

# Rituals of Democracy

*Towards a Phenomenology of Electoral Authoritarianism  
in Algeria and Egypt*

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## Abstract

*In this paper, an approach to understanding the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in the Arab world is explored. Elections are events variably productive of political outcomes and political actors. Two electoral events are approached in an asymmetrical manner. The elections held in the fall of 1991 in Algeria produced a whole a new set of actors at the dawn of an extraordinary decade of violence in the history of the country. The formal configuration of power in Algeria was unable to "encompass" the products of this event; and a formal reconfiguration of power took place with a military intervention through which the president of the republic was forced to resign. Because of its temporally concentrated nature, and wide ranging consequences, the event is examined in a manner circumscribed to its temporal confines. The dominant approach to analyses of such events, strategic interaction among rational actors is therein critiqued. The Egyptian elections of 2005 in which the Muslim Brotherhood secured control of almost twenty percent of legislature, in contrast, are framed as an historical analysis that would seek to make them intelligible through an excavation of the political history of the republic, emphasizing the Brotherhoods complex imbrications with the Free Officers Movement within the military, the group responsible for the republic's foundational coup d'etat.. Both sets of analysis are impure, with phenomenological critiques of the approaches embedded and comparisons made across the two polities. It is suggested that only through a different lens that captures the political usefulness of categories and their transgressions can the resolution of internecine battles within "regimes" be glimpsed in battles between the state and a monolithic category of 'Islamists.'" The rituals of democracy, including the holding of elections, are arenas in which rationality of the emergent actors is projected backwards in time through claims that elections are facades of power. In this reading, the defense of the integrity of electoral processes is not a priority for emergent political actors, who may come to accept charges of manipulation as markers of a prior cohesion, calculation and control for which there is otherwise no evidence. It is not a failing of this facade that it is known to be a facade. The phenomenological approach is then introduced and its implications discussed; including a resistance to history and a privileging of historicity, sensitivity to the political power of abstractions and the centralization of the following question about politics: Who is the political actor?*

# Rituals of Democracy

## *Towards a Phenomenology of Electoral Authoritarianism in Algeria and Egypt*

### I- The End

*Each moment of breakdown or recomposition of social order presents its own possibilities within its own context of constraints.*

*James McDougall<sup>1</sup>*

All things being equal, the general betrayed a predilection for the constitutional. To rid the state of its head had become an imperative amongst the faceless top echelon of the military, of whom the general was nonetheless able to produce a list of 181 demanding that the president recuse himself.<sup>2</sup> When the sullen Chadli Benjedid, the Algerian Republic's third president (1979-1992) appeared on national television to tender a resignation on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, 1992, it had become known to the now acutely attentive international press that he had been at least prodded towards the decision in a long session with his appointee, the Minister of Defense, General Khaled Nezzar list in hand, probably on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> of January.<sup>3</sup> Algerian politics had drifted into the international gaze since the results of the regional and municipal elections in June

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<sup>1</sup> McDougall, James. "Savage Wars? Codes of Violence in Algeria, 1830s – 1990s," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No.1, pp 117- 131, 2000, 129.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, 248.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

of 1990 signaled the rapid ascent of the Front Islamique du Salut [the Islamic Salvation Front, FIS] which, its significantly derivative name notwithstanding, was a single political party rather than a front.<sup>4</sup> The specter of the first electoral ascent of Islamists to power in Arab politics produced effusive commentary, both local and international, speculating upon the likely character of the emergent polity.<sup>5</sup> With the narrative's much speculated upon denouement looming, the intervention now underway must have seemed to observers like an experiment gone badly wrong,<sup>6</sup> a colossal miscalculation requiring exceptional measures. The situation would at least reveal the identity of the powerful in Algerian politics, always referred to in the local vernacular enigmatically as "Le Pouvoir,"<sup>7</sup> for, as one political theorist had demonstrated many years prior, "the sovereign is he who decides on the exception."<sup>8</sup>

Constitutionally, the next in line was Abdelaziz Belkhadim, the president of a National Assembly, still comprised entirely by members of the "ruling" *party* of the Front Liberation Nationale [the National Liberation Front, FLN].<sup>9</sup> Belkhadim is said to have belonged to the

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<sup>4</sup> The FIS was constituted as a legal party in September of 1989, Ibid, 164. Other significant Islamist political actors existed, namely Mahfoud Nahnah's HAMAS, the name designed to echo the Palestinian Hamas, but whose practices resemble more closely the cautiousness of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Also significant was Abdallah Djaballah's Nahda. There was an attempt to unify all three into a front in April of 1990, but that negotiations collapsed due to personal conflicts among the parties respective leaderships. Ibid, 166.

<sup>5</sup> The tone was in one or another alarmist, especially that by Agence Press France. Headlines such as "Fundamentalists Threaten Holy War," June, 28, 1991 and "Last New Year's Party Before Islamic Austerity," December 30, 1991, are typical of the institution. Coverage in other countries was not especially more nuanced, see for example "The Struggle to Prevent the Next Iran," The Independent [UK], June 6, 1991 and "A Second Iran?" Washington Post, April 21, 1994 .

<sup>6</sup> "The Big Gamble" is how one typical account from the outside put it during the long summer in which the election were postponed, mass demonstrations called, a strike instigated and a state of siege ordered. Eldad Beck. "The Big Gamble," The Jerusalem Report, June 20, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Lit "The Power": The term "encompasses a larger semantic field than merely "the state," incorporating military authorities generally viewed at odds with elected officials. "Paul Silverstein An Excess of Truth: Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and the Algerian Civil War ." *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4, Autumn, 2002/1991. [en, 2], 666. It is here, according to the local vernacular that true power resides.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology; Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 .

<sup>9</sup> A not insignificant detail often neglected in commentary is that the party that lost the election in 1991 was called "the party of the FLN" rather than the FLN itself.

"FLNs Islamic wing" and had been adjudged a "valet of the FIS,"<sup>10</sup> then on the brink of an absolute legislative majority, the outcome which this intervention was designed to block. It therefore transpired that Benjedid, as one of his final acts, had dissolved the assembly, an announcement that was not made until after his resignation.<sup>11</sup> Within a definition of the boundaries of explicit law, the last man available to fill the position of the presidency was Abdelmalek Benhabyles, an FLN stalwart, the president of the Constitutional Council, and the one to whom the presidency would legally pass only in the event of the incumbent's death. On the grounds that Benjedid was still alive, Benhabyles refused to cooperate with that which was now scantily constitutional and plainly a coup.<sup>12</sup>

It was deemed that since the constitution itself did not provide for the simultaneous absence of both the president and the national assembly, than power would be divested by Benjedid to the High Council for Security (HCS), an extant but, by law, merely consultative body.<sup>13</sup> The emergence of HCS, as if by logical elimination, as the body entrusted to manage the crisis, as if by accidental calamity reflective of no particular will, likely owed much to the fact that it was dominated by senior military officers. The council then created the Haut Comite d'Etat [HCE], a transitional presidency composed of five men of whom one was General Khaled Nezzar.

It is not clear, and is not likely to be conclusively clarified, which of the violent events that ensued "tipped" or "triggered" the Algerian polity's "descent" into savage war.<sup>14</sup> The design of, and designs within, the electoral arena in which the confrontation was fashioned are

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<sup>10</sup> Willis, 248.

<sup>11</sup> Willis, fn 98, 249.

<sup>12</sup> Willis, 249.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> McDougall provides an important critique of the abuse of the imagery of savagery and its ascription to some aspect of the "Algerian character."

immediately brought forth as causal forces to which the breakdown is attributable. The intensity of the search for beginnings diminishes as the ensuing events develop a logic that can justifiably be severed from its electoral foundations. The transcending of the causal power of the electoral even has been accomplished through an amplification of the associations of the uniquely violent present with a violent uniquely violent past, or, alternatively, by the reduction of post-electoral disorder into ordered matrices of survival and gain. An account such as Luiz Martinez's widely read *La guerre civile en Algérie* [translated as *The Algerian Civil War*] provides a worthwhile ground level microsociology but is gravely bound by a macrothesis that ascribes the violence to an "imaginative frame of reference" in which "violence has a value of virtue" and where legitimate power could only be wielded by the maquis.<sup>15</sup> Less historically embedded, and therefore less likely to subscribe to eloquent rearticulations of crude assumptions is Stathis Kalyvas's *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, in which the author presents a rational-choice model where warring factions use violence in order to maximize support over captive civilians, especially when their hold is weak, in order to counter the then increased likelihood of defection to other, clearly defined, factions.<sup>16</sup> What this otherwise icily compelling account, which usefully counters notions of "anarchic violence," cannot do is delineate how such a state is brought into being. Indeed in his excellent analysis of the FIS's unconsummated electoral victory, Kalyvas acknowledges that such a modular form is "limited to the analysis of a particular and well-defined strategic situation,"<sup>17</sup> one which he carefully excises in demonstrating the self-styled Islamist party's inability to vouchsafe immunity to those who required it in order to ignore the

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<sup>15</sup> Luis Martinez. *La guerre civile en Algérie*. Paris: Karthala, 1998, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Stathis Kalivas. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Stathis Kalivas, "Commitment Problems in Emerging Democracies: The Case of Religious Parties." *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 32, No.4. July, 2000.

many promises of "public tribunals" for the corrupt and the murderous clamorously proclaimed at FIS rallies.<sup>18</sup>

The argument presented here however holds that not only is the *definition* of the strategic situation an important privilege and reason for power,<sup>19</sup> but that the design of the arena of contestation is itself productive of new political subjects. Failure to reject this hypothesis must fundamentally call into question any equilibrium model of democracy. Such models can profitably lay bare the choices available to actors -given particular assumptions about their behavior and careful rendering of their external constraints, but are otherwise incapable making intelligible the behavior of actors *who are themselves the effects* of applied political models.<sup>20</sup> The classic reading of "democratization" from above as instituted by Benjedid, following the widespread riots of 1988, is that the measures constituted a concession to the angry masses. It is however much better described as an offensive action against other elements within the state apparatus - including factions, ideologically and otherwise, opposed to the determined economic liberalization program instituted in the 1980s. His charismatic predecessor Hourri Boumedienne "had neutralized most of the social, political and even military elites by addressing "the masses"

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<sup>18</sup> Willis, 168.

