

The Origins of Islamist Insurgencies:
The Social-Institutional Foundations of an
Ideological Shift



Mikael Hiberg Naghizadeh

New College

University of Oxford

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations

Michaelmas 2022

Acknowledgements

I am incredibly grateful to prof. Stathis Kalyvas for his advice and support throughout my time in Oxford, without which I would not have found the fortitude to complete this project. I am very thankful to prof. Paul Staniland and Prof. Neil Ketchley for their role as examiners in the viva voce, and for their immensely valuable feedback. I would also like to thank past and present members of the T.E. Lawrence Program on the Study of Conflict for the many inspiring discussions which played a significant role in shaping my thesis.

I am forever grateful to friends and family for their patience for both the highs and the many lows of my eccentricities. Mom, dad, Sandra, I love you.

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Abstract

Islamism has become the predominant ideology of civil war in the post-Cold War order, and yet its significance for civil wars remain poorly understood. At the macro-historical level, it is unclear why it was Islamism, rather than something else, which replaced socialism as the foremost counter-hegemonic ideology among Muslim would-be revolutionaries. At the micro-level, there are no satisfactory explanations for why some rebel groups adopt Islamist ideology while others do not. This thesis is an attempt at theory-building to explain the historical rise of Islamism among rebel groups, through an inductively-derived theory of how group-ideology is determined by the process of mobilisation at the micro-level.

I do this by tracing the trajectories of Islamist groups from their pre-war social-institutional origins to the point of rebellion. I compare three sub-national regions which experienced Islamist rebellions to eight regions which did not in Somalia, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Russia. To this end, I argue that societies which do or do not experience rebellions can be distinguished according to their pre-war social landscape. This is defined by the degree to which the capacity for violence is fractionalised among multiple actors, and how capable governing institutions are at providing public goods.

I show, first, that ideological choice among rebel groups is strongly constrained by organisational legacies and the process of mobilisation. Second, that the ideological contours of a rebellion is defined by the types of pre-war networks which are best positioned to mobilise in response to a conflict-issue. Third, that broader processes of modernity in all cases undermined pre-existing institutions, paving the way for religious institutions as providers of welfare and security, implying a shift in social capital which made Islamist mobilisation viable. Fourth, the outbreak of violence represents a clash between such local experiments in religious governance, and states which seek to impose institutional uniformity. Finally, I provide a classification of pre-war social landscapes and argue that different mechanisms are tied to each landscape-type. I use this to set out a new agenda for studying both ideology and civil war, and the origins of civil wars more broadly.

To ignore the...fact that men often do not correctly understand their own individual behaviour or its sources....to ignore motives and the context in which they arose, the range of possibilities as they stretched before the actors...to ignore the spectrum of human thought and imagination - how the world and they themselves appear to men whose vision and values (illusions and all) we can grasp in the end only in terms of our own – would be to cease to write history.¹

¹ Berlin 2002: 26

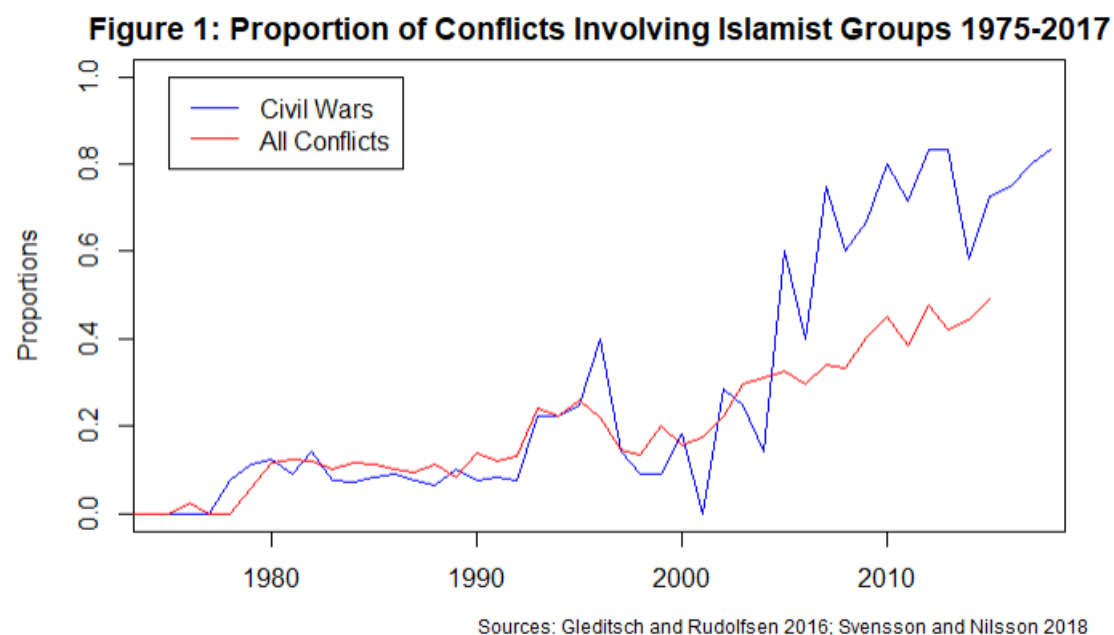
Part 1 Introduction

Chapter 1 Why Islamism? Why War?

1.1 The Puzzle and Micro-Structuralism as a Solution

What explains the macro-historical rise of Islamism as the predominant ideology of civil war in recent decades, and what explains local variance in the emergence of Islamist rebellions?

A defining characteristic of civil war in our own age is that a high proportion of insurgent groups rely on Islamic imagery and rhetorical frames to articulate their political goals and to justify their struggles.² Kalyvas (2011: 217) has described Islamism as being unique in the post-Cold War era in offering ‘...revolutionary beliefs both in the sense of a global counter-hegemonic ideology and the willingness to take up arms in order to implement it.’



² See Figure 1. The Blue line represents the proportion of civil wars in which at least one Islamist actor is involved, while the red line refers to other conflicts which does not reach the threshold of civil war, such as intercommunal violence and terrorism.

This thesis sets out to explain the macro-historical ideological shift whereby Islamism has become pervasive among rebel groups. It does this through an original micro-structural approach, whereby which posits that the character of political movements is strongly influenced by the pre-war social landscape of institutions, networks, and cleavages groups mobilise around. Instrumentalist theories suggest that rebel groups adopt various forms of Islamism to gain strategic advantages in war. Such calculations are part of the story, but not sufficient, not least because it gives an incomplete picture of the practical constraints rebel leaders face when they pursue ideological innovation. This thesis instead sets out to elucidate how ideological choice occurs by situating rebel groups within micro-level institutional contexts. While not discounting agency, it focuses on the structural conditions which paves the way for mobilisation around new ideologies. Specifically, cases of governance-collapse and institutional fragmentation which paves the way for new modes of organisation. The central argument is therefore that the rise of Islamism among rebel groups is not simply a matter of strategic calculation. It rather follows from local-level institutional failures which has led to experiments in governance along modernist Islamic lines, spurred on by the transnational flow of ideas and individuals who promote certain forms of Islamism as solutions to local woes.

A distinguishing feature of the post-Cold War era is that there is a dearth of ideological alternatives to Islamism for revolutionary-minded Muslim actors, and Islamism has become intertwined with revolutionary politics in ways which in many Muslim countries was previously reserved for “Third-Worldist” ideologies which often were anti-imperial, nationalist, and socialist or state-capitalist, such as pan-Arabism (Ajami 1978; Berger 2004; Farah 2019; Hadiz 2004; Malley 1996; Kalyvas 2018).³ Beginning with the symbolic

³ Pan-Arabism had its equivalents among other Muslim-majority ethnic groups as well, for example pan-Somalism, pan-Turkism or Turanism, pan-Iranianism, etc.

watershed of the Arab defeat in the 1967 Six-Day war, and culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, these ideologies gradually ceased to inspire revolutionary fervour as they failed to deliver on the economic and political aspirations of the masses.

