the requirements of linear regression with one exception: The variable “market-based competition” deviates from the linearity assumption. The model was therefore employed without including “market-based competition”.

The linearity assumption

Figure 9 shows that all predictors are linearly related to the dependent variable, except the variable “market-based competition”. This necessitated omitting the variable from the analysis

Figure S: All predictors are linearly related to the DV except "market-based competition" in Model III

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.3 Cleavage / conflict management * Q1.2 State identity	Between Groups	(Combined)	232.558	8	29.070	11.235	.000
		Linearity	216.508	1	216.508	83.680	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	16.050	7	2.293	.886	.520
	Within Groups		310.481	120	2.587		
	Total		543.039	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.3 Cleavage / conflict management * Q1.4 Basic administration	Between Groups	(Combined)	234.492	9	26.055	10.049	.000
		Linearity	211.971	1	211.971	81.753	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	22.521	8	2.815	1.086	.378
	Within Groups		308.547	119	2.593		
	Total		543.039	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.3 Cleavage / conflict management * Q7.1 Market-based competition	Between Groups	(Combined)	277.040	9	30.782	13.771	.000
		Linearity	233.867	1	233.867	104.625	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	43.173	8	5.397	2.414	.019
	Within Groups		265.999	119	2.235		
	Total		543.039	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.3 Cleavage / conflict management * Q11.1 Output strength	Between Groups	(Combined)	257.576	8	32.197	13.535	.000
		Linearity	239.095	1	239.095	100.509	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	18.481	7	2.640	1.110	.361
	Within Groups		285.463	120	2.379		
	Total		543.039	128			

The assumption of homoscedasticity

The Gijser test in figure 10 shows that the residuals of the model have an equal variance across all data points. All the variables are statistically insignificant when they are regressed on the residuals of the regression model ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that the model fulfills the assumption of homoscedasticity.

Figure T: Gljser Test shows that Model III fulfills the assumption of homoscedasticity

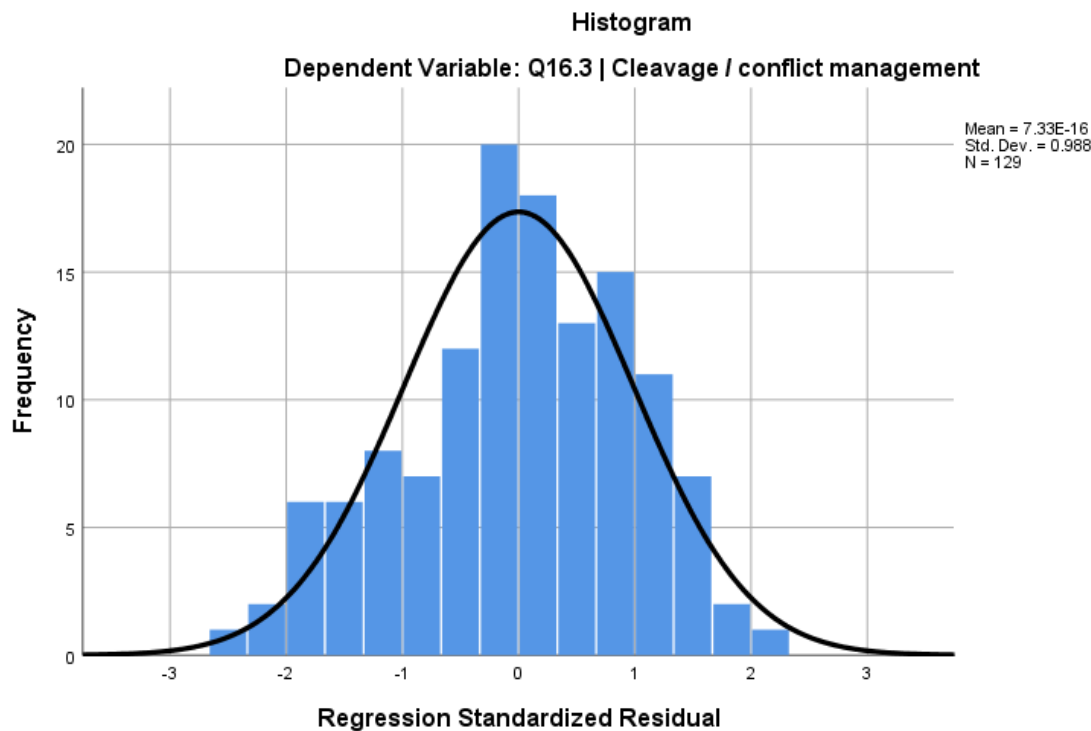
		Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.509	.314		4.803	.000	.887	2.130		
	Q1.2 State identity	.003	.047	.006	.055	.956	-.090	.095	.675	1.481
	Q1.4 Basic administration	-.050	.049	-.144	-1.025	.308	-.146	.046	.393	2.542
	Q11.1 Output strength	-.023	.053	-.057	-.443	.658	-.127	.081	.464	2.155

a. Dependent Variable: Absresid_DV_conflictmanag

The normal distribution of the residuals

The graph below in figure 11 shows that the residuals of the model are equally distributed.

Figure U: The residuals in Model III are normally distributed



3.5 Model IV: Regression on the dependent variable “anti-democratic actors”

The diagnostics below show that the regression model run on the predictors and the dependent variable of “anti-democratic actors” fulfill all the criteria of linear regression except one: The variable “output strength” was not linearly related to the dependent variable. It was accordingly removed from the model.