<sup>19</sup> This much has been well argued by Andreas Schedler in "The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections," and in specific Arab cases by Lust Okur Lust in *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions*. Cambridge University Press; New Ed edition, December 19, 2006

<sup>20</sup> Hence, in consideration of the Algerian elections, when John Waterbury councils for the habituation of the ostensibly undemocratic FIS into formally democratic institutions of legislative elections by having the FIS serve a period in opposition, he fails to address by whom this educative apprenticeship is to be offered, writing of a "government" whose benevolence, and more problematically in this case, cohesion, is simply assumed. This, strangely, is in the context of considering a "pacted transitions" which assumes the presence of "hardliners" and "reformers." "Had the Algerian government," he writes, "paid greater attention to the modalities of the elections from the very start, the FIS might have been induced to endure a fairly long apprenticeship as a minority participant in a new Algerian democracy." The rational calculus borrowed from Przeworski's Democracy and the Market is situational, and the introduction of time here in order to account for political reality, though welcome is more strategic and selective than that employed by the actors themselves. How are the "government's" rational preferences consistent in engineering, unsuccessfully rigging cancelling an election it has to overturn consistent with its proposed democratic education of an unruly opposition? See John Waterbury. "Democracy Without Democrats?: The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East." *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* edited by Ghassan Salame. London: I.B. Tauris, 1994.

directly" and "used the extensive network of administrative institutions to implement decisions taken by a team of faithful technocrats" in effect encapsulating in his person a non-reproducible political system buttressed by an economic regime of privileges granted to war veterans and ex-party leaders in the shape of business opportunities and other forms of rent.<sup>21</sup> The Chadli Benjedid regime in contrast implemented a program of structural adjustments that "required the determined demobilization of popular energies, since these were bound to be alienated by and hostile to this project."<sup>22</sup> The dynamic that developed was centrifugal rather than centripetal, with the state having lost the capacity to capture and channel the various ideological tendencies in society. What was required was a *fuite en avant* [escape forward], which is how one prominent observer describes the president's actions in 1988:<sup>23</sup>

Chadli's enterprise — which can more and more clearly be seen to have been a *fuite en avant*, a headlong dash to regain the initiative at all costs and at any price after his position was so profoundly weakened by the riots of October 1988 — thus politicised and bitterly envenomed the fault lines in the Algerian body politic between adherents of an Islamic constitution of the state and adherents of a modern democratic constitution, and the fault line between Kabyles and the rest of the Algerian nation. He thereby created a scenario which would lead either, at best, to a hung parliament, precluding coherent government in a context of chronic social and economic crisis, or to unbearable strains on the body politic culminating in the disintegration of the nation-state.

A glimmer of a pattern amongst debt ridden successors of iconic leaders of post-colonial states is discernible here; was it not Indira Gandhi, following Nehru, who undertook a series of "interconnecting rational decisions taken ad hoc with short term objectives in mind,"<sup>24</sup> in an

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<sup>21</sup> Boutheina Cheriet. "The Resilience of Algerian Populism." *Middle East Report*, No. 174, Democracy in the Arab World. (Jan. - Feb., 1992), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Hugh Roberts. "The State and the Challenge of Democracy," in "The State and the Challenge of Democracy," *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*, Verso, 2003, 118.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 119 – 120.

<sup>24</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, "Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXI Nos 38 and 29, September 20-27, 1986: 1699.

attempt to introduce new forms of legitimation into her battles with those put her in place?<sup>25</sup> Was not her crisis dependent politics predicated on simultaneous offense against actors within, and without, what casual observers would narrowly call the regime? The suggestion is bolder still whence we consider the politics and fate of Anwar el-Sadat, following Nasser in the history of Egypt, a history to be considered at some length below, who deigned to chart a penetrative escape route from one constituency to another - even if abandoning one required that he create the other. In comparing and linking political narratives, whether as a nexus or as independent cases, one would be remiss to assume that such historical lessons were entirely lost on political actors, not least in the Algerian drama. Chadli Benjedid, following Boumedienne, [mis]calculated that he could abandon elements of the regime opposed to his program in the confines of institutions that are severely delimited by a democratization process; wherein a parody of political party, the so called “party of the FLN” was transformed from a state appendage into one rudderless shell amongst sixty competitors in the summer of 1991. Still going by the same name, the conventional association of this entity with “le pouvoir” must have seemed useful to a performance of “democratization”; analysts foreign and domestic could look upon this political deportation camp as the vehicle of the incumbency.<sup>26</sup>

The general, along with others, saw that for the president the ideal scenario was not a victory of the party to which he nominally belonged, but a hung parliament over which he could

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 1697. Indira Ghandi was chosen as a compromise, precisely because she possessed the qualities of “indistinctness and ambiguity.” Her specific characteristics would appear only later. The same can be said about the colorless Benjedid, but who, in contrast, did not become any less pale and indistinct with time.

<sup>26</sup> Roberts writes that “the party in reality had a legitimating function but was not where power lay nor where decisions were taken. During Boumediene’s rule, it possessed neither Political Bureau nor Central Committee and held not a single congress. Under Chadli, it at last acquired a bureaucracy, held occasional congresses somewhat...but its still came a very poor fourth to the other apparatuses in the power structure” [1-The Army, 2-The Presidency, 3-The Bureaucracy]. Hugh Roberts. “Algeria’s Veiled Drama.” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), 386.

arbitrate.<sup>27</sup> Though it was under his leadership that the military dismantled the president's design, Khaled Nezzar, perhaps on account of constituencies he thought necessary to assuage, or perhaps in appreciation of the performativity of the discourse of democratization as a legitimator of power, even by undemocratic means, did not abandon Benjedid's *modus operandi* entirely. When the tanks rolled into Algiers with the HCS's incredulously legalistic assumption of executive power, the action was accompanied by gestures towards new constituencies in the reconfigured polity. The five man presidency included only one active representative of the armed forces, Nezzar himself and was further comprised of Ali Kafi, the leader of the Veterans Association; Tijani Haddam, the rector of the Paris mosque; Ali Haroun, the Human Rights Minister in the outgoing government, all under the nominal leadership Mohammed Boudiaf, a dissident and former Trotskyist and, incidentally, the man credited the design of the Algerian flag. Boudiaf agreed to return from 28 years of exile in Morocco in to assume the position.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps no man's presence was so large as to obscure the essence of the intervention, but he was a man of sufficient heft for the more distant French government to be able to entwine its quiet, customary calls for a return to democracy and its tacit support for the coup by "hiding behind Muhammad Boudiaf, hoping that his charisma could create a political alternative and that the military success against the Islamists would allow the state to negotiate from a stronger position."<sup>29</sup> For in the view of French officialdom the conflict was essentially dichotomous between 'Islamic fundamentalism' (*les intégristes*) and 'the state' and as such, the confrontation was absolute inasmuch as there could exist no conceivable compromise "since the Islamists

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<sup>27</sup> This is the position Antonio Gramsci described as Caesarism, a derivation Marx's Bonapartism. See *Prison Notebooks*, particularly 219- 223. "For many senior figures in the military a FIS government would spell disaster" from Willis, 245.

<sup>28</sup> Willis, 250-251.

<sup>29</sup> Roger Diwan and Fareed Mohamedi, "Washington Watch: Paris, Washington, Algiers." *Middle East Report, No. 192, Algeria: Islam, the State and the Politics of Eradication* (Jan. - Feb., 1995), 27. There was in fact a near unanimity of support for the coup across the French political spectrum, *Ibid*.

are revolutionary in their objectives as well as their methods, and will settle for nothing less than an Islamic republic, while the state, being essentially secular and modernist, cannot come to terms with its antagonist without subverting itself,"<sup>30</sup> - an impression assiduously nurtured in the French press.<sup>31</sup>

The temporariness of the arrangement,<sup>32</sup> its attendant instability and the transnational discursive field made available by the staging of the Algerian drama to an increasingly attentive international public suggested an increased utility, within the contexts and constraints of the situation, of the performativity of democracy and terror. It was in the name of the former that Boudiaf justified intervention.<sup>33</sup> And it was the also Boudiaf who was assassinated on national television on the 30 of June, 1992, an action which was clumsily attributed to the FIS, but for which at least one section of the Algerian security apparatus was almost certainly responsible.<sup>34</sup> With that bloody end to the nearly four year process of democratization, as practiced and performed, it became brutally clear that in politics, as in its analysis, the trouble with endings is that things continue to go on after they have ended.

That the conflagration at the end of the 1991 maybe modeled as a game between incumbents and challengers disguises the fact that engagement in such a contest creates, then alters the political character of the participants, a phenomenon discernible in Algeria. The abstracted confrontation does not capture the amalgamation, differentiation and movement of forces within larger bodies that are themselves ascribed the character of a coherent political

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<sup>30</sup> Hugh Roberts, "Algeria's Ruinous Impasse and the Honourable Way out." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Apr., 1995), 248

<sup>31</sup> Roberts cites part Le Figaro's coverage as a representative example in articles such as "'Pasqua: il n'y a pas de troise voie" [Pasqua : There is no third voice], *Le Figaro*, 5 August, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> The HCS was meant to complete Benjadid's term.

<sup>33</sup> Willis, 256.

<sup>34</sup> Francois Burgat. "Algeria: Islamism Against the Intellectuals?," in *Face to Face with Political Islam*, I.B. Tauris, 2003: 110. The charge is seconded by Hugh Roberts, who, unlike Burgat, has very little romantic attachments to Algerian Islamists. See "Post Script" in Roberts, Hugh. "The State and the Challenge of Democracy," *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*, Verso, 2003, 122.

actor. The liberalization entailed by the political opening meant that members of the army were no longer members of the party of the FLN,<sup>35</sup> which in turn meant that when the results of the first round of elections were announced, with the FLN securing less than 24 % of votes cast compared to the FIS's 47 %, and winning only 16 seats outright out of the 231 that were decided in the first round, compared to the FIS's astonishing 188<sup>36</sup> meant that the party so soundly defeated that December - despite the deployment of considerable portion of the menu of manipulation<sup>37</sup> available to the exclusively FLN assembly in its fashioning of electoral law<sup>38</sup> - was no longer the vehicle of those very same actors who, upon intervening, sought to coat their action with the veneer of constitution fashioned by an FLN assembly under the guidance of an FLN president. It is striking to note that though important political groupings called for, supported and justified a termination of the electoral process, the defeated party of the FLN was among those who *opposed the* intervention.<sup>39</sup>

So profound was the party's defeat that it actually came in third in terms of seats secured in the first round, with the Front des Forces Socialistes (Socialist Forces Front, FFS), whose base of support was limited both geographically (to the Kabyle region) and ethnically (to Algerians

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<sup>35</sup> Roberts, *Veiled Drama*, 386

<sup>36</sup> Willis, 230. The total number of seats in contention was 430. In many ways this was a lopsided victory; The second round, had it been allowed to take place, would certainly have given the FIS the 28 seats it needed for an absolute majority and effective mandate to shape the destiny of Algeria. This ostensible reshaping would, owing to the low participation rate in the elections, would have actually been based on a quarter of the voters, the fraction who actually supported the FIS.

<sup>37</sup> Schedler's phrase from "The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections."

<sup>38</sup> The FLN dominated assembly was entrusted with creating new electoral laws that, among other things, were designed to disproportionately weigh rule regions against the urban-based FIS – the strategy backfired when the party of FLN lost where the framers though corporatism would deliver the vote.