This shift was visible already in the 1970s and 1980s in bastions of revolutionary nationalism such as Egypt and Algeria, where iconic figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Houari Boumédiène were succeeded by leaders who turned to Islam to legitimize their regimes (Malley 1996). It was accompanied by the recognition that attempts at state-led development had stalled by the 1980s, which led to economic liberalisation and the state's withdrawal from the social sphere, leaving issue of welfare in the hands of non-state actors, particularly religious institutions and charities (Derluigian 2005). At the same time, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, along with the efforts of the mujahideen in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in the 1980s, proved to a new generation of revolutionaries that religion could serve as a powerful rallying cry for their political struggles.

This ideological decline was paralleled by the consolidation of religiously-conservative rentier states, particularly in the Gulf. These states, particularly Saudi Arabia, became increasingly adept at projecting power abroad as well, notably in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This power-projection included encouraging the spread of particular forms of political Islam to counter both secular ideologies such as pan-Arabism and communism, but also to limit the influence of Iran's revolutionary Islamism (Barnett 1993; Barnett 1998; Kerr 1971).

The appearance of an "ideological vacuum" after the 1970s does not in itself explain why it was Islamism, rather than something else, which would emerge as the dominant revolutionary ideology of the Muslim world. It does not explain why various articulations of revolutionary Islamism failed to gain traction among communities and groups where

grievances were expressed differently, ranging from the West Sahara, Chad, the Kurdish territories, and the Rohingya in Myanmar (Debos 2016; Olson 2013; Ware and Laoutides 2018; Zunes 1987; 2010).

The rise of Islamism also challenges a long-standing academic assumption that modernity is inextricably linked with secularism, and this trend, along with the pervasiveness of other religiously-inspired ideologies such as Christian and Hindu nationalism has led some to proclaim that we are experiencing a broader political “return to religion” (Toft, Philpott, and Shah: 2011).

The notion of a “return” is not particularly illuminating as it is not clear that present religiously-inspired political movements have much in common with political movements of the past. For example, there are multiple examples of resistance against colonial encroachment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries being led by Sufi shaykhs, maybe most notably with the Mahdist war (1881-1899) in Sudan and the Somali Dervish movement (1899-1920) (Ingiriis 2018; Warburg 2011). It would be a mistake to assume that pre-modern Islamic movement have much in common with modern Islamist militancy, beyond their general references to Islam. These differences relates both to their interpretations of Islam, but also patterns of mobilisation.

The ideological turn towards Islamism is therefore not a return to some imagined civilizational authenticity, but rather a symptom of, and a response to, the collapse of traditional hierarchies and the onset of mass politics. In essence, the onset of modernity (Huntington 1993; Pinker 2011). Nor are the doctrinal differences among the Abrahamic religions large enough to explain the relative stabilization of large parts of the Christian world, and the lack thereof in the Middle East and North Africa (Pinker 2011). Religion and religious differences are by no means irrelevant, but it does not take us far in terms of

explaining both temporal and spatial variance in outcomes. This requires us to look at how religion is manifested in a society, through the institutions and networks which gives such abstract idea-systems political meaning. In particular, it requires us to examine whether there are recurring social-institutional configurations which give rise to Islamist mobilisation, and how these are related to broader social changes such as economic and political modernisation. When studying the rise of Islamism among rebel groups, there are at least four points worth considering:

First, the ideological shift is not universal as several groups and communities continue to organize around ethno-nationalist and leftist ideologies. This is the case with the Kurdistan Worker's Party, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party before it achieved autonomy under Iraq. The same is true for armed groups among the Baloch in Pakistan, such as the Balochistan Liberation Front, and for the Polisario Front in West Sahara (Akbar 2011; Metelits 2018; O'Connor 2021)

Second, in places where Islamist insurgencies eventually developed, there has in many cases been a significant temporal lag between the breakdown of the state and the emergence of Islamist groups. One example of this is Somalia, where state collapse in 1991 was followed by a brutal civil war between warlords and their clan-militias, and it was only after 15 years that an Islamist group became a significant power player. This was despite an attempt by al-Qaeda at establishing a presence in the region in the early 1990s which failed due to the lack of support from Somali actors (Dowd 2015). It has also taken several decades for the type of militant Islamism which grew out of the jihad against the communists in Afghanistan to spread to other Muslim communities such as Sub-Saharan Africa. It is therefore not the case that Islamism in its various forms is immediately recognised as the go-to solution for political instability.

Third, there is significant spatial variance in the emergence of Islamist rebel groups, even in contexts of weak state-presence. In north-west Nigeria, a conflict between Fulani nomads and other settled peoples over land rights has led to multiple instances of severe intercommunal violence. While there have been persistent fears that Islamist insurgent groups in Nigeria's north-east, such as Boko Haram, might exploit these tensions to move into the north-west, there is very little evidence that it has been able to do so (Walker 2016). In the North Caucasus, the exploits of Chechen militants such as Shamil Basayev into neighbouring regions such as Dagestan failed because locals rejected his attempt at creating Islamist enclaves beyond Chechnya (Hertog 2005; Hughes 2007). Among the Kurds in Iraq, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan was largely concentrated in urban areas in Sorani Kurdistan (Lia 2022). Among the Somali, the emergence of al-Shabaab in South-Central Somalia had very little influence on the Ogaden-region in Ethiopia in which there is a long history of struggle for Somali independence from Ethiopia's primarily non-Muslim regimes (Abdullahi 2007).

Fourth, the ways in which religion is manifested in the political realm is extremely multi-faceted. For example, the most influential political mass movement before the rise of Taliban-style groups among the Pashtun in Afghanistan and Pakistan was an organization called the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (KK). The KK was an ethno-nationalist organization which espoused an ideology thoroughly imbued by religion, but which was also strictly pacifist (Bala 2013). Despite reaching 100 000 members at its peak, and despite being severely repressed by the colonial administration, and then by Pakistan, there are no recorded incidents of its members killing an opponent (Tendulkar 1951). While the group largely failed to achieve its goals and eventually was overshadowed by the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, it serves as a reminder that the emergence of Taliban-style militant groups was by no means a pre-destined outcome (Saikal 2010). If the KK had succeeded in its goals, it is

perfectly possible that it would have become the model for religious activism in the region, precluding the emergence of the Taliban. This is all to say that Islam does not provide ready-made templates for what a just society would look like, or what methods to use to achieve these, and Islamic political movements are defined by interpretation, experimentation, and historical contingency, as are all political movements.

While the rise in Islamist insurgencies represents a macro-historical trend in the nature of civil war, different Islamist insurgencies may still be driven by fundamentally different micro-dynamics, despite their common ideological labels (Hegghammer 2014; Kalyvas 2003; 2006; Maynard 2019; 2022). Consider the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban which emerged for very different reasons despite their common nomenclature and geographical proximity. The Afghan Taliban's rise in the early 1990s was largely fuelled by the endemic disorder and banditry caused by warlords who preyed upon Afghans and foreign tradesmen following the Soviet withdrawal from the country. The Taliban's promise of providing security and a functional judicial system made it popular among segments of the local population who saw it as the best hope to dealing with the warlords, and also with businesspeople in Pakistan who sought access to Central Asian markets (Ahmad 2017; Harpviken 2012; Harpviken and Tadjbakhsh 2016; Rashid 2001; 2010).

The term "Pakistani Taliban," on the other hand, designates multiple groups with different goals. For example, in the Swat valley, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) appropriated class-contention against landowners associated with the Yuzufzai-tribe, while Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged through a generation of leaders from low-status families who used outside resources such as recruits from madrasas, to achieve leadership positions in the tribes, along with inter-tribal competition and as a reaction to state encroachment on tribal areas (Abbas 2008; 2014; Acharya, Bukhari, and Sulaiman 2009; Fair 2011).