The linearity assumption

The statistics in figure 12 show that “output strength” violates the assumption of linearity. All other variables do not deviate from linearity in any statistically significant way ($p < 0.05$).

Figure V: All predictors except "output strength" are linearly related to the DV in ModelIV

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.2 Anti-democratic actors * Q1.2 State identity	Between Groups	(Combined)	290.746	8	36.343	5.805	.000
		Linearity	230.150	1	230.150	36.759	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	60.596	7	8.657	1.383	.219
	Within Groups		751.316	120	6.261		
	Total		1042.062	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.2 Anti-democratic actors * Q1.4 Basic administration	Between Groups	(Combined)	265.051	9	29.450	4.510	.000
		Linearity	219.988	1	219.988	33.691	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	45.063	8	5.633	.863	.550
	Within Groups		777.011	119	6.530		
	Total		1042.062	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.2 Anti-democratic actors * Q11.1 Output strength	Between Groups	(Combined)	345.758	8	43.220	7.448	.000
		Linearity	244.398	1	244.398	42.119	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	101.361	7	14.480	2.495	.020
	Within Groups		696.304	120	5.803		
	Total		1042.062	128			

ANOVA Table

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q16.2 Anti-democratic actors * Q7.1 Market-based competition	Between Groups	(Combined)	464.265	9	51.585	10.624	.000
		Linearity	410.823	1	410.823	84.611	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	53.442	8	6.680	1.376	.214
	Within Groups		577.797	119	4.855		
	Total		1042.062	128			

The assumption of homoscedasticity

By regressing the predictors on the residuals of the model, the Gljser test in figure 13 shows that none of the predictors are related to the residuals in any statistically significant way ($p > 0.05$). That way, the model meets the assumption of homoscedasticity.

Figure W: Gljser Test shows that Model IV fulfills the assumption of homoscedasticity

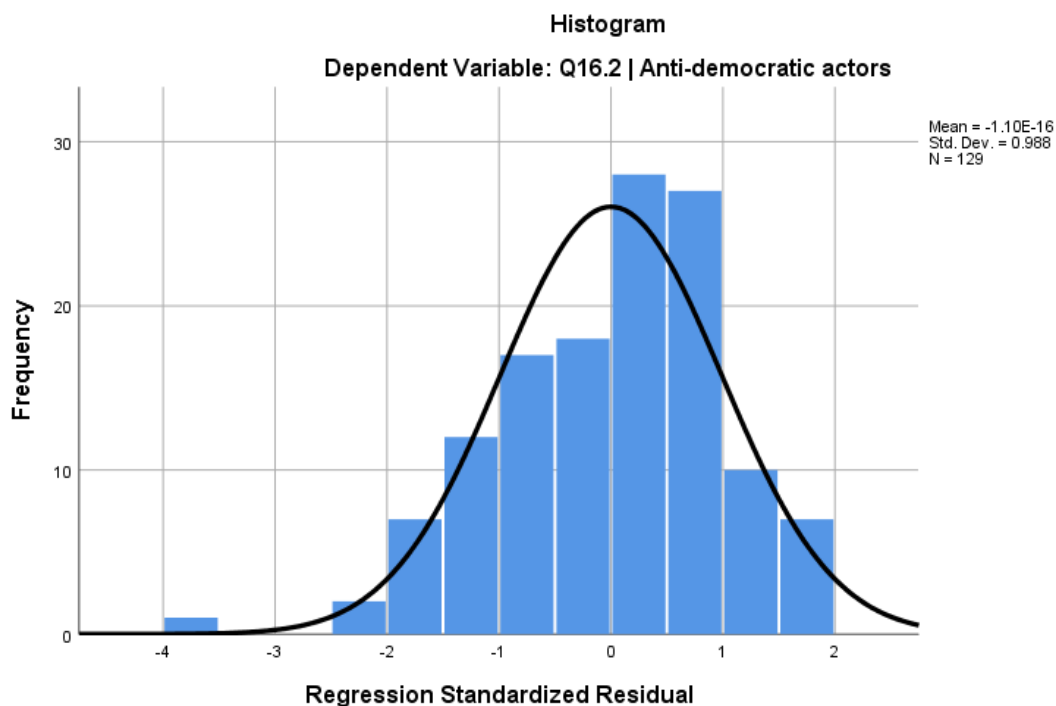
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.816	.469		1.739	.085
	Q1.2 State identity	.049	.072	.072	.681	.497
	Q1.4 Basic administration	.135	.088	.251	1.534	.128
	Q7.1 Market-based competition	-.072	.086	-.127	-.833	.406

a. Dependent Variable: Absresid_DV_antidemoactors

The normal distribution of the residuals

The graph below (figure 14) shows that the residuals of the model are normally distributed

Figure X: The residuals of Model IV are normally distributed



4 Conclusion

The statistical models developed in chapter 4 require the analysis to meet some statistical criteria for the models to be statistically valid. This appendix discussed the requirements of logistic and multivariate linear regressions. It also illustrated how the models that are developed in chapter 4 met these requirements. The logistic regression model that tests the impact of the predictors on regime type

met all of its requirements. But the linear regressions models required some amendments: The analysis did not omit any of the predictor variables that violated the assumptions in Model II because of the model's centrality in testing the general validity of the hypothesized relationship between dissent on state identity and regime-type. Instead, the predictors were recoded so that the model meets these requirements while minimizing the amount of information lost due to the transformation. Since Models III and V are only indicators of the validity of H2, the analysis omitted the variables that violated the assumptions of linear regression.