<sup>39</sup> Whilst the party of the FLN, under the leadership of Abdelhamid Mehri, is said to have began its activities as a party in opposition with the intervention, after its leadership's refusal to accept what it had branded as "anti-constitutional." Amidst the mounting bloodshed, it sought to rid itself of its perceived image of being responsible for the crisis, and consistently called for a return to a democratic process. The position guaranteed that it took no part in the military regime's appointed parliament. It could be argued that this position has, paradoxically, made of what had previously been an institutional appendage a political party. See Youcef Bouandel, "Political Parties and the Transition from Authoritarianism: The Case of Algeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Mar., 2003), 12

who identify as Berbers) but who nonetheless managed to win 25 seats outright.<sup>40</sup> A self-identified secular party led by one of the "historic chiefs" of the revolutionary war of independence, Hocine Ait Ahmed who returned from exile to reassume the reigns of an institution that had once opposed the revolutionary regime of the early 1960s and had, over the years articulated the accretionary grievances of the Berber minority.<sup>41</sup> The FFS was to provide the critical mass for a "Democratic Alliance," a "Group of Eight" opposed to both the regime and the FIS and including former president, Ahmad Ben Bella's (MDA) — which, significantly, had an "Islamist fringe," some of whom went on a hunger strike on learning of their potential alliance with the militantly secularist Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), which in turn drew on the same Berber geographic/ethnic base of support as the larger FFS.<sup>42</sup>

If we are to take seriously the theoretical claim that frontist alliance politics is constituted through the stringing of a "chain of equivalences" by which a *single* member in the political arena is rendered an "internal antagonist" and marked as a target,<sup>43</sup> and the empirical claim that opposition elites are far more likely to succeed in the context of unfree election when they "form a strategic coalition for the purpose of mounting a credible challenge to the ruling party or

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 231. The geographical concentration of support helped the FFS win seats outright. Its vote tally was lower than that of the FLN.

<sup>41</sup> The FFS, as far back as 1963, had, as banned entity campaigned vigorously against the participation in the vote on the "dictatorial constitution," proclaiming that "a regime that throws socialists in prison is not socialist." The principle of non-participation in what it saw as a flawed electoral process extended to 1990 municipal elections so spectacularly dominated by the FIS, but not to the legislative elections, not least for the fact that another party, the militantly secular Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), led by an old FFS hand who had fallen out with the charismatic Ahmed, Said Sadi, had temporarily captured the Berber voice in the municipal elections, inducing the participation of the FFS in a process its leader still questioned. Though clearly "an ethnic party," even at an early stage, the vibrant apparatus was never just that for in 1963 "The F.F.S. failed because the Algerians were too tired of war to care enough to risk anything substantial and because of circumstances. The timely war with Morocco, the absence of a charismatic leader of Ben Bella's stature in the F.F.S., and the contradictory elements of the memberships of the opposition organization probably had more to do with the failure of the F.F.S. than the ethnic origin of most of its leaders." (126). For valuable historical background see Alf Andrew Heggoy, "The F.F.S., An Algerian Opposition to a One-Party System." *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1969), pp. 121-140.

<sup>42</sup> Willis, 209,210.

<sup>43</sup> Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. New York: Verso, 2007, xi.

candidate in national elections"<sup>44</sup> then we must conclude that the defining element in the breakdown of the "Democratic Alliance" was not in the main due to the personality clashes between the leaderships of the FFS and RCD, nor perhaps their evident conflict of interest over their largely overlapping bases of support among the Kabyle Berbers.<sup>45</sup> Rather, it was what these qualities did, but need not have, constitute; an inability to define a coherent target.<sup>46</sup> For at least two members of the alliance that wasn't, the defeat of what they perceived as the irredeemably corrupt governing party was imperative even if that meant backing a member of the FIS in situations where that would cause the greatest damage to the FLN slate of candidates.<sup>47</sup> The opposite was true of RCD whose commitment to a militant secularism "compelled it, in contrast, to back any candidate capable of defeating the Islamists of the FIS which it saw as a far greater threat to Algeria than the FLN."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the RCD, the militant secularism it espoused and the salutation offered by its leadership for military's intervention before the second round of the elections are exemplars of an electoral *events productivity* of political actors. It was joined in this position by another party, Ettahadi, an indirect offshoot of the defunct Algerian Communist Party, now borne anew as a militant secularist entity. Building on Sartori's observation that electoral systems are "the most specific manipulative instruments in politics,"<sup>49</sup> and providing for the fact that such systems are put in place by a political assemblage that need not survive the act (the FLN assembly, the president, the supervising military *pouvoir*) one begins to discern that

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<sup>44</sup> Howard, Marc Morje and Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2, April 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Willis, 211-212.

<sup>46</sup> The phrasing here is not synonymous necessary and sufficient conditions, but more accurately reflects the phenomenological "conditions of possibility" in lieu of logical causation. More on the distinction below. To go further, see Hubert Dreyfus. "The Primacy of Phenomenology over Logical Analysis.": [http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/188\\_s05/pdf/Primacy\\_of\\_Phenomenology.pdf](http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/188_s05/pdf/Primacy_of_Phenomenology.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Willis, 210. One of those was the Mouvement Algerien pour la Justice et le Development [Algerian Movement for Justice and Development, MAJD – lit. Glory in Arabic] was led by Kasdi Merbah, a recent FLN Prime Minister – again betraying the severity of the intra-regime enmities obscured by the apparent unity of the party of the FLN, a very different kind of front.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Giovanni Sartori. "Political development and political engineering." *Public Policy* 17, 2: 261–98. 1968

*what is manipulated is not so much the behavior of political actors, but the constitution of political actors themselves.* When the fierce cross-currents of international politics are introduced, the divergent positions taken by the FFS and the RCD become concretely embedded in the electoral event. One may ascribe the former's principled commitment to the continuance of electoral process to a rational calculus borne of its relative success,<sup>50</sup> but that ascription is oblivious to the extraordinarily discrepancy with which its conciliatory policy towards the FIS was met in Europe, as compared to the platforms made available to Dr. Said Sadi the leader of RCD in venues such as the French right-leaning daily *Le Figaro* and the robust support provided to Ettihadi by the French Communist Party.<sup>51</sup> The RCD and Ettihadi then became part of a new category known ominously as the "Eradicateurs" [lit. eradicators], from which the productive Manichean confrontation between the 'secular state' and the 'Islamic fundamentalists' was born. The interveners excised from a polity in which the state's own appendage [the party of the FLN] and a widely supported movement under the leadership of the FFS existed in opposition, an Islamist fundamentalist monolith. The new assemblage of Eradicateurs was a transnational front that had expunged from within itself an internal antagonist.<sup>52</sup>

The January 1992 coup d'etat was not a response to the FIS's election victory, simply because this party and a number of other Islamist parties had been legalised by the regime and were doubly legitimised by it and the other opposition political parties which took part in the election. In reality the coup was incited by a fear of the emergence of a genuine democratic force. The FFS march of 2 January 1992, which gathered the biggest street crowd in the history of Algeria (between 800 000 and one million), aimed at mobilising the silent majority, particularly the 42% of the population who abstained, to vote in the second round. The marchers brandished slogans against both the existing 'police state' and a 'probable integrist republic'. This was a major cause of the coup. After all, the FIS is the product of a regime with which it could have cohabited. All the institutions drafted since Algeria's independence have devoted their first articles to the glorification of Islam and its

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<sup>50</sup> Of the 49 parties that participated, it was one of only 3 to secure seats, with 25 in the first round.

<sup>51</sup> Roberts, "The International Gallery," 239.

<sup>52</sup> Mohand Salah Tah, "Algeria's Democratisation Process: A Frustrated Hope." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Jun., 1995), 199

consideration as the state religion. Moreover, the comparatively small turnout of voters appeared to magnify the importance of the FIS.

The ability to define the vista towards which others strive, and the contours of preferences embedded therein, is more than an approach to the study of social phenomena. To recount political change whilst providing no account of intentionality is not to merely count the actions of empty shells,<sup>53</sup> but to fill plaster molds of unhistorical political actors.<sup>54</sup> When political theory enters the world through the rituals that structure the field of the political, the so-called post-hoc logical fallacy<sup>55</sup> becomes less an error of interpretation than conscious appropriation of the past; a political strategy.<sup>56</sup> Rationality, it is argued here, is an emplacement of the self in time, by emergent political actors who become coherent through their historicization as rational

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<sup>53</sup> That would merely give an incomplete explanation of political phenomena.

<sup>54</sup> For an influential critique of behaviorism and its reduction of action to observable movements from a phenomenological perspective see Charles Taylor's *The Explanation of Behaviour*, which in turn is heavily influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*. The critique of behaviorism, or rather behaviorism as it was known is psychology, has not been restricted to European philosophers identified with phenomenology (most notably Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) but equally in the American tradition which it in many ways resembles, the philosophical pragmatism of William James and John Dewey. The latter described behaviorism as "A set of considerations which hold good only because of a completed process, is read into the content of the process which conditions this completed result. A state of things characterizing an outcome is regarded as a true description of the events which led up to this outcome." John Dewey. "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology." *The Early Works, 1882-1898; Volume 5: 1895-1898*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. A more explicit, nuanced phenomenological critique is put forth by Hwa Yol Jung: "Phenomenology is thus opposed to the scientific doctrine that defines the truth of the social sciences essentially according to the procedural rules of the physical sciences, because the methodology of the natural sciences fails to acknowledge the meaning-structure of human phenomena, which is absent in natural phenomena. This does not mean that phenomenology resorts to the method of introspection. Nor does it reject in toto the 'behavioristic' interpretation of human behavior. The phenomenological approach only pinpoints the limits and blind spots of behaviorism. The behavioristic interpretation of human action is correct and valid so long as it refers to the external indication of movement, but it goes wrong when it identifies what is external with the intended meaning the actor imputes to his/her action." Hwa Yol Jung, "The Political Relevance of Existential Phenomenology," in his *Rethinking Political Theory: Essays in Phenomenology and the Study of Politics*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993, 13.

<sup>55</sup> In complete form: Post hoc ergo propter hoc (after this therefore because of this).

<sup>56</sup> An ascription of instrumentalism to the self as proof of prior existence of an emergent political actor, a political self-fashioning in the present. This instrumental use of history is captured in the phenomenological historicity, and does not account for actions that follow, but captures a present reality. From Kierkegaard, philosophers who took of the mantle of existential phenomenology (as distinct from the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl) adopted the view that self-definition, i.e. identity must be projected into the dimension of time, that "the self defines itself by taking up its past by means of present actions that make sense in terms of its future." Hubert Dreyfus. "Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology and Politics." *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Charles Guignon, Ed., Cambridge University Press, 1992, 1-2.

actors. Behavioralism is hence a political act not reducible to [mis]representation. This ability to shape the discursive field of politics is prone to be reproduced rather than comprehended in a strategic analysis of dichotomous belligerents in a political arena, for as George Simmel first demonstrated, "the triad is a structure completely different from the dyad."<sup>57</sup> The productive predicament cannot be annulled through the introduction of analytical tools that further allow for the existence of multiple players or of games in multiple arenas.<sup>58</sup> A contingency of political acts upon actions in other arenas cannot capture the contingency of political actors themselves upon actions that reshape the arena, not least the dynamic construction of fronts, political back and forth movement between structural monoliths, dyads, triads and so on. The stark insights of strategic analysis lack a crucial reflexivity that would delineate how tools very much like the analytical tools employed are put to use by political actors. History complements, but does not achieve an intelligibility of the similarities and differences in "the secular state's" confrontation with "fundamentalism" in Algeria and Egypt. Crucially, much depends on the social praxis of religion, in history and despite it.

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<sup>57</sup> Georg Simmel. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel. Ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff.* New York: Free Press. 141.