Another interesting case is that of the Muslim-majority republics in the Russian Northern Caucasus which despite appearing "...as if they were deliberately constructed for comparative analysis" have had very different post-Soviet trajectories (Derlugian 2005: 260). In Chechnya the Soviet-era elite was replaced with a new generation of outsiders who did not see their fortunes as being tied to Moscow. This eventually led to a separatist rebellion, followed by independence in 1996. Segments of Chechen society Islamised through the development of Islamist parallel societies which operated beyond the scope of the newly independent Chechen state. These elements forced the Chechen Republic into a second war with Russia which destroyed the nationalist independence movement and allowed these Islamist elements to appropriate the independence-struggle. Chechen Islamists initially failed to export the revolution to other parts of North-Caucasus, but a low-intensity insurgency eventually in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia in response to state-repression and harassment of non-traditional Muslims (Swirszcz 2009: 186; Wilhelmsen 2005). In these regions, there was a great deal of continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet elite which prevented large-scale destabilization and confrontation with Moscow, and Islamist radicalism gained traction as a form of revolutionary activism against a rigid political system. Militant Islamism in Chechnya followed from different actors attempting to seize control over the Chechen state itself, along with a form of local competitive polity-building, as a symptom of a non-functioning state. In the rest of the North Caucasus, the issue was the opposite, an overbearing state which severely harassed and repressed all non-state sanctioned displays of religion, leading some believers to turn to militancy.

Some features of politics are so pervasive that they are taken for granted and assumed to be inevitable and natural, though they might not be (Lewis 1990). The centrality of Islamism to modern Muslim politics has made it common in both policy-circles, and in academia, to take it for granted that Islamism is all-pervasive, especially in politically

unstable contexts. The also applies to the small literature on civil war and Islamism which predominantly has revolved around notions of outbidding while assuming religious ideologies to be the universally strategically optimal ideology to adopt (Toft 2007; Walter 2017a). The civil war literature does not provide the theoretical tools to explain variance in the adoption or non-adoption of Islamist ideology, nor whether and how Islamist rebel groups differ from other insurgencies in terms of their origins, patterns of violence (Toft and Zhukov 2015), or conflict resolution (Walter 2017b; Svensson 2007).

One reason for this state of affairs is that scholars of civil war have not adequately engaged with the specialist literature on Islamist civil wars and the contexts in which they arise (Teti 2007; Valbjorn 2003; 2020a). This is reflected in the conceptual confusion on the topic as conflict-scholars use terms such as “Islamist,” “Salafi,” “Jihadi,” or “Wahhabi” interchangeably (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020; Hegghammer 2020; Walter 2017a). Other issues have revolved around whether or not to include Shi’ite groups in the same categories as Sunni groups, if they are to be included at all (Kalyvas 2018; Valbjørn and Gunning 2021: 40), or relied on unclear coding criteria (Gleditsch and Rudolfson 2016; Svensson and Nilsson 2018). The goal here is not to clarify this conceptual confusion, but rather to illustrate what may be known about ideology and civil war through deep-engagement with specific cases, as opposed to relying on assumptions about how certain political dynamics supposedly are unique to Islam and Muslims.⁴ Another reason for this theoretical gap is that ideology is often treated as a veil for the self-interested “greedy” motives of rebel leaders (Collier 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003), or as epiphenomenal to the grievances of communities who rebel (Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011; Gurr 1971). The recurring assumption is that ideology can have either an instrumental or a

⁴ See (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004) for a level-headed discussion of how to think about “Muslim Politics”

constitutive function, but rarely both, though most researchers implicitly assume that both matter (Maynard 2019; Sanin and Wood 2014).

A pervasive explanation for why Islamist civil wars have become more common in recent decades is the notion that rebel groups engage in religious outbidding to gain strategic advantages (Toft 2007; Toft 2013; Walter 2017a). However, religious outbidding is, frequently portrayed as being a more straightforward process than it is in reality. One particularly problematic assumption is the claim that Muslim audiences are inherently receptive to groups espousing hard-line religious ideas because “extreme” ideological positions are associated with credibility and incorruptibility. This claim is puzzling given that groups commonly labelled as “Salafi-Jihadi” have had to resort to extreme acts of violence to govern seized territory because their laws clash with local norms (Walter 2017a: 32). The instrumental use of religious rhetoric may certainly make strategic sense for certain groups, but it is imperative to be specific about the conditions under which target audiences actually are receptive to this.

The manipulation of identities, such as religion, for self-serving reasons is an ubiquitous feature politics. One example is that both state and non-state actors have exploited Saudi fears over the influence Iran might exercise over Shi’ites to attract funds (Nasr 2000; Nasr 2006; Wehrey 2013; Wehrey 2017). Islamist rebels are as rational in this regard as groups during the Cold War who used the threat of communism to attract support (Emerson 2019; Kalyvas 1999). However, explanations of rebel group ideology which focus on strategic deliberations have not fully elucidated how such deliberations occur, nor specified the conditions under which specific ideological positions actually provide greater advantages than disadvantages (Abrahms, Maynard, and Thaler 2018).

Rebels have established reputations, personal convictions, and operate within established associational structures, cleavages, and social norms, which shape the process of

mobilization. Attempts at Islamist signalling by actors without established reputations may be perceived as insincere, leading to a backlash from external or internal audiences (Ahmad 2019; Arves, Cunningham, and McCulloch 2019; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; Walter 2009). While aligning with a group such as al-Qaeda may allow a group to attract funds and foreign fighters it also raises the prospect of intensified counterinsurgency efforts against the group, limits the spectrum of potential allies, and closes the door to negotiated resolutions to conflict. Explanations of group-ideology as a strategic decision will necessarily be incomplete if they assume certain ideological positions to be inherently beneficial without considering potential disadvantages, making such theories both underspecified and overdetermined.⁵

The specialist literature on Islamist actors has been more attentive to how Islamist mobilisation is influenced by historically contingent and local ideological dynamics (Kepel 2004), social structures such as tribes (Collombier 2018; Knysh 2017), economic interests (Ahmad 2017; Derluguian 2005; Malley 1996), and social processes such as urbanisation and industrialisation (Derluguian 2005; Islam 2015; Lefèvre 2021). This attention to the embeddedness of Islamist rebel groups in specified pre-conflict social contexts is missing in the civil war literature. Consequently, we lack the micro-theoretical foundations to explain why some rebel groups adopt Islamism, while others do not.

The lack of coherent explanations for the emergence of Islamist Insurgencies follows from a double failure; first, of not uncovering micro-dynamic explanations for rebel group emergence as research tends to start from purportedly universal theoretical assumptions (Kalyvas 2006), and second, by not integrating the significance of history in the form of the influence of pre-war social-institutional legacies (Staniland 2012; 2014). Rebel mobilisation

⁵ Neither Walter 2017a; 2017b, nor Toft 2022 do so

is endogenous to the pre-war social landscape of social structures and actors with pre-existing values and beliefs and should be studied as such.

In this regard, I strongly agree with point made by other researchers that the study of both IR and certain sub-fields of comparative politics, including civil war studies, are suffering from a lack of comprehensive theorizing as the professional incentive structures in academia favours hypothesis-testing over theory-building (Achen 2002; Braumoeller 2004; Mearsheimer and Walt 2013; Schrodt 2014). While empirically-focused research is important, the lack of big-theories sometimes renders research unfocused and non-cumulative due to there being a continuous collection of narrow, often disparate empirical statements with unclear implications for our understanding of the broader phenomenon in question. For example, existing datasets of civil wars do for the most part not rely on explicit theoretical assumptions in their coding, including not having clear conceptions of what constitutes a civil war, and how rebel groups differ from other actors (Sambanis 2004; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). Civil wars are consequently conflated with coups, riots, genocide, criminal violence, or terrorism if they pass a certain threshold of deaths.

Another example is that data-generation has revolved around disaggregation and a focus on dyadic-relationships between conflict actors. Yet, this drive towards increasingly disaggregated data does not in itself solve ontological issues with existing datasets, for example with regards to whether dyads are appropriate units of study, and how to account for interrelationships among dyads (Collier 2000; Cunningham, Skrede Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). While the study of civil war must avoid the growth of borderline-ideological “schools” of thought which speak past each other, a core reason why traditional IR has stalled, it must also avoid becoming a field of disconnected empirical claims. Grand-theories of civil wars are necessary to give the field direction, even as a target of dispute.

To this end, I develop an original theoretical approach to ideological variation in the emergence of Islamist rebellions both macro-historically, and at the micro-level, drawing inspiration from the social-institutionalist literature on rebellion and social revolutions (Gould 1995; Skocpol 1979a; 1994; Staniland 2014; Yashar 1998). Through this micro-structural approach, I argue that the origins of Islamist insurgencies can only be explained by examining how pre-war social configurations constrain and shape group-ideologies and the path to war. The pre-war social landscape consisting of institutions with imbued values, organisations and networks which tie specific segments of the populace together, and pre-existing social cleavages and grievances, set the boundaries for how would-be rebel leaders can mobilise. Leaders certainly do have agency to promote ideological frames, but straying from existing norms and grievances may backfire as conflicts play out on templates shaped by the past (Ahmad 2019; Staniland 2014; Walter 2009). Similarly, the viability of Islamism as an ideology of rebellion is not universal to Muslim-contexts, but endogenous to specific pre-war social configurations.

Integrating this historical dimension is necessary to uncover how underlying political tensions are translated into an insurgency, and why it is expressed through Islamism rather than other ideologies. This entails, not just outlining historical context, but rather studying how the processes of modernisation produces specific social discontents and grievances. In some cases, existing institutions may be well-positioned to respond to these grievances, but in others, the rise of new social challenges may inspire the search for something new. Religious institutions have in some cases emerged fulfilled this demand as the failures of traditional institutions or the state inspired experiments in using Islam to provide social cohesion.

Importantly, the religious institutions which have emerged in such contexts have often not been associated with traditional Islam. Rather, they embody modern interpretations of Islam, sometimes funded by local or transnational actors with ties to the Arab Gulf states.

Institutional innovation and the rising salience of religious institutions as nodes for social cohesion has also allowed for political mobilisation around new idea-systems. The processes of modernity as a macro-historical phenomenon, therefore influences micro-level dynamics by unsettling social-institutional configurations, leading to a search for new institutional equilibriums, which in turn influences the ways in which counter-hegemonic actors mobilise.

At the micro-level, the character of rebel groups is defined by the pre-existing institutions and networks which leaders rely on for mobilisation (Staniland 2012; 2014). For Islamist rebellions, this means that the mechanisms which gave rise to two different Islamist groups may be fundamentally different, despite their common ideological label (Kalyvas 2006; 2018). At the same time, local conflicts driven by different micro-level dynamics may still be influenced by broader macro-historical trends. Communist rebellions during the Cold War also developed due to different local-level grievances. Still, they were all shaped by the same historically contingent political game of the Cold War, which informed the process of mobilisation in ways which would not have been possible before the Cold War era (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010).

Islamist rebellions are similarly influenced by historically contingent strategic realities such as the Iran-Saudi rivalry, and the transnational flow of funds and foreign fighters which Islamist groups may tap into. More fundamentally, they are driven by specific macro-historical processes associated with political modernity such as nation-building, industrialization, and urbanization. Such processes lead to social dislocations and political dis-equilibriums which led to social tensions which played out differently at the micro-level. To understand the origins of Islamist civil wars, and civil wars more broadly, it is essential to grapple with how to disentangle historically contingent processes from general patterns.

1.2 Thesis Overview

This thesis is an attempt at explaining a macro-historical shift, the rise in Islamism as the pre-eminent ideology of civil war in our time. I examine this ideological shift in two ways. First, I examine it as the outcome of multiple macro-level processes associated with modernity which in multiple Muslim societies has led to new social demands which to varying degrees has unsettled social relations depending on the ability of pre-existing institutions to adapt to such changes. In some cases this led new institutions to take on greater roles, including religious institutions. I argue that Islamism as a feature of political mobilisation follows from the pervasiveness of institutions and networks to which religion makes sense as a *participation identity*.

I argue that such institutional shifts or non-shifts follow from a form of extrinsic institutional change where the prevalence of different types of institutions in a society is a function whether these fulfil social functions which are in-demand at a particular historical juncture (Darwin 2019). My emphasis on institutional change as extrinsic is due to a central but sometimes misunderstood aspect of Darwinism which I argue can serve as an important corrective to our understanding the of ideological trajectories of groups. Both academics and practitioners are sometimes guilty of assuming that history is teleological and moving towards a concrete end-point, and in the case of Muslim societies that religious institutions, organizations, and ideology are inherent or natural features of Muslim politics (Berlin 2002b). However, institutions, as organisms, are not intrinsically evolving towards a final end-point, but evolve extrinsically in response to environmental factors.

What defines macro-historical developments is that the sum of the multitude of micro-level “mutations,” which in the social realm are non-random. Macro-historical trends therefore embody the aggregation of micro-level actions by local actors who pursue their own

narrow visions and interests. The key is to identify the exogenous factors which encourages recurring patterns of behaviour among disparate actors which operate in common structural contexts (Smith 1804). No institutional trait, including religious ideology, is inherently advantageous. Evolution is not teleological, and neither are institutions.

The advantageousness or disadvantageousness of specific group-traits is contingent on factors external to the organism itself. Traits which are beneficial under one set of circumstances, might turn out to be disadvantageous as external factors change. The question to ask in investigating the rise of Islamism is, therefore, whether there are specific external circumstances which have favoured groups with Islamist-traits over others. In particular, whether these follow from the “incomplete” transition to modernity whereby traditional governance systems associated with villages and tribes have collapsed, but not fully been replaced by an effective state.

Second, I argue that the macro-historical shift towards Islamism can only be understood by untangling the micro-dynamics which drive these insurgencies. In particular, by understanding the pre-war social landscape from which groups did or did not mobilise. I propose that this pre-war social landscape can be studied through two dimensions 1) the degree to which the capacity for violence is held by one or many actors, 2) the ability or willingness of governing institutions to provide public goods beyond security.

These dimensions determine the broad social needs which provide the impetus for both social-institutional change or stability, and political mobilisation. Whether or not this mobilisation occurs along Islamist lines is a question of whether mobilisation occurred through pre-existing networks to which religiously-informed ideological frames made sense as a *participation identity* (Gould 1995). The ideological frames of a rebel group should be studied by identifying the conflict-issues, and identifying which network-types were best

positioned to mobilise in response to these issues. The question of why Islamist rebel groups emerge in some contexts and not others, is therefore a function of where social capital lay before and at the point of conflict.

Table 1 Pre-War Social Landscapes

Fractionalization of Authority	Public goods provision	
	Effective	Limited
High	Archipelago-system (City States, Tribal systems, Pre-modern societies)	Disorder (Failed states, Intensive Conflicts)
Low	Centralised Authority (Nation-State)	Nightwatchman-State (Authoritarianism, Dysfunctional governance)

Table 1⁶ captures this intuition. When fractionalization is high and public goods provision is low, there will be greater political *disorder* as the populace’s governance-demands are unfulfilled. Conversely, a situation of *cohesive governance* will likely to be more politically stable. In an *archipelago*-system, the capacity for violence will be spread across multiple political actors, but these are internally cohesive and able to govern effectively locally. A *nightwatchman*-system is defined by the concentration of the capacity for violence in one or a few actors which are unwilling or unable to provide public goods beyond security. These categories are associated with different social-demands and conflict-issues which drives political conflict. Each category may be associated with multiple mechanisms for civil war, but some mechanisms may only be logically compatible with one of the categories.

For example, a political movement which emerges in response to endemic disorder and instability, such as the Afghan Taliban (Harpviken and Tadjbakhsh 2016; Rashid 2010),

⁶ More elaborate versions of this table appears in chapters 3 and 8.

is more likely to emerge in a disorderly system or some archipelagic-systems. However, in a system with rigid hierarchies, mobilisation may be driven by the demand for social revolution, as was the case with the TNSM, a branch of the Pakistani Taliban in the Swat-valley (Elahi 2019; Sheikh 2016). Civil wars are also by definition less likely to erupt in systems of cohesive governance or nightwatchman systems where power is concentrated in one or a few actors, as violence is in these contexts more likely to take the form of mass protest, repression, or terrorism. This unless an external shock causes the central power to collapse, in which case it would move towards an Archipelago-system, or a state of disorder.

Two key takeaways from this are, first, that there may be recurring mechanisms for civil war associated with different pre-war social landscapes as societies transition from being more or less fractionalised and having more or less effective institutions. Second, we should not assume *a priori* that all civil wars are directly comparable, as they may differ fundamentally through the social-configurations which spawned them.