<sup>58</sup> For a fine introduction to the concept of games played in multiple arenas, i.e. "Nested Games," see George Tsebelis. *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

## II- The Intimate Enemy

*Note the problem of religion taken not in the confessional sense but in the secular sense of unity of faith between conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct. But why call this unity of faith "religion" not "ideology," of even frankly "politics"?*

Antonio Gramsci<sup>59</sup>

Religion, observed the Indian political psychologist Ashis Nandy, had been split into two by the modernizing secular state in the subcontinent. First there is faith as it has been experienced in everyday life and as an ideology, which, in stark contrast, is identified with one or more texts. "One way of explaining the difference between the two," writes Nandy, "is to conceive of ideology as something that, for individuals and people who believe in it, needs to be constantly protected and faith as something that the faithful usually expect to protect them."<sup>60</sup> Of the two, the modernizing state "always prefers to deal with religious ideologies rather than with faiths,"<sup>61</sup> given that the state constructs a narrative, a story of dyads in which religious ideology is "set up to lose."<sup>62</sup> Yet if the conception of "multiple modernities" is taken to differentiate between the "West" and the post-colonial world, here is evidence to the contrary, a divergence in patterns amongst emergent polities of post-colonial countries.<sup>63</sup> Indeed it was Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest opposition group and the Arab world's

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in, Gil Anidjar. "Secularism." *Critical Inquiry* 33 (Autumn 2006), 52-77, see also, Antonio Gramsci, "The Study of Philosophy." *Prison Notebooks*, 326.

<sup>60</sup> Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration." *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 322

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 322-323.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

<sup>63</sup> On multiple modernities, see Sudipta Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity", *Journal of European Sociology*, Vol. xlvi, No. 3 (2005), pp. 497-526

premier Islamist organization who wrote of two faiths, that of the Brotherhood and that of the people. And he did so long before the founding of the Egyptian republic:<sup>64</sup>

The difference between us and our people, though we are all in accord in our faith in this principle, is that among them it is an anesthetized faith, dormant within their souls, one to which they do not wish to submit and according to whose dictates they do not wish to act; whereas it is a burning, blazing, intense faith fully awakened in the souls of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This discourse stands in stark contrast to that of the early Arab nationalists, the apogee of which is identified as the Nasserist state that would come to so severely repress the Brotherhood in the 1950s and 60s. In its genesis, Arab nationalism was often articulated by members of religious and ethnic minorities, and in the main, perhaps because of potential sensitivities engendered by such a position, early pan-Arabism sought to countenance rather than alienate those deploying an Islamic discourse. Hence we find among the paragons of Arab nationalism such as Qustantin Zuraiq and Sati'al-Husri representative statements attempting to channel, rather than discredit religious practice,<sup>65</sup> part and parcel of that combination of "objective modernity" and "subjective antiquity" that necessary is for nationalism.<sup>66</sup> The assumption therefore that Arab Nationalism was congenitally hostile to political projects deploying a religious frame of reference across the Arab world is a deeply simplistic one.

The hostility, as it later developed, was subject to particular contexts and constraints, and varied considerably, even across the republics. Situated in an Algerian context, the Islamists of

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<sup>64</sup> Hassan al-Banna, taken from Charles Wendell, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949)*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, c. 1978, pp. 40-68

<sup>65</sup> "True religion," wrote the Christian Qustantin Zuraiq on the occasion of the anniversary of the prophet Muhammad's birth in 1949, "which aims to develop the forces of the spirit springs from the same source as nationalism, and they both go in the same direction, toward the same end." Zuraiq, Qustantin. "Arab Nationalism and Religion." *Arab Nationalism; An Anthology* ed. Sylvia G.Haim, Berkeley: University of California Press, 167-171, 1962.

<sup>66</sup> Sanjay Joshi, "Republicizing Religiosity: Modernity, Religion, and the Middle Class." *The Invention of Religion; Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* edited by Derek Peterson and Darren Walhof. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002: 93 .

the FIS mobilized against an economically liberalizing regime of Chadli Benjadid, not the Arab nationalist par excellence Hourri Boumedienne. A historical approach enables us to situate ferment spearhead by Algerian Islamists in the economic destitution of the 1980s when the rapid fall in oil prices was accompanied by a top down economic liberalization, bring to an end the corporatist welfare guaranteed under the previous regime. In that milieu, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) was a "front" precisely because it sought to capture the spirit of the "true FLN". The "worldview of the state" was never under attack. It was important for the *Algerian* Islamists of the FIS to represent themselves as the true heirs of the historic FLN that achieved independence for Algeria. The Algerian Islamists were insistent on their nationalist credentials. The fact that FIS leader Abassi Madani was a member of the historic (i.e. true) FLN was a political asset in the this context. Even their name is a play on this theme of inheritance of the mantle: "rightful heir (son, fils, FIS) of the historic FLN of 1954-1962, the heroic FLN of national liberation war."<sup>67</sup> It is now the case, as Abdelbaki Hermassi notes, that "fundamentalism is still in opposition and the secularism of the modern elites is still on the side of the state," but that had not always been the case for "unlike the Mashriq, where the question of religion and state was significant at an early stage, in the Maghrib it was not the object of specific discussion within the nationalist movements. It was still not addressed after independence when the states erected monopolies of religion and used Islam as a way of legitimizing the socioeconomic policies of successive regimes. It has in fact been the political advance of Islamism that has forced a public

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<sup>67</sup> Hugh Roberts. "The Strategy of Algerian Islamism," *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*, Verso, 2003: 95.

debate on Islam and religion.”<sup>68</sup> Yet to say that question was significant is not to say that it was simply a question of opposition.<sup>69</sup>

The Egyptian Free Officers and volunteer members of the Muslim Brotherhood had fought together against the nascent state of Israel in the 1948 war, and from thence developed a relationship among the clandestine plotters within the army,<sup>70</sup> infuriated by the poor leadership and munitions they had received and the Brotherhood, who, in 1948 had been subject to a "decree of dissolution" by then Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi owing to the violent anti-government and anti-British activities of the organization's armed "Special Apparatus."<sup>71</sup> The assassination of al-Nuqrashi several weeks after the issuance of the decree by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood brought Ibrahim 'Abd al-Hadi to the premiership. In the following six months the new premier instituted a reign of official terror keenly felt across the political spectrum, but which specifically target the Brotherhood membership and its leaders.<sup>72</sup> All that is, except for the founder and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna who remained free whilst making conciliatory gestures to the government through the establishment of a

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<sup>68</sup> Hermassi, Abdelbaki. "The Political and the Religious in the Modern History of the Maghrib," in *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa* (John Reudy, ed.), St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994.

<sup>69</sup> The point is more obvious in Algerian case, where there was no overt hostility between what was in its inception a revolutionary Arab state par excellence and an opposition organized around an Islamic banner against a "secular state." Article 4 of the "Fundamental Principles" of the republic's first constitution in 1963 reads "Islam is a religion and a state and the republic guarantees for every individual respect for his opinions, beliefs and freedom of the practice of religions" (my translation). It is significant that a shared mantra of contemporary Islamists of various leanings is that Islam is a "religion and state" is included in the republic's foundational document. If anything, a revised constitutions in 1996, promulgated in the middle of the civil war between the secular state and militant Islamists, of various sorts, makes an even stronger religious language; in Chapter 1, of Section 1, under the title of "Public Principles Governing Algerian Society," article 2 simply reads: "Islam is the religion of the state" (my translation.) See <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.dz/IndexArab.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> In the main, it could be described as a relationship of mutual admiration, "one Brother," write Richard Mitchell in his magisterial and authoritative account, "who fought in Palastine said after the revolution that he was happy that God had willed the 'the great victory' (i.e. the revolution) had occurred 'at the hands of our noble comrades (al-zumala' al-kiram)' who 'had fought with us in Palastine.'" 99

<sup>71</sup> Richard Mitchell. *Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 100, 101, 66. The official memorandum presented by the ministry of interior to the prime minister accused the Brothers of a litany of crimes, including murder, arson, agitation among works, attempting to overthrow the political order, bombing, the manufacture of bombs – all with the expressed intent to "embark on widespread terroristic activity of pressing danger to the security and existence of the state."

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

'mediation committee',<sup>73</sup> and who correctly interpreted in his continued freedom after the government shunned further talks as an "official death warrant."<sup>74</sup> Hasan al-Banna was murdered on the 12 of February 1949 by the secret police, with the complicity of both the prime minister and the palace.<sup>75</sup> In May the Free Officers activity was almost exposed, and their leader, Nasser was summoned to the prime minister, 'Abd al-Hadi, who directly charged Nasser with having trained groups of Muslim Brothers in the use of arms. Nasser's true loyalties, or whether not he belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood remains a matter of controversy, but in Richard Mitchell's account, the future president's sympathies are clear:<sup>76</sup>

To a question by the prime minister about his relations with the Society Nasir answered: 'like the relations of 20 million Egyptians to all parties'. Pressed for clarification, he went on to say (in the face of 'Abd al-Hadi's vow to him to avenge the death of Nuqrashi and to sacrifice his own 'neck' to prevent the Brothers from ruling Egypt) that some Egyptians liked the Sa'dists, some the Wafdists, and some the Brothers. He added, 'I am one of those latter.

Nasser was allowed to leave with no further action taken against him. It is noteworthy however that Ibrahim 'Abd al-Hadi was the first political leader to brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal established by the military junta after the coup of the 23<sup>r</sup> of July, 1952. That the Muslim Brotherhood supported the coup that would later become a revolution is not in question,<sup>77</sup> and their reward was an exemption from the decree dissolving parties,<sup>78</sup> though their gradual remotion from the direct the affairs of the emergent republic was, among other things, justified by the fact that "that open participation of the Society would assure automatic Western

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>77</sup> In on the 1st of August the Consultative Assembly of the Society released a statement describing the army's move as 'blessed event.' Ibid, 105.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

intervention in the revolution and its destruction."<sup>79</sup> In April of that year, signs of disquiet appeared between the new regime and the Brotherhood, when, in readying themselves for negotiations with the British over the crucial issue of the Suez Canal, the regime sought to 'unify the nation' through the new slogan "Religion is for God and the nation is for all." Though not protested by the leader of society, this was a clear sign of the regime distancing itself from an Islamic referentiality.<sup>80</sup> To this the British reacted by seeking and receiving an audience with the Brotherhood's leadership, with the ambassador calling on Hasan al-Hudaybi, a meeting not looked upon kindly by then Prime Minister Nasser.<sup>81</sup> A sustained campaign in the press followed, where a 'secret deal' between the Brotherhood and the British was played up and Hudaybi's was portrayed as an intimate confidant and ally of key figures in the ancien regime.<sup>82</sup> The complex interplay within the regime involving a struggle for power between the elderly figure-head President Muhammad Naguib and Nasser saw the brotherhood side with the ill-fated Naguib.<sup>83</sup> On October 27 1954 an attempt, that may or may not have been staged, was made on Nasser's life whilst giving a speech in Alexandria and attributed to the Brotherhood. The mass arrests, and the deployment of Azhar shaykhs in a sustained campaign of *religious* deligitimation was one so complete that, by 1969 when Richard Mitchell's magisterial account of the "Society of the Muslim Brothers" was published, it was strictly in the manner of a postmortem that author approached his then absent subject. Of great consequence is that this assessment was made in 1966 when author saw the success of what had become, contra its convoluted origins, a successful hegemonic project that came to be an anti-Islamist Arab nationalism, reasoning that

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 138-139.