One way of disciplining theoretical imaginations about Islam and politics is by comparing cases of Islamist rebellion, to similar but negative cases. I rely on an inductive and comparative-historical approach to trace Islamist and non-Islamist groups from their pre-conflict origins to pinpoint where they diverge.

I do this in four steps: beginning 1) with a pre-war social landscape of networks and institutions which includes anything from traditional tribal institutions, to religious seminaries, labour unions, and the state itself, each associated with particular idea-systems and norms, and each with different levels of social capital.

2) If an external shift or shock occurs, pre-existing institutions will vary in the degree to which they will be able to adapt and respond, for example to the fallout from state-

collapse. In cases where pre-existing institutions fail to respond effectively, other networks and institutions may gain new significance as nodes for political stability.

3) Islamisation follows if the institutions which are best positioned to fill the new demand for social services are religious institutions, increasing their importance as nodes for social cohesion and political mobilisation, at the expense of institutions organised around other idea-systems. This can occur, for example, if religious institutions take on new functions such as dispute settlement and welfare provision which were previously reserved for clan-institutions or the state.

4) Militarisation and violence may follow if these local experiments in stabilisation is met challenged by outside actors, for example states seeking to impose institutional homogeneity within their borders. Specifically, such institutions may turn to militarism if sub-factions with militant agendas manage to seize leadership-positions to repurpose the organisations for the purpose of militant action (Ahmad 2019; Wood and Kathman 2015). Uncovering the struggle to “capture” the tactical and ideological direction of pre-existing institutions which were established for other reasons than war is an important part of the puzzle to explaining the emergence or non-emergence of Islamist groups.

The micro-level argument is therefore that Islamisation is a function of a pre-war social landscape in which social capital shifts towards Islamic institutions and networks in response to an external disruption. This makes mobilization around Islamism viable in the case of a political crisis such as state collapse or repression. Violence may erupt as these institutions clash with external actors over their newfound positions. Religious outbidding might be a feature of such contexts, but in a superficial and indicative manner as a symptom, rather than as a cause of Islamisation itself. The “deeper” explanation for Islamist mobilisation is rather a question of pre-conflict institutional continuity or discontinuity.

This sets the stage for the comparative analysis which proceeds at two levels. At the nation-level, I select three cases which share the outcome of experiencing an Islamist insurgency, but which otherwise are as dissimilar as possible. These cases are the Somali territories, the North Caucasus in Russia, and parts of the Pashtun and Baloch territories in Pakistan. Within these cases, I compare regions which are as similar as possible, but which vary on the dependent variable of experiencing an Islamist insurgency. This amounts to four cases in the Somali territories, four in the Russian North Caucasus, and three in Pakistan. I exploit the spatial and temporal variance among and within these territories to develop multiple micro-level pathways to Islamist rebellion.

I find that in the Somali-context, an Islamist rebellion only developed in Mogadishu, and this was after 15-years of warfare between non-Islamist groups. Whereas Mogadishu, Somaliland, and Puntland were in a similarly precarious position after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, the latter two managed to stabilise through persistently strong traditional institutions such as elder councils. These same institutions were too weak in Mogadishu to provide stability, and endemic violence led local community leaders and businessmen to establish a series of Sharia courts as “last-man standing” as providers of security and welfare.

These served as the basis for an Islamist rebellion in 2006, after militant sub-factions, such as al-Shabaab, managed to hijack the movement due to pressure from rival warlords. The emergence of the Islamic courts was critical, because it represented a shift in social capital towards institutions to which religious identity had primacy as a participation identity. In fact, there were multiple attempts at fomenting an Islamist insurgency in the 1990s, including by al-Qaeda, but they failed because the social-institutional framework for widespread Islamist mobilisation was simply not present before the Islamic courts. The absence of organisational equivalents to the Islamic courts explains the lack of Islamist

rebellions in Somaliland, Puntland, and Somali state in Ethiopia. This shows there is nothing inevitable about Islamist actors emerging in contexts of political instability, even in places like the Ogaden where there was a long-standing nationalist insurgency against non-Muslim regimes. Islamist actors only emerge where the institutional framework to do so is present at the point of conflict.

The last-man standing explanation for Islamist rebellion takes a different form in Pakistan. Rather than representing an experiment in governance-provision, I find that Islamist militancy in the Swat Valley of the Malakand Division, took the form of a social revolution among the landless and the growing Pashtun middle-class who were frustrated by the legal privileges of a noble-class which no longer served a social function in a monetary-based globalised economy. This dynamic in the “settled areas” stands in contrast to the nearby tribal areas in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Tribal institutions and hierarchies remained far stronger in the tribal areas due to Islamabad’s policy of governing the area indirectly through appointed tribal leaders. Islamist militancy embraced by younger generations of tribesmen, often from lower-ranking tribes, who had few prospects of political power if they respected traditional hierarchies. Many of these had also developed network-ties outside of genealogical ties, through education in newly established religious seminaries, or from fighting in Afghanistan. The access to a global economy, weapons, and access to networks for mobilisation, allowed these figures to challenge tribal hierarchies through violence, and many of these also turned against the Pakistani state after 2006. In both cases, Islamism became available as a counter-hegemonic through the creation of new networks and institutions which stood outside the control of traditional institutions, therefore allowing for new radical mobilisation.

This stands in contrast to affairs among the Baloch in Balochistan, who despite similarly facing fallout from wars in Afghanistan and access to smuggling routes, have not

seen the emergence of organisational equivalents to the Taliban. This is in large part because of greater institutional continuity as traditional tribal elders have remained in control of the opposition movement. Insurgencies against the Pakistani state in the region therefore remain ethno-nationalist in character.

Finally, I find that Islamist militancy in Chechnya took on a fundamentally different character than elsewhere in the North Caucasus. Although Chechnya successfully won its independence from Russia in 1996 the newly established Chechen state lacked the institutional reach to govern effectively beyond Grozny. This led to the emergence of Islamist enclaves whose leaders repeatedly challenged then nationalist leadership for control over the state through continuous outbidding which eventually dragged Chechnya into a second war with Russia.

This stands in contrast to Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria, where elites and patronage networks survived the collapse of the Soviet Union, preventing the collapse into chaos as happened in Chechnya. However, the rigidity of these systems also meant that people without the right connections were left without prospects socio-economic advancement, while also having to deal with pervasive corruption and criminal extortion. The outlet for many, especially young men, became religion, both because this meant getting access to alternative systems of welfare-provision, but also because religious networks espoused a different political order. Some of these networks turned to militancy as the regional-states cracked down on all non-sanctioned forms of religion, especially in the 2000s, but this took the form of terrorist campaigns rather than outright civil war.

These different pathways to Islamist civil war, or lack thereof, were all grounded in specific pre-configurations social-institutional configurations which are detectable through in-depth engagement with the regional-specialist literature. Religious networks and institutions were often best-positioned to respond to such social demands and conflict-issues

preceding wars, meaning that patterns of mobilisation based on the positionality of pre-war networks made Islamism a viable option for new political movements.

This dispels the notion that there is anything inevitable about Islamist militant groups emerging in Muslim contexts, it is a matter of the historically contingent positionality of religious networks in responding to specific social demands. It also challenges notions that it is possible to find single-cause explanations of such conflicts. It instead directs our attention to complex social-institutional configurations.

Finally, this approach allows for the study of whether and how Islamist civil wars differ from each other, and from non-Islamist wars. Through repeated local level comparisons to find local-level mechanisms for war, and situating these in specified pre-war social-institutional contexts, it may be possible to study both Islamist civil wars, and civil wars more broadly, in a more cumulative manner. It also allows us to connect local-level dynamics to broader regional and global processes.

This thesis proceeds with a literature in chapter 2, where I deal with the existing literature on Islamist insurgent groups, pointing out how the literature is spread across disciplines such as area- and religious studies and political science, with research gaps partially following from a lack of interdisciplinary communication. I also survey the civil war literature on ideology. In chapter 3 I give a macro-historical overview of the rise of Islamism as a revolutionary ideology and the broader processes which fuelled it. Broadly guided by the Darwinian intuition, I show that many Muslim societies were defined by the “incomplete” transition to modernity where traditional institutions ceased to be effective, but were not fully replaced by the state, allowing religious institutions to emerge as nodes for social cohesion. I also outline the theoretical intuitions which may be derived from this which guides the remainder of the thesis. I present the methodological approach in chapter 4 which details my reliance on a comparative historical focus to pin-pointing the mechanisms which underpin

social shifts. I also explain the case-selection strategy, pointing out that I seek countries which are as different as possible, but which have sub-national regions which vary on the dependent variable but which otherwise are as similar as possible. I proceed to the empirical investigation of the Somali territories in chapter 5, Pakistan in chapter 6, and the Russian North Caucasus in chapter 7. Finally, in chapter 8 I detail how the micro-level theoretical inferences from these cases fits into a broader theory of Islamist civil war and how it should be studied.

Part 2 State of the Literature, Theoretical Inferences, and Method

In this section I review the specialist literature on Islam and politics, and I argue that there are important lessons to be drawn from this for political scientists who study Islamism. I argue in particular that assumptions about the “uniqueness” of Muslim politics should rely on the study of social-institutional configurations, especially in relation to processes of modernisation, rather than abstract assumptions about religion. I also review the literature on ideology and civil war which is still in an infant-state, partly due to the strong influence of economic actor models and methods on the field.

I move on to providing an overview of the macro-historical rise of Islamism as a revolutionary ideology, and argue that this is fuelled by specific social disruptions and dislocations which paved the way for the rise of religious institutions as nodes for social cohesion. I seek to capture this intuition through a two-dimensional model for pre-war social landscapes which are associated with different mechanisms for Islamist civil war, and which serves as the guiding model for the empirical section. The methodological framework for this is a comparative-historical one, strongly inspired by historical institutionalism, where I compare three nation-level cases which are as different as possible except all having experienced an Islamist rebellion, and eleven sub-national cases which are as similar as possible except with regards to the outcome. Contrary to existing research, I find that the mechanisms which underpin these different Islamist rebellions are fundamentally different, due to being a function of different pre-conflict social configurations.

Chapter 2 Islamism in the Conflict-Literature

2.1 Scholarship on Islam and Politics

Islamism has become unique in the post-Cold War era in offering ‘...revolutionary beliefs both in the sense of a global counter-hegemonic ideology and the willingness to take up arms in order to implement it...’ (Kalyvas 2011: 217). This holds true for the domain of civil war as well, as Islamist insurgent groups have become predominant in term of their proportional involvement in civil wars globally. This ideological trend represents a broader systemic shift in the nature of civil wars where Cold-War divides have lost salience or were reframed as religious and cosmic struggles. As the communist bloc collapsed in the early 1990s, the most visible and militant mode of opposition to the global hegemony of the U.S. and its allies became the various Islamist groups and state in places such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iran, Sudan, and elsewhere. These sought to carve out their own spheres in a global order they saw as incompatible with their own principles. This culminated in the War on Terror following the September 11. Attacks of 2001 which heralded a new era in how insurgencies were fought, a shift in the ideological justification for fighting, the emergence of new transnational networks and alliances, and the destabilization of multiple states whose populations would endure indescribable horrors (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; Kalyvas and Balcells 2010; Maynard 2019).

An Islamist group can be defined as ‘...a substate faction that utilizes Islamic ideas, identity, symbols, and rhetoric in its framing, and that espouses political order based on Islamic laws and institutions’ (Ahmad 2015: 92). Islamist groups range from pacifist and democratic, to revolutionary, and militant, but they share the goal of bringing about a political order built on Islamic law, however defined (March 2015).

The emphasis on bringing about a polity based on Islamic law is also what distinguishes Islamists from other political actors who use Islamic rhetoric. Rhetorical references to Islam is omnipresent in politics in most of the Muslim world. It offers the political entrepreneur a vocabulary, symbols, and ideas which will be familiar to Muslims, and which has resonance across social divisions such as class, clan, and ethnicity. In this sense, politics becomes “Muslim” as political discourse revolves around the awareness of being part of a tradition of ideas and practices, which may not be doctrinally well-defined, but which still provides an identity which constitute people as “Muslims” which may still overlap with and reinforce ethnic or national identity (Eickelman 2004: 13). However, such rhetorical appeals often takes the form of identifying Muslims as belonging to a common community or nation, and therefore need not entail the espousal of a particular political and religious order as is integral to Islamism.

Islamist groups are therefore extremely heterogeneous, and some scholars argue that the term Islamism should be altogether abandoned because of the pre-conceptions it evokes (Martin and Barzegar 2010; Varisco 2005). Others argue it is a purposefully broad term which usefully distinguishes groups who share the goal of implementing an Islamic system of governance from groups who do not (Tibi 2013: 433). For the purposes of this thesis, I opt for the latter approach to distinguish groups which seek to bring about an Islamic political order, but do scrutinize their ideological positions per se. To be clear, my use of the term Islamist is not to deny that there are significant ideological differences among Islamist actors, but rather to examine how groups in this broad ideological category differ from others.

What does the existing literature on Islam and politics tell us about Islamist insurgent groups? The answer is complicated, in large part because the literature is fragmented across multiple disciplines with different research goals. The specialist literature on Islam and politics does not necessarily aspire to produce generalizable theoretical statements as is the

norm in political science (Teti 2007; Valbjorn 2014). While Islamist political movements are receiving significant scholarly attention, there is no consensus on how they should be studied (Devji 2005). It is common to depict the literature as being divided between primordialism, instrumentalism and “third way” (Valbjorn 2020a). These terms are used to describe a range of research which to varying degrees portray cultural practices as inherent fixtures of particular communities, in contrast to arguments that self-interested political actors emphasize different identities for political gains.

There has also been a range of constructivist research, as well as “modernists” who emphasize the salience of ethnicity linked to nation-states, rather than religion as a force independent of modern institutions (Wimmer 2013). Primordialism is not a particularly useful term to describe research as it tends to function as a strawman-argument to attack other authors. Instrumentalism is a far more pervasive approach. It fits with the common perception among area-specialists that Islamist violence is an issue of religion being manipulated for self-serving purposes rather than a religious issue per se, and with utility-maximizing modelling which is pervasive in political science and economics. In this approach, religion is simply one of many identities which can be chosen for a strategic issue, and this has also led to a focus on modelling utility to explain the political significance of different identities (Yashar 1998: 29). Identity is only of secondary importance in explaining violence in this approach.

Islamism has received significant scholarly attention from political scientists as well, for example related to the performance of Islamist parties in elections, mobilization patterns, and also jihadi terrorism (Brooke and Ketchley 2018; Cammett and Luong 2014). The civil war literature has not devoted the same level of attention to Islamist groups. The few attempts at explaining the origins of Islamist civil wars have tended to rely on overly broad explanations such as the absence of an equivalent to the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and

the introduction of modern state sovereignty as enabling Islamist civil wars (Toft 2007: 101), the inflammation of sectarian cleavages (Nasr 2006), or underspecified explanatory chains about the utility of adopting Islamist ideology (Walter 2017a). It remains an open question how and under what conditions Islamist insurgent groups are created, whether they simply are rebels who rebrand themselves for strategic reasons, or whether they are the product of the politicization of new types of networks and organizations.