<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, that period saw the communists extend a had of allegiance to the Brotherhood against the "fascist" dictator. The Brotherhood were not receptive to the offer. Later alliances, in the 1980s, were, in keeping with this indisposition to ally were strictly arrangement of convenience; with the Liberal Wafd in 1984, and the Islamist Labour Party in 1987, under whose aegises Muslim Brothers ran for parliament.

"the essentially secular reform nationalism now in vogue in the Arab world will continue to operate to end the appeal of this organization."<sup>84</sup>

Consider now two important recent accounts of the battles between regimes and politically organized religious actors: In his analysis of religious parties as "counter-societies," who "substitute the state," Stathis Kalyvas expertly captures a trans-historical empirical regularity in the character of politically organized religious institutions.<sup>85</sup> To explain variations in the secularisms of the United States, France and Turkey, Ahmad Kuru looks at struggles with the ancien régime:<sup>86</sup>

First, ideologies emerge in the works of some native thinkers, or they are imported from other intellectually influential countries. Then, they find certain followers among the elite through publications and school education. Next, these followers organize and mobilize to challenge the existing ideological establishment. Finally, these activists need available structural conditions (such as wars, economic crisis, or critical elections) to replace the old ideological dominance. When the activists find convenient conditions, they establish the new ideology by making it dominant in both abstract institutions (the Constitution, other laws, and the market) and organizations (schools, courts, and barracks).

Modular apparati, particularly when presented compellingly, partially conceal a cardinal fact in politics — that in experiencing the world actors shape, and are shaped, by the templates their actions take. The "common sense" that inflects their understanding of the world can effect even the most distant of observers' understanding. When generalized, this reflexivity becomes the lineage of present readings. In the absence of such a demonstration, consider now how the emergent Egyptian regime's attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood relied less on the organization's association with the ancien régime than the new government's *emplacement* of the

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<sup>84</sup> Mitchell, Preface, xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>85</sup> Stathis Kalyvas. "Does the Christian Democratic Experience Travel in the non-Christian World?" [Paper presented in "Democracy, Islam, and Secularism: Turkey in Comparative Perspective" Conference in Columbia University], March 2009, 16

<sup>86</sup> Ahmad Kuru, "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion" *World Politics*, 592, 593

Brotherhood in that category. Indeed it was the Brotherhood's convoluted relationship with the palace and its loyalist governments that included a federated structure and multiple levels of membership with which the emergent regime had ambiguously allied that was *again* countered upon the breakdown of the partnership — the "counter-society" preceded the republic and its corporates.<sup>87</sup> There is little that is metaphysical about this argument, political actors cohere through learning. One important attribute surmised by the emergent regime was the immense religious vascularity of society.

### *Nasser, A Violent Embrace*

From his jail cell (1926-1937), pondering the inertness of the peasantry to communist activism, to a philosophy of praxis that remained an orthopraxis of an inorganic floating intelligentsia, Antonio Gramsci recognized first that 'we are all conformist of some conformism or other, always main-in-the-mass or collective man.' Despite this embeddeness, this being, from which one may never be able to abstract oneself "one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic," for "one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups."<sup>88</sup> A multiplicity that was dimly glimpsed by Gamal Abdel Nasser in his 1954 volume *The Philosophy of the devolution* where he wrote of the three circles of belonging in his new hegemonic project, Egyptian, then Arab, then Islamic — an order through which "55 million Arabs, then of the 224 million Africans, then of the 420 million followers of Islam" could be led to play "heroic and glorious roles which never found heroes to

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<sup>87</sup> See Mitchell 163- 184 for an elaborate mapping of the structure of the Muslim Brotherhood in the pre-revolutionary period.

<sup>88</sup> Antonio Gramsci, "The Study of Philosophy," Prison Notebooks, 324

perform them."<sup>89</sup> Gramsci's conception of philosophy as concrete practice is roughly congruent:<sup>90</sup>

"For a mass of people to be led to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world, is a 'philosophical' event far more important and 'original' than the discovery by some philosophical 'genius' of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals."

Religion is not reducible to an intellectual order, "since it cannot be reduced to unity and coherence even within individual consciousness, let alone collective consciousness,"<sup>91</sup> this is precisely its strength in that it can bind the masses, the intellectuals and the "simple" without the "official" formation of "two religions."<sup>92</sup>

This binding, what Kalyvas found manifest as a cross-class alliances within Christian democratic parties in Europe,<sup>93</sup> is both an essential resource and threat for a potential hegemon. Nasser, whose project, contra his successor, was hegemonic, therefore proceeded to "nationalize" religious practice in Egypt. Central to this process was the corporatization of Al-Azhar, the 1000 year old center of learning and still one of the preeminent Islamic educational and jurisprudential institutions in the world. With the 1961 reform, al-Azhar came under the purview of the state's Ministry of Endowments, with the ministry controlling its finances and president of the republic appointing its head, Shiekh al-Azhar, who remains a figure head of Sunni Islam. Educational experts were embedded in the Azhar High Council and faculties of medicine, engineering and law were added to its three colleges of theology, Arabic and Shari'a., a not necessarily

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<sup>89</sup> Incidentally an inversion of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. See Gamal Abdel Nasser. "The Philosophy of the Revolution," in *Arab Nationalism; An Anthology*. ed. Sylvia G.Haim, Berkeley: University of California Press, 229-232, 1962.

<sup>90</sup> Gramsci, 325.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 328.

<sup>93</sup> Stathis Kalyvas in his "Does the Christian Democratic Experience Travel in the non-Christian World?"

unwelcome intrusion when coupled with a large increase in the resources allocated for the institution; 7 million Egyptian pounds were allocated for its budget in 1966 as compared to 3 million Egyptian pounds in 1961.<sup>94</sup>

The institution was central to the degree that in spite of the nationalization, which in subsequent eras would amount to an enervation, it was able to cope and fulfilled the regime's need for religious authorities who would readily oppose the influence of the Muslim Brothers<sup>95</sup> and counterbalance the discourse embodied by the neighboring regime in Saudi Arabia as part its arsenal in the "Arab Cold War."<sup>96</sup>

For the project to have succeeded, as it did in at least precluding the articulation of a religiously framed opposition, it must be situated within the qualified success of the regime's hegemonic project<sup>97</sup> — a move which mandates the transcendence of the paradox imposed by a science of politics that though Nasser led regime was more authoritarian than its successors, it was decidedly more popular.<sup>98</sup> The proposition serves as a valid hypothesis about the nature of the openings that followed; ones in which an interplay between performativity and regime metamorphosis made of democratic structures alternate technologies of rule. A percipient gap now appears in a historiography of a regime's nationalization of religion; for the vicissitudes of that relationship to become intelligible in a historical account of its alternate modes of public incorporation need to be integrated, not least its violent embrace of the poor.

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<sup>94</sup> Tamir Moustafa. "Conflict and Cooperation between the State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32 No. 1, Feb. 2000, 5-6.

<sup>95</sup> Malika Zehgal, "Religion and Politics in Egypt: The Ulema of al-Azhar, Radical Islam, and the State (1952-94)." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 3, Aug. 1999, 374.

<sup>96</sup> Malcolm Kerr. *The Arab Cold War 1958-1967: A Study of Ideology in Politics*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967

<sup>97</sup> Qualified inasmuch as the breakdowns that followed are not unrelated to the practices of the regime, the expectations it had engendered or proscribed.

<sup>98</sup> For a detailed exploration of this notion, see the edited volume *Beyond coercion : the durability of the Arab state /* edited by Adeed Dawisha & I. William Zartman: London ; New York : Croom Helm, c1988

Gamal Abdel Nasser would come to be remembered for the amelioration of the lot of the peasantry and the proletariat, and the creation of bureaucratic middle class.<sup>99</sup> Yet the very first act of state violence was directed against two labor leaders in a textile mill, who after a show trial were subjected to what was practically a public execution — violence directed against the watching laborers as it was against condemned men.<sup>100</sup> No such violence was directed against groupings later marked as enemies of the regime — landowners, capitalists and even royalists were spared a similar fate. Violence against its own base becomes understandable when we consider that the maintenance of authoritarian rule has always been a primary goal for the regime. The regime will grant privileges to patrons but would not answer the demands of a political base.

### *Sadat, A Despotic Liberalism*

The state inherited by Sadat in 1970 was a Nasserist state, equipped with corporate penetrative devices, through which control was maintained and patronage dispensed. The apparatus was replete with a nationalist-leftist centers which in 1970s were already identified as "Nasserist." This group was deeply suspicious of the new president. It was against a branch of the regime, identified with his predecessor that Sadat launched the "Corrective Revolution," an intra regime breakdown for which the president sought external support — and if not support, than a source of enmity to his enemies. Whilst the left perhaps makes too much of Sadat's Islamist pretenses<sup>101</sup> there is little disagreement over the fact that Sadat attempted to mitigate against Nasserists and Lefitists by granting Islam a greater share of the public discourse whilst

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<sup>99</sup> "...the Egyptian revolution made significant populist socioeconomic gains," writes Marc Cooper, "by any definition of the distribution of welfare in Egyptian society, and in comparison with other nations at similar levels of development, the 'masses' made some real gains." See Marc Cooper, "Egyptian State Capitalism in Crisis: Economic Policies and Political Interests, 1967-1971." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Nov., 1979), pp 481-515: 482

<sup>100</sup> The leaders Khamis and al-Bakry were much eulogised by the Egyptian left. The site of the factory was El-Mahla Textile Milling Company in Kafr El-Dawar in 1952.

<sup>101</sup> See for example Ahmed Abdalla's, 'Egypt's Islamists and the State,' in *MERIP*, July-August 1993, pp. 28-31 wherein the author makes the claim that Sadat "unleashed Islamists on the left" (29).

offering an olive branch to Islamists, militant and otherwise. This social shift to the right, which included frequent public displays of personal piety and culminating in Sadat's adoption of the somewhat comical name of "Al-Ra'is Al-Mo'min"(The Believer-President), was accompanied by a brusque shift to the right economically. There exists some disagreement over the inevitability of the Sadat's "Open Door Policy" instituted in 1974, there is however little disagreement that the *type* of capitalism ushered under the auspices of the policy was an unproductive and parasitic one.<sup>102</sup>

An important shift was taking place in the Egyptian economy, distinct from the shift to laissez-faire but parallel to it. This was a shift away from directly productive sources of income towards various forms of unproductive income, or 'rent' The main sources of this income were remittances of emigrant workers, oil exports, tolls from the reopened Suez Canal and tourism.

Sadat had moved to resituate Egypt in the world market at a particularly inopportune time — with world inflation and recession forcing the country's complete dependence on international capital not only for investment in future development projects but to meet day to day needs of the population:<sup>103</sup>

The end of significant aid from the Soviet bloc was not matched by an immediate and significant increase in aid from the West; nor from the oil states. Speculation and shortages of food and other essential commodities on the world market sent Egypt's import bill through the roof, while the recession in the industrial countries precluded increases in their purchases of Egyptian foods and raw materials. The cost of food subsidies, the first target of the international bankers in 1976 is reflected in the deficit of the Supply Authority: LE 11 million in 1972; LE 89 million in 1973; LE 322 million in 1974; and LE 493 million in 1975. The only immediate source of cash for Sadat has been the private Western banks, forced by the recession-induced decline of domestic investment opportunities to seek outlets for their money capital in desperate Third World countries. Reliance on these short-term, high-interest loans left Egypt vulnerable to their demands to restructure Egyptian economic institutions and open up the country to foreign investment.