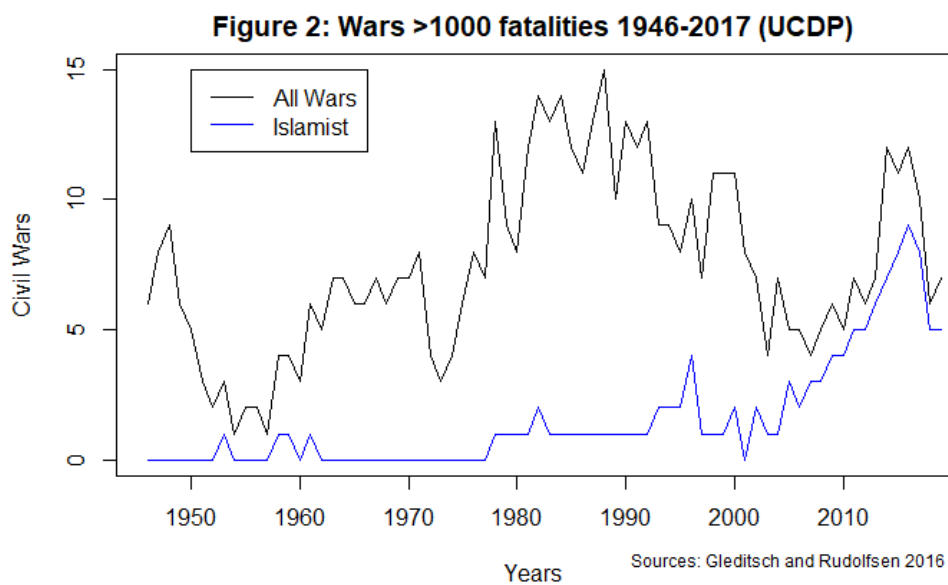
A rising proportion of civil wars, especially after 2003 involve groups with an Islamist political profile, as indicated by figure 2, reproduced from a study by Gleditsch and Rudolfsen. Other estimates sets the proportion of civil wars fought at least partially over Islamist claims as 11 % in 1979, rising to 73 % in 2015 (Svensson and Nilsson 2018: 59), while another states the share of conflicts involving an Islamist group has risen from 5 % in 1990 to over 40 % in 2014 (Fearon 2017: 22). This coincides with a geographical shift where more civil wars are occurring in Muslim-majority countries which in itself is a puzzle. Added to this is the rise in the number of “jihadi proto-states” where Islamist groups seek to establish systems of governance locally (Lia 2015: 31). The overall number of civil wars has declined since the end of the Cold War, but remains persistently high in Muslim-majority countries (Gleditsch and Rudolfsen 2016: 3). Steven Pinker also observes that his “decline of war” thesis seemingly does not apply to the same extent to the Muslim world (Gleditsch et al. 2013; Pinker 2011).

One caveat to this is that religious civil wars are not equally endemic to all Muslim countries, but rather highly concentrated to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Toft (2021) finds that even though MENA is home to 5 % of the world’s population and 20 % of the world’s Muslims, the region accounts for 40 % of religious civil wars since 1945.

This trend has led certain scholars to ask whether there is something particularly violent about Muslim countries or Islam. This notion has largely been discounted by large-N studies when factors such as economic development, oil dependency, and age distribution have been accounted for (Bormann, Cederman, and Vogt 2017; Fox 2000; Karakaya 2015; Sorli, Gleditsch, and Strand 2005). Nor is there evidence of a relationship between the size of Muslim populations and violence (Dowd 2015). Furthermore, Bormann, Cederman, and Vogt find that religious cleavages are less conflict-prone than ethnolinguistic divides, and that Muslim populations are no more conflict prone than other groups (Bormann, Cederman, and Vogt 2017). Other academic work focuses on historical grievances such as the impact of colonialism, the Israel-Palestine conflict, or the failed consolidation of the post-independence state, along with socio-economic grievances (Collins 2007).

The literature on religion and civil war is not well developed, as scholars of civil war have instead tended to focus on the significance of ethnicity. This stands in contrast to the terrorism literature where the question of the influence of religion on individual- and group-motives and behaviour is among the most important topics of study (2021). Consequently, it is unclear how, and in what ways Islamist insurgent groups differ from other rebel groups in terms of their origins, recruitment, or their use of violence (Gleditsch and Rudolfsen 2016; Walter 2017b). The drivers behind, and the consequences of, the rise of Islamist rebel groups for the dynamics of war and conflict resolution, therefore remain fundamentally enigmatic.

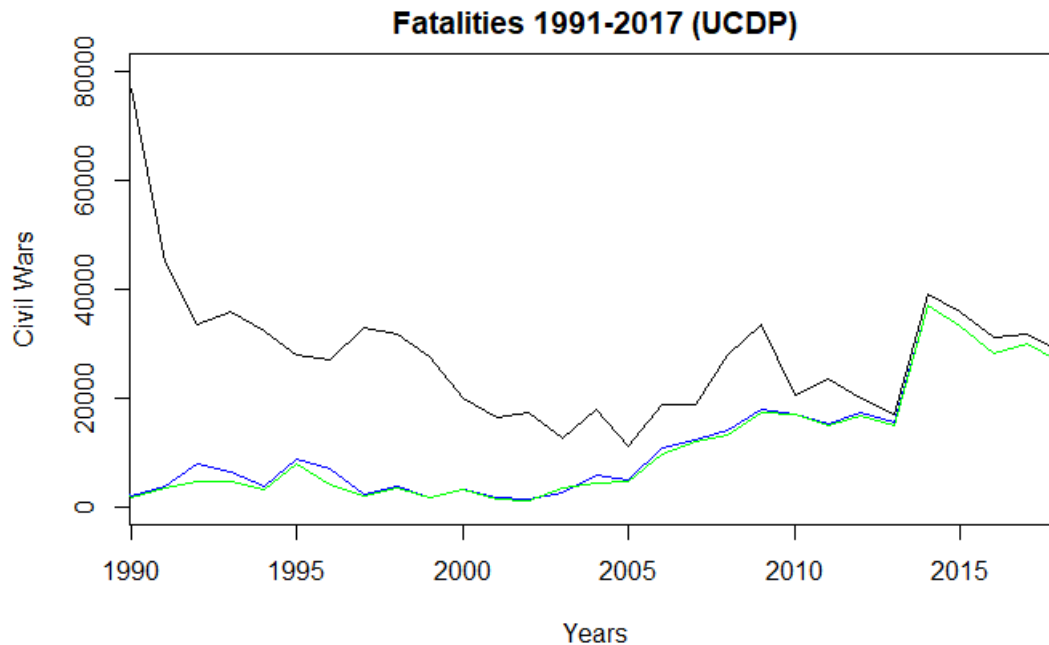
A broader theoretical gap in civil war research relates to the significance of systemic shifts for rebel group-traits, including with regards to ideology. Ideologies follow definite trends in terms of their popularity and association with political violence and this is intertwined with broader structural factors such as socio-economic trends in developing countries, or the decline of the superpower rivalry of the Cold War. Yet, the relationship between structural but historically contingent factors, and local dynamics remain poorly theorised (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010).



The failure to decipher central enigmas around a trend which to a significant degree has defined global post-Cold War politics is not only an academic problem, but also risks assigning the civil war literature to political irrelevancy as the literature is devoted to the “the trivial, the formal, the methodological, the purely theoretical...” (Morgenthau 1967: 73). The lack of robust and actionable findings on Islamist insurgencies is particularly important because conflicts involving religiously informed actors is important because such wars tend to be longer and bloodier (Fox 2000: 58; Pearce 2005), and more difficult to settle peacefully, even when the warring parties profess the same religion (Svensson 2007: 942). Reasons for this may be that religion makes conflict-issues non-divisible to the warring parties

(Juergensmeyer 2003: 157), or because of greater resilience by relying on transnational rather than local support networks (Toft and Zhukov 2015).

Figure 3: Fatalities by Type of Civil War



For most of Muslim history, there has not been any such thing as “Islamism.” It was only in the late 19th and early 20th century in response to the sense of Muslim humiliation and loss of power in the face of imperial encroachment by non-Muslim states, along with the social problems which followed from top-down imposition of Westphalian state institutions, that Islamism was born. This was in a context in which many also looked to other idea-systems such as liberal constitutionalism and Marxism for ways to revitalize Muslim nations, and there was considerable cross-fertilization among these ideologies (Husain 2018). This is why Islamism is commonly described as a modern response to modern problems despite the frequent references to the past in Islamist rhetoric (Hegghammer 2014; Lacroix 2014; Maher 2016).

The modernity of Islamism comes not simply from its recent origins, but from it being a product of modern social processes and configurations such as urbanization, nation-

building, and rising education levels. Islamism is essentially the invention of an imagined community, unified by religion, which has to respond to the corrupting cultural influences of modernity to create an “authentic” Muslim order, though this idea is in itself a modern invention (March 2015; Tibi 2012).