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<sup>102</sup> Marie-Christine Aulas. "Sadat's Egypt: A Balance Sheet." *MERIP Reports*, No. 107, Egypt in the New Middle East. (Jul. – Aug., 1982), 8

<sup>103</sup> Joe Stork. "Bailing Out Sadat." *MERIP Reports*, No. 56 (Apr., 1977) (8)

But restructure he did. It's not that the now friendly Americans did not want to help out — indeed international financial leaders, led by the US Treasury Secretary and Chase Manhattan Bank Chairman David Rockefeller spent the spring of 1976 touring Middle Eastern capitals with the aim of collecting \$11 Billion to rescue Egypt's collapsing economy. But with their help came the conditions for austerity measures meant to secure the profitable stay of international capital in Egypt, conditions that, among other things, mandated the cutting of vital food subsidies to the poor. In January of 1977, a spontaneous nation-wide revolt broke out when the cuts related to bread subsidies were announced — the "bread riots" of 1977 still serve as a warning sign to the limits of austerity in an authoritarian setting. Sadat, with his popularity, outside a narrow class and newly enriched type of "Open Door" era capitalists, was at its nadir. It is in this context that his statement that "Ninety Nine percent of the cards" were in the hands of the Americans should be viewed, and it was with this same percentage that Sadat announced the success of a referendum amending the 1971 in 1980 to add recognition of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence as *the principal source of legislation*. Both the statement and the referendum were the desperate grasps of a presidency unable to meet the needs of its domestic bases of support. Vulnerable and unpopular, he could no longer rely on the myriad Islamists who were now allowed to occupy a considerably large portion of social and political arena. It was under these conditions that Sadat made his trip to Jerusalem:<sup>104</sup>

No matter how Sadat appeared to the West, in Egypt he often seemed to be at least as dictatorial as Nasser. He was frequently more arbitrary, even if he relied less on coercion. His speech to the Israeli Knesset, which broke the war deadlock, only occurred because Sadat could disregard any normal political or constitutional restraints. Sadat also used his

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<sup>104</sup> Ellis Goldberg, "The Protestant Ethic and Egyptian Sunni Radicalism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Jan., 1991), pp. 3-35

power to ban the sale of meat in Egypt for a month in 1980, to enforce rigid and unrealistic laws regarding business hours, and even to suggest allowing Israel access to Nile water.

Despotism, liberal or otherwise, could ill accommodate the cacophony of severe criticism unified in nothing but its condemnation. Sadat had released many Islamists from prison and looked on with approval, and indeed offered discreet and tacit support as Islamic Groups (*Gamdat Islamiyya*) took over the university campuses, once a bastion of left-wing activity that had the then new president himself as its principle target in the early 1970s.<sup>105</sup> By the end of the decade, the Gama'at could claim a membership of up to 100,000. Meanwhile Sadat had established a personal relationship with Muslim Brother Umar al-Tilmisani, who served as a go between him and the young Islamists:<sup>106</sup>

Broadly speaking such was the profile of the jama'at islamiyya in Sadat's Egypt up to 1977: the regime erected no obstacles to their freedom of expression, and the jama'at refrained from attacking the regime too openly. Was this a gentleman's agreement or a fool's game? The jama'at were well aware of the limits beyond which they could not go, but it is nonetheless clear that the infrastructure they were establishing, and the cadres they were training in the summer camps and Islamic study weeks were well prepared for taking on tasks other than smashing up Nasserists and Communists for the benefit of the ruling group. As far as they were concerned, although Nasserism had been an especially execrable period of jahiliyya, fundamentally the Sadat era was scarcely any better. Its internal contradictions, however, had enabled the jama'at to grow in the regime's shadow.

When a member of the vanguardist group Jihad<sup>107</sup> assassinated Anwar el-Sadat on October 6, 1981 the BBC World Service famously asked: Why was Cairo silent the day Sadat died?

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<sup>105</sup> Gilles Kippel. *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, trans. J. Rothchild. London: Saqi Books, 1985 132.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>107</sup> Inasmuch as its ethos, articulated by its young leader, Abdul Salam Farag, an engineer, in his *The Neglected Duty* completely shunned social mobilization in favor of violence against the head of state – i.e. political decapitation. Though they assassinated a head of state, this movement was strictly symptomatic of the time, rather than an actor with historical, philosophical or or imaginative depth. The degradation of the now copious religious discourse propagated by the state can be seen in the reply of the president appoint shiekh of al-Azhar, Jad al-Haq in his reply to the Neglected Duty. See ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, *The Neglected Duty*, trans. Jansen, particularly 159-230. See discussion in Ellis Goldberg, “Smashing Idols.”

## Mubarak, Democratizing Decay

The capture of 88 of the 454 seat People's Assembly in the 2005 Egyptian legislative elections by the Muslim Brotherhood, their unprecedented electoral success was surprising, but not exceedingly so.<sup>108</sup> In contrast to the explosive Algerian drama late in 1991, a strategic analysis here would be in the form an iterated game where the strategy is contingent on past moves, thus allowing for reputation effects and retribution. In games repeated many times over, strategies are triggered that can encourage cooperation. If one is to allow that the legally proscribed Brotherhood had cohered into a federated society whose behavioral aspects can be linked in their participation (under the banner of the Wafd party) in 1984, in alliance with two other parties in 1987 (the Liberal Party and the Labour Party) and then later on their own when the Egyptian Supreme court invalidated the list system that barred independents from running — the category under which the Muslim Brotherhood fields its candidates,<sup>109</sup> the same cannot be said of the Mubarak regime. It is intuitive to accept that a change in personnel need not signal a change in regime, but more opaque is a fundamental change in regime without a change in personnel.

In 1981 Hosni Mubarak inherited a state apparatus that had expanded under the rule of Anwar al-Sadat. For his part Mubarak allowed the expansive trend to continue and, irrespective of the official pronouncements and new economic policies they justify, the Egyptian state has continued to expand in a manner sometimes deliberately obscured by a regime mindful of demonstrating a firm hold on spending to international agencies – which from the late 1980s onwards held a sway over the regime that no domestic grouping ever peacefully achieved in the

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<sup>108</sup> The Brotherhood, in anticipation of a high success rate put up “approximately,” 150 candidates. (the exact figure is unknown), which implies that a greater number of candidates would have proved too threatening for the regime, who would then not allow the elections to take place under the same degree of contestation. This restraint on the part of the Brotherhood however implies that they expected a high rate of success among those candidates that they did field.

<sup>109</sup> Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, “The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament,” *MERIP*, Fall 2006.

post-revolutionary period.<sup>110</sup> Samer Soliman writes of special funds through which government spending was siphoned in a manner that went undocumented in the government's national budget figures.<sup>111</sup> This temporary stitching of the growing cleavages in the workings of government is characteristic of the regime's way of doing things and is of great and grave importance. First, faced with a potential crisis, the government sacrificed the golden rule of financial accounting when it allowing a sum of its revenues and spending to go unrecorded in its annual budget. In effect, the regime was ready to sacrifice the cohesion of state apparatus in order to meet a short term need and avoid a confrontation. Second, in allowing for the creation of funds outside official government records rather than amend the system, the Mubarak regime followed a pattern it had diligently stuck with over the quarter century it has been in charge – a deliberate aloofness to pressure and immobility that has been the defining characteristic of its survival. One is generally safe if one is entirely without initiative and in studying the institutional lethargy fostered by the Egyptian regime it becomes clear that the principle method with which the Mubarak regime has ensured its survival against incremental pressure has been a deliberate policy of doing absolutely nothing.

It always helps to be lucky. Soliman cites a Reuters news story on the grim prospects of the Egyptian government, which had suspended payment of its external debt. The story, written in 1990, predicted the imminent bankruptcy of the state. Two week later, Iraq invaded Kuwait and half of Egypt's external debt was canceled in return for its participation in a coalition to expel the Iraqi army from Kuwait. But it hasn't been all down to luck – sometimes clever, often obtuse and frequently violent, the Egyptian regime has clumsily descended on a strategy for a

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<sup>110</sup> The process is brilliantly chronicled in Samer Soliman. "al-Nizam al-Qawi Wa al-Dawla al-Da'eefa" [*The Strong Regime and The Weak State*]. Cairo: Merit, 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 56.

survival in a polity whence it is no longer able to purchase apathy.<sup>112</sup> And if it could no longer placate its base, then perhaps the fault lay with the base – and just as Gabriel Marquez’s patriarch sought a new people to rule, here the regime came upon the strategy of shifting its political base to a new group altogether. When 2000 parliamentary elections were held, businessmen, running as independents and often facing the government’s candidates, most of whom were bureaucrats, managed to capture 77 seats – more than double what the *political* opposition managed to capture.<sup>113</sup> What these victories signified was that in an atmosphere of political repression fostered by the regime, and with state patronage on the wane, it was capital, in its most basic, monetary form that secured political victory – in effect what had increased was the “political purchasing power of capital.”<sup>114</sup> It was at this time that Gamal Mubarak, the aging president’s son was brought into the ruling National Democratic Party as the head of the newly created “Policies Committee,”<sup>115</sup> into which members of the business elite were invited; a group of distinctly different character and history than the “old guard” of the regime who had gradually been retired to posts distant from the steering of policy.

In 2004, a cabinet composed almost entirely of businessmen was put in place and was widely referred to as “Gamal’s cabinet,”<sup>116</sup> which, for the first time since Sadat embraced economic liberalization, pursued the privatization program in earnest, with “Policies Committee” members often ending up in privileged positions in this accelerated process.<sup>117</sup> Concurrent with

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>113</sup> Officially, opposition parties managed a total of 16 seats between, but the figure does not include members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were forced to run as independents because of their unofficial status. The brotherhood managed to capture 17 seats in the 2000 elections.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>115</sup> Samer Shehata, “After Mubarak, Mubarak?” *Current History*, December, 2008, 420

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Part of the reactivated program, which has earned praise from the international financial institutions, may be seen as the state transferring assets to an unaccountable group within itself. But the question is more complicated if we grant the new businessman the role of an independent political group within the state. This makes them, in Jill Crystal’s excellent phrase, a group that is “swallowed but not digested” - less dangerous, but less loyal. See Jill

their multiple engagements with the Muslim Brotherhood, and alteration between submissiveness and fierceness to multiple opposition groups, elements of the regime have managed to effect a breakdown within its own makeup, a success completely neglected by a kind of institutional analysis that discerns in the clumsy use of arbitrary force a kind of genius and ascribes to it the foresight in having constructed a system where “dissent among the pillars of authoritarian rule reinforces a strategy of divide-and-rule performed at the top of the state; the existence of opposition contributes to the political legitimacy of the overall polity. A co-opted opposition serves as an instrument to control society and moderate societal dissent.”<sup>118</sup>

### *Encompassing Electoral Events*

The genesis of a polity in which all practice and none believe requires neither totalitarian control nor Machiavellian verse.<sup>119</sup> The fierceness with which state security impeded Muslim Brotherhood voters after the larger than expected success in the first round<sup>120</sup> suggests the competition to demonstration of public support in the formal arena is a real one. More importantly, the renegeing on relatively unobtrusive supervision from the first round betrays a lack of accurate grand design with which the regime is often credited. Political actors seek and capture power through the deployment of inchoate abstractions that delimit the scope of actions of contestants – and then act within the imposed grid through means that need not be congruent with the “spirit” of this abstract concept, which in this confrontation happened to be electoral

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Crystal, ‘Authoritarianism and its Adversaries in the Arab World,’ *World Politics* 46, no. 2 (January 1994) pp. 262-289: 263.

<sup>118</sup> Albrecht, Holger. “How can Opposition Support Authoritarianism? Lessons from Egypt” *Democratization*, Jun2005, Vol. 12 Issue 3, p378-397

<sup>119</sup> Indeed the ideal phenomenological answer to the ascription of immense calculative faculties bases on outcomes of authoritarian persistence would be a quote from Marx, Groucho rather than Karl: “He may look like an idiot and talk like an idiot but don’t let that fool you. He really is an idiot.”

<sup>120</sup> See Mona El-Ghobashy, “Egypt’s Paradoxical Election.” El-Ghobashy chronicles the abrupt shifts in levels of violent repression from one round of elections to the next.

democracy. It is more likely that a hysteresis between the formal and the informal, the institution and the practice is the productive zone where collective striving is manifest. It became clear very quickly with the shift in the level of intimidation and violence by the security forces from the first round to the second and the second to the third, the Muslim Brotherhood was bound to the formal rules of the electoral process in ways that the regime simply was not. The performance of the Brotherhood bloc in parliament has since their election has drawn favorable notices for their awakening of a “sleepy parliament,”<sup>121</sup> in which they “took politics seriously.”<sup>122</sup> That a stiffer resistance to the government's program is now in place in parliament is clear, but the electoral event, in comparative terms cannot be in any sense analogous to the Algerian drama fourteen years earlier, in terms of reconfiguration of power and the powerful. One cannot say that in equivalent situations, the Egyptian regime made less of a mistake than the Algerian one in managing an election. Owing to factors that parallel and encompass (or fail to) an electoral process whose outcome (in formal terms and in terms of new political actors and constituencies), the events were simply of a different order.

It can be said that the events of January 1992 *revealed* that “every state has an army but in Algeria the army has a state,”<sup>123</sup> a contestable statement inasmuch as the generals' actions brought about that reality rather than merely having expressed it. Around the same time, in the early 1990s, the Egyptian military had become “an almost entirely autonomous enclave of middle-class modernity in an increasingly impoverished and marginalized Third World economy,”<sup>124</sup> which the regime had carefully integrated into the financial aid streams stemming

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<sup>121</sup> Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, “The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament,” *MERIP*, Fall 2006.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Eva Bellin, “Coercive institutions and Coercive Leaders,” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. M. Pripstein Posusney and M. Penner Angrist, (Lynne Rienner: 2005), p. 26.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Springborg, quoted in Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002: 242

from its close relationship with the United States. The military not only received the bulk of the aid, but was also allowed to establish lucrative business ventures in cooperation with American firms.<sup>125</sup>

On the level of calculative agency, when Chadli Benjadid sought to counter the weight of his competitors, in both the party of the FLN and the military, he ultimately needed to use a democratic institution to achieve a “split the vote between the FLN and the FIS”<sup>126</sup> and in the process invest what was becoming an organized political actor, with real power. In contrast, Mubarak's regime has cultivated a domestic group of businessmen with no separate or organized political base. It has transnationalized its reasons for power such that when the American presidential spokesman, Scott McClellan opined that “the election represents an important step forward toward holding fully free and fair competitive multiparty elections”<sup>127</sup> its pillar had been secured.

Benjadid's partners, whether or not they were pleased with the association, were, in the process of mobilizing for victory instilling real fear in the army, with the FIS's second in command playing on the military's fear of infiltration when he publicly alluded to those who “adore God” among the gendarmerie, and the party's leader directly challenging army's authority when a stage of siege was imposed on the capital upon the declaration of a general strike by the FIS:<sup>128</sup>

In the event of the military coming onto the streets, we will fight, I swear that if a single drop of blood is shed, we will combat the military until its complete annihilation

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<sup>125</sup> Timothy Mitchell, 241.

<sup>126</sup> Willis, 131.

<sup>127</sup> As reported by Juan Cole in “Bush’s War and the Egyptian Elections” in Salon.com; September 19, 2005. Though the statement was made about the presidential elections, it was representative of the American position on the parliamentary elections later in the year.

<sup>128</sup> Willis, 185.

This had come from Abassi Madani, the normally temperate leader of the FIS, who, as described by Kalyvas, was not able to contain the statements of his subordinates, and hence unable to make a commitment to the military.<sup>129</sup> The FIS, who, along with the majority of Algerians, disliked the president, must have particularly resented the fact that, absent a deep organizational history, their sudden rise owed a great deal to Benjadid who, in turn did not head an acute Machivellian dictum predicting his fate:<sup>130</sup>

He who is the cause of another becoming powerful is ruined; because that predominancy has been brought about either by astuteness or else by force, and both are distrusted by him who has been raised to power

The erratic behavior of the FIS leadership, including a call for a general strike in the summer of 1991 that brought Army to the streets of Algiers despite going largely unheeded by a labor class that was not in the main amongst their constituency,<sup>131</sup> is attributed by Hugh Roberts to the derivativeness, vacuity and essential shallowness of Algerian Islamism. “It is a striking fact,” he writes, “that there has been no Algerian Ghannouchi, let alone an Algerian Qotb or an Algerian Mawdudi or an Algerian Khomeini.”<sup>132</sup>

Should this then lead one to conclude that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, owing to the embeddedness and age of their organization, who indeed possessed in their history a Sayid Qotb, were better able to contest under the constraints of the Egyptian power structure? One would do well to recall that the Brotherhood have largely disowned the militant Qotb, and that not two years after their electoral success, the regime had completely locked out the Brotherhood of the Shura (upper house of parliament) in 2007 and local municipal elections in 2008.<sup>133</sup> It has

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<sup>129</sup> Kalyvas, “Commitment Problems.”

<sup>130</sup> Machiavelli, Niccolò, *The Prince*, (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1988), 36

<sup>131</sup> Willis, 186-190

<sup>132</sup> Roberts, “The Strategy of Algerian Islamism,” 99.

<sup>133</sup> Joshua Stacher, “The Brotherhood and the Wars,” *Middle East Report* 250, Spring 2009.

further amended the constitution banning any political association based on religion.<sup>134</sup> Nor can one consider their putting forth only 150 candidates a successful process of “signaling,” after which a “pacted transition” would occur. In contrast with the Algerian contestants, the Muslim Brotherhood did not mobilize for a formal victory, enabling the regime to encompass the election, whose productivity was channeled by its new leaders in its reconfiguration of itself and its retirement of the “old guard.” Only if the Brotherhood is to be judged as an essentially status-quo power, one whose dominance as the main force of opposition was reinforced in the election can their recent activity be described as successful in anyway. As such, and in their own way, the Muslim Brotherhood has become as equally derivative of the power structure as the FIS, with the caveat that only the latter attempted to sketch a vista in which their supporters (and opponents) could glimpse a dramatically altered political reality in the event of their victory.

Antonio Gramsci, who in some ways admired the hegemony of religion, may have also seen this possible function its mobilization can play, to become an “ideological state apparatus”<sup>135</sup> for regimes who can invest the space between deployed formal reifications (democracy, secularism etc.) with practices that waterlog avenues of rebellion; “guiding dissatisfaction into popular mutinies that can shift power from one elite competitor to another, but never – at least thus far – to the mutineers”; an inarticulate hegemony of discontent.<sup>136</sup>

Time is not a neutral variable.<sup>137</sup> In considering both the explanation for, and the meaning of the elections in 2005, one must not discount that the octogenarian Husni Mubarak has been head of state since 1981, placing a polity where Mubarak is not president outside the experience

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<sup>134</sup> Note that a similar clause existed in the Algerian constitution of 1989, banning political associations of a “sectarian” character. Benjedid did not want to see this clause used to prohibit the legalization of the FIS. Willis, 118-119

<sup>135</sup> Otto Maduro. “New Marxist Approaches to the Relative Autonomy of Religion,” *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Winter, 1977), 362.

<sup>136</sup> Daniel T. Linger, “The Hegemony of Discontent,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 20, No 1 (Feb., 1993), pp. 3-24, 4

<sup>137</sup> On the topic with respect to the study of democracy, see Juan Linz, “Democracy's Time Constraints.” *International Political Science Review* (1998), Vol. 19, No. 1, 19-37.

of an enormous percentage of the population, a resource well utilized by Mubarak apologists in the 2005 presidential elections when the statement “Who we know is better than who we do not.”<sup>138</sup> Having deliberately avoided appointing a vice-president throughout his tenure, the post from which both he and Anwar el-Sadat arose to become heads of state, Mubarak maybe aware of the productive nature of crises, one perhaps in which actors within the regime ready a transition effected under the planned disjuncture of his passing.

Or he may not. As description first and foremost, phenomenology is less prone to the ascription of grand design to actors of whose *coping* it is an empirical account. Since Heidegger’s troublesome and masterful intervention in the 1920s, it has become possible to posit the preconceptual as the ground for conceptual, the latter being an occasional achievement and a ground for both exceptional action and analysis, but which is by no means the dominant mode of one’s “being-in-the-world.”<sup>139</sup> Crucially, this coping with everyday reality involves the time configuration of human life which is the identical concern human beings share. In readying themselves for this event, the Muslim Brotherhood are thus no different than the rest of the population, amongst whom there is widespread antipathy to what appear to be plans for the ascension of Gamal Mubarak to the presidency. Indeed the slogan of one of the more proactive homegrown civil society organizations in recent years, Kifaya [Enough] has been “No to extension [of presidential mandate], No to inheritance.”<sup>140</sup> The attitude is best captured in a story narrated by Juan Linz:<sup>141</sup>

Let us remember the story of the person who every day went to buy a newspaper and then threw it away. Asked about it, he said, "I am only interested in the death notices." The dealer said, "But you don't leaf through the paper." The answer was, "The one I am looking for will be on the front page."

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<sup>138</sup> “Ili-ni'rafu ahsan min il-mani'rafush”

<sup>139</sup> Martin Heidegger. Being and Time.

<sup>140</sup> « La lil-tamdid, la lil-tawrith. »

<sup>141</sup> Linz, 36 [en, 3].

### III- The Politics of Experience

*When modern physics exerts itself to establish the world's formula, what occurs thereby is this: the being of entities has resolved itself into the method of the totally calculable*

Martin Heidegger<sup>142</sup>

Phenomenology is ontology. As a human science, it is less concerned with “knowing that” than “knowing how,”<sup>143</sup> how it is that human beings exist within their environment. In the study of politics, this amounts first to the description of the meaningful experience of the political field for the community involved; hence the necessity of the privileging of an empirical account of that experience to the theoretical, and the induction from the former to the latter. As an empirical political philosophy it is, mercifully, not charged with adjudication of the meaning of “being,” but of the experiential meaning of political phenomena in the communities described. It is therefore unnecessary to accept the extreme rejection of epistemology (and methodology) by Heidegger<sup>144</sup> and some of his followers, but rather to relegate methodology to a secondary status.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> From “Hegel and the Greeks,” From Conference of the Academy of Sciences at Heidelberg, July 26, 1958: <http://www.morec.com/hegelgre.htm>

<sup>143</sup> A distinction put forth by Gilbert Ryle in his review of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and later incorporated into his own influential work, especially with regards his critique of the idea human action is structured as a causal chain from the mind to the body, “the myth of the ghost in the machine.” See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 297.

<sup>144</sup> The rejection of methodology by Heidegger was initially justified on the ground that “being” is not an entity; that is, not a thing.” as distinct from the sciences of the things that are, of beings. “Ontology or philosophy in general, is the critical science, or the science of the inverted world.” Heidegger eventually abandoned this transcendental quest for an understanding of being, and came to a more historical understanding. See Martin Heidegger. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Translation, Introduction, and Lexicon by Albert Hofstadter. Indiana University Press; Rep Sub edition (August 1, 1988), 17. It cannot be said that Heidegger’s views on epistemology were relaxed however. He intriguingly posited that we are much closer to the thing itself, engaging as we do with a whole thing, than we are to its individual qualities. In the masterful “The Origin of the Work of Art” he lectures that “we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen” (152) rather than build from the sounds and make a conclusion accordingly. Whilst a great deal can be taken from this holism, the complete rejection of epistemology is untenable in any serious academic study of politics.

<sup>145</sup> So long as the fictitious, isolated individual is not assumed, political phenomenology can in fact be consistent with most of the tools deployed in political science, including quantitative ones. The incompatibility is with

Once the study of fundamental concepts of what it means to be human are set aside, we can begin to understand how action in the political world mirrors the methodology of its study, that is how concepts are set-up as fundamental in the social world. Fundamental concepts are those, we learn from the later work of Heidegger, that come to be self-explanatory, that justify themselves as first principles.<sup>146</sup> They become the ground for political action. Of those, there are three candidates in the above accounts; Islam, secularism and democracy.

The question of democracy, notes Aziz al-Azmeh, “has become a major constituent in the political vocabulary of contemporary Arab discourse.”<sup>147</sup> What this developmentalist account of the instrumentalist use of democratic advocacy misses is the immense power of ideas; not as mental phenomenon that persuade, but as fundamental concepts separable into “matter” and “form.”<sup>148</sup> *It then becomes possible to think of true and real democracy, secularism and Islam as distinct from the experience thereof; the concept becomes a fecund source of collective action, a ritual in the name of that which justifies itself; for which no further reasons need be rendered.* It is not the instrumentalism here that is at issue, since political actors, who are assemblages rather than individuals, are as much the artifact of the deployment as they are its authors. The valence lies in the sovereignty of principles independent of the experience of them. Ideas are experienced as abstractions.

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assumptions embedded in the deployment of those tools, and the negligence of the rich experience of the political world, which is a social world. Phenomenology and methodological individualism are therefore irreconcilable.

<sup>146</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*. Indiana University Press (January 1, 1996).

<sup>147</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh. “Populism Contra Democracy: Recent Democratist Discourse in the Arab World.” *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* edited by Ghassan Salame. London: I.B. Tauris, 1994, 112.

<sup>148</sup> Heidegger writes of the power of this split: “Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything maybe subsumed. And if form is correlated with the rational and matter with the irrational; if the rational is taken to be the logical and the irrational the alogical; if in addition the subject object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair form-matter; then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding.” Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art.” *Basic Writings* (Edited by David Farrell Krell). New York: Harper Perennial, 2008, 153

Writing about the myriad nationalisms, Ernest Gellner discounted “lucubrations of German thinkers about the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,”<sup>149</sup> in the shaping of modern political actors. Yet one need not assert that Gamal Abdel Nasser was familiar with Gramsci or Mubarak with Machiavelli to assert their relevance to a phenomenology to electoral authoritarianism inasmuch as the insights of both writers are in their way general *precisely because of their embeddedness* – their connectivity to their own contexts and constraints – that seemingly paradoxical insight; the un-abstracted logic. Nor should it be taken for granted that political actors are outside the scope of political philosophy and its manifestations. Indeed one of those “lucubrate” Germans seems to have played a role in the Algeria revolution. “Of European philosophers,” writes Hugh Roberts about Fredrich Nietzsche, “he is one of the most relevant to the drama of the Algerian revolution.”<sup>150</sup> Nietzsche contended that awareness of the past was inversely proportional to one’s capacity for action such that one may experience a paralysis resultant of an overload of history. In his conception, the efficacy of action and the lucidity of the guiding identity of the actor not only exist independent of history, but action, by definition was ahistorical – or even more – anti-historical. Nietzsche is “the only theoretician who seriously considered the issue of why and when historians should welcome and contribute to a forgetting of the past.”<sup>151</sup> The Dutch theorist, Frank Ankersmit, sees the process of national identity formation, in an educative process that one remembers in order to forget- remembering to historicize. Historiography here is exorcism whence a narrativizing history is a final step of a negotiation of identity – the writing of a history is the contraction of acquisition and encasement of a disposable identity. “I have been interested to discover,” writes Roberts “that several key

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<sup>149</sup> Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism,” In *Thought and Change*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964, 153.

<sup>150</sup> Roberts, Hugh. “Historical and Unhistorical Approaches to the Problem of Identity in Algeria,” in his *The Battlefield Algeria: Studies in a Broken Polity*, 1988 – 2002, Verso, 2003: 141

<sup>151</sup> Frank Ankersmit. “The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(come) What One Is No Longer,” *History and Theory*, vol. 40, no. 3, October 2001, 299.

personalities of the revolutionary nationalist generation of Algerians were well aware of Nietzsche's relevance."<sup>152</sup>

Here then is the first clue to an approach to making electoral authoritarianism intelligible; one must guard against the timeworn invitation to historicize. The imperative is to internalize the fact that political actors themselves historicize - celebrating folklore and popular culture "when these things are weakest."<sup>153</sup> What is to be captured then is not a determining historical force in the practices of actors, but their own historicity.<sup>154</sup>

For if in the guise of historicism history writing strove to capture the past "the way it really was" (Ranke), it remained incapable of providing orientation or directives for the historical present. According to Dilthey, "historicity" meant not only that all life was historically determined, but that it was in essence "meaningfully" structured in a way that facilitated hermeneutic understanding across generations. Thus, history qua "historicity" represented a reservoir of interpretive meaning that transcended the soulless, positivist accumulation of data by traditional history writing (*Historie*).

To meaningfully structure the past is a principal component of what political actors do,<sup>155</sup> which in Heideggerian terms becomes "futurity" (*Zukunftigkeit*), that past that yields "traditions on which peoples and individuals could act in view of future possibilities."<sup>156</sup> In this light, to understand actions taken as an outcome of inherited organizational and intellectual traditions, there must exist an intermediary step wherein current understandings of that inheritance are themselves excavated. Hence the impact of the Muslim Brotherhood's interactions with the revolutionary regime in the 1950s or the traditions of Association of Algerian Ulema in the decades prior to the revolution do not, in and of themselves, make the behavior of the

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<sup>152</sup> Roberts, 141

<sup>153</sup> Gellner, 162.

<sup>154</sup> Richard Wolin and John Abromeit, "Introduction," in Herbert Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*. Richard Wolin and Jon Abromeit eds. University of Nebraska Press, 2005: 20

<sup>155</sup> In *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan use the phrase "Usable Past" to describe such process of excision from history with which polities consolidate democratic systems, as for example in their discussion of the impact of recent Polish history on its transition away from authoritarianism, 292

<sup>156</sup> Wolin and Abromeit, 20.

Brotherhood or the FIS comprehensible without an exploration of how those pasts have been put to use, or indeed if they have been used at all. *The power of history proper is to refute.* History enables us to glimpse how the strategic caution of the Brotherhood throughout their existence has been consciously duplicated whilst the FIS's lineage, inasmuch as its leaders have attempted to trace it, can more correctly be linked to the “historic FLN” of whom they are heirs (fils; son). History does not repeat itself, it is merely quite unoriginal.

The sensitivity to the power of abstractions locates the rituals with which sovereign concepts are reproduced as fundamental principles. The ever frequent dualisms between concept and application may be collapsed by showing how democracy and secularism are not about objects that either exist or do not, or as institutions that can be an “inert object that somehow stands apart from individuals, precedes them, and contains and gives a framework to their lives.”<sup>157</sup> An abstract concept can become a reason for power sharpened, not blunted, when the pursuit seemingly contradicts its essence whence that essence is rendered as experience. From the phenomenological commitment to an engagement with the real it follows that any engagement with normative debates in democratic theory can never be strictly abstract. If there is an abstract object called democracy, then there are multiple ways with which to achieve it, including authoritarian ones – a practice facilitated by a means-ends dualism. A phenomenology of the political describes political reality, including its constituent political actors as always engaged in the world, hence always in the process of becoming. It follows from this logic that phenomenology cannot easily countenance a means-ends dichotomy.<sup>158</sup> As such the approach is in tension with proposition that there can be “Democracy without Democrats,”

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<sup>157</sup> Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics.” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1, Mar., 1991.

<sup>158</sup> Natalie Depraz, “Socrates, Christ, and Buddha as 'Political Leaders.'” *Phenomenology of the Political*. Eds Kevin Thompson and Lester Embree. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000, 122.

with “democracy” being an unintended consequence, an equilibrium outcome in a battle. Democracy here is less an object than a experience, an adjective, rather a noun – a quality of action that can indeed, following both historical and formal approaches, be routinized and institutionalized, but must re-inflect the exercises of power that are re-articulated everyday.

The power of abstractions is furthered by the attribution of qualities to processes that are more correctly attributed to political actors. In considering Algeria, one could not discuss the process of “democratization” without further inquiring by whom, and from what position, are the series of actions that constitute democratization undertaken. A phenomenological account would situate the man, in this case the president Chadli Benjadid, within his context, uncovering alliances and enmities within and without formal governing regimes. The approach encompasses time, and as such includes productive processes in which communities “take a stand on their existence”; cohere into political actors, split and metaphorsize. Indeed the question of who is the *political* actor becomes a central question to ask about any political process; to locate the actor who acts, again in Heideggerian terms, not “in order to” but “for the sake of,”<sup>159</sup> That is to say the political actor is *not* he who acts strictly instrumentally, for the instrumentalism is a minor part of process in which the authors do not survive the deployment as political actors. Rather it is he who seeks to “concretize” abstract values.<sup>160</sup> As such his primary activity is located precisely in the space between the abstract and the real. He seeks to mobilize and immobilize, to perform rituals of democracy, secularism and the Islamic state, all the while listening for the “echo of an unperformed melody.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Steven G. Crowell. “Who is the Political Actor.” *Phenomenology of the Political*, Eds Kevin Thompson and Lester Embree. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000, 22.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Frank Ankersmit, “Democracy's Inner Voice: Political Style as Unintended Consequence of Political Action.” *Media and the Restyling of Politics* edited by John Corner and Dick Pels. London: Sage, 2003

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