A common academic assumption in the 1950s and 1960s was that secularization, at least in the political sphere was an inevitable feature of political and economic modernity. This “secularization thesis” in the modernization literature was influential, not only in Western universities, but also among large segments of the post-colonial elites in Muslim countries who often had received Western education (Fox 2004: 56; Toft 2011: 2-9). In the 1920s and the 1930s, various forms of liberal constitutionalism had become influential among Muslim elites, for example with the al-Wafd party in Egypt. By the 1950s there were ample signs that the political significance of religion was on the decline. Islam was by no means rendered irrelevant, but the most forceful political movements between the 1950s and 1970s were informed by some mix of nationalism and socialism. The most famous example of this was the regime imposed by Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt after his rise to power in 1952 where he positioned himself as a champion of the Arab people to challenge the regional status quo and conservative regimes such as the Arab Gulf States.

In the years that followed, an ‘Arab Cold War’ developed where Arab political leaders competed for regional influence through ideological posturing which invoked the revival and unity of the Arab nation as opposed to the Muslim *ummah* (Barnett 1993; Kerr 1971). Pan-Islamism and later instances of political Islam such as that associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood were largely overshadowed by non-Islamic alternatives during the 1950s and 1960s (Dawisha 2003). Islam was, however, used instrumentally by conservative states such as Saudi Arabia to counter the ideological threat that Arab nationalism represented to their regimes. Similar forms of nationalist, secular, and often

nationalist politics were also pervasive outside of the Arab world, and usually similarly intertwined with the military as Arab nationalism was in Egypt, Syria, or Iraq. One example is Somalia where Siyad Barre, after a coup in 1969, set about restructuring Somali society in pursuit of Pan-Somali and socialist principles (Lewis 2002: 227). Other examples include Kemalism in Turkey (Azak 2010), the regime of shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, and Sukarno and Suharto in Indonesia (Elson 2010). In all of these, the military was either set up or modelled on Western bureaucracies, and held common notions of the military as the guardians of the nation, which often involved disentangling national progress from what was seen as backwards aspects of religion. To be clear, the “secularism” of these regimes does not mean that Islam was absent from their discourse or political calculations, but Islam was not at the core of the political vision for the future they presented and Islamic political forces were often viewed with suspicion (Calvert 2010: 160-165).

The secularization thesis of modernization theory was to some degree a response to the assumptions of the scholars labelled, often by their opponents, as “orientalist” such as H.A.R. Gibb and Bernard Lewis. What these scholars had in common was a tendency to see Muslim societies as part of a broader Islamic civilization which had fixed characteristics, and which represented a more authentic identity for Muslims in contrast to the intellectually incoherent attempts by “westernised” Muslim elites in imitating Western state systems. One conclusion drawn from this was that the nature of Islamic politics could be understood through historical events and scripture whereas contemporary political events were ignored (Lockman 2010). Lewis, in particular, relied on writings by a 14th century scholar to argue that Islam was inherently authoritarian. This also implied inevitable confrontations between Islam and the West as civilisational differences were enough to drive people to kill for the purpose of maintaining their “authentic” identities (Lewis 1990). The notion that Muslim identity would take primacy above all else and constituted an incorrigible difference to that of

other civilizations would later resurface in the work of Samuel Huntington's work (Huntington 1993).

Modernization theory, which was prevalent from the 1950s to the 1970s, challenged these sentiments through the claim that modernization was a path which would play out more or less identically for different societies. It had roots in the works of Max Weber and Karl Marx who believed in a stark dichotomy between traditional and modern societies, and saw Muslim countries as stuck in a backwards phase of history in terms of power being concentrated in a despot or due to a specific mode of production. Both allowed for progress through industrialisation or bureaucratization, and even colonialism in the case of Marx (Lockman 2010: 85).

Such sentiments were echoed by later writers such as Daniel Lerner who saw modernization as a universal process, with roots in the west, and argued that actors who envisioned political modernity differently to the Western system, especially Arab nationalists, were irrational (Lerner 1958). It instead favoured leaders who sought to model their societies on the West, not least by rendering into a private matter as political emphasis on Islam was an obstacle to modernization (Mellon 2002; Toft 2011). The implication was that Muslim societies faced a stark choice between political and economic modernity, or backwards polities based on religion. This line of thought also favoured authoritarian strongmen modelled on figures such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, or the Pahlavi Shahs of Iran who were seen as necessary actors in bringing about change in Muslim societies, despite any qualms about their methods (Eickelman 2000: 120).

Similar sentiments have pervaded in U.S. policy circles towards the Middle East, especially in the post-9/11 order and the War on Terror where the Muslim masses were seen as easily manipulated by religious fanatics into turning against the West, thereby justifying support to authoritarian figures who were willing to repress such sentiments. This notion of

Muslims easily falling prey to fanaticism is a long-standing one, and dates at least back to the image of the “Mad-mullah” in British media in the late 19th and early 20th century. This stemmed from insurrectionist movements led by Sufi sheikhs against British rule in the frontier-territory of British India, and Sudan, and these mullahs were portrayed as fanatic and irrational figures standing in the way of the West’s civilizing mission (Ansari 2005; Jalal 2008).

Modernization theory challenged the notion that the differences among people and cultures were so fundamental they were irreconcilable. However, the idea that a particular form of modernity was inevitable, and that religion would outlive its use in the political sphere, proved to be fatally wrong. As one proponent of the modernization thesis, Michael Walzer later wrote “...That is more or less what we all believed in those years and for many years after, social scientists and political activists alike,” but, he admitted, the political importance of religion persisted (Walzer 2015: 25).

2.2 Islamism as a Modern Ideology

The secularization thesis was largely abandoned as a consequence of the resilience of religion in politics. In the 2000s this inspired an academic debate about whether the world is undergoing a period of religious revival (Toft 2011). This pertains, not just Islam, but also popular and charismatic forms of other religions such as Evangelicalism in the U.S., Pentecostal Christianity in parts of Africa (Gifford 1998), and Hinduism in India (Anand 2011; Varshney 2002). Explanations for this trend range from religiosity being a response to specific social dislocations and material struggles, to being a response to the existential insecurities of living in an increasingly urbanized and individualized society. While there is no consensus why, it does seem clear that religion plays an integral role in political modernity as it is currently understood.

With regards to the Middle East, the Arab loss in the 1967 Six-Day War to Israel is often pointed to as the final death kneel of Arab nationalism. The post-colonial Arab nationalist regimes had largely failed to deliver on developmental hopes, encouraging state-driven industrialization which upended social relations through rapid urbanization, but which did not translate into greater exports and access to foreign currency and therefore proved unsustainable. The outcome of the Six-Day War was another unforgivable humiliation on a political issue which had made Arab nationalists such as Nasser popular to begin with.

The year 1979 marked a further ideological turning point which brought political articulations of Islam to the forefront due to two events. The first was the Iranian revolution and the fall of Muhammad Reza Shah, a secular autocrat who was replaced by a theocratic regime. The other was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which eventually gave rise to the Mujahedin. The ideological momentum of Islamist radicalism was further buttressed by incidents such as the seizure of the grand mosque in Mecca in 1979, the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, and the 1983 Beirut Barracks bombing (Fischer 1982). These events proved to would-be revolutionaries that political Islam had potential as a revolutionary ideology at a time when secular alternatives such as were in decline. The Iranian revolution was particularly surprising at the time as Iran had undergone rapid modernization in terms of industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of a middle class, and yet it became a theocracy which openly sought to export its revolution to neighbouring states (Gause 2010: 47).

Eickelman (2000) cogently argues that this was not a case of Muslim societies inevitably returning to religion as is implied by essentialist notions that religion is a more “authentic” and primordial, civilizational feature which is incompatible with “Western” modernity. Politics is a competition over meanings and symbols, and in the intellectual marketplace, modernization had given religious actors an edge in capturing people’s

imaginations. They were not an anti-modern force, but instead underpinned by new generations of intellectuals and activists who benefited from greater access of education, ease of travel, and the proliferation of mass media and communication, to challenge traditional religious and political hierarchies (Eickelman 2000: 123-130). The emergence of Islamism therefore represents a particular form of modernity, rather than a return to something ancient.

The notion that Islam is inimical to modern democratic politics more generally has been convincingly challenged by Eickelman and Piscatori who argue that Islam is less a set of fixed ideas than a repertoire of concepts and imagery which is familiar to Muslims, but which gains significance in specific political contexts. Talal Asad also argues that Islam represents a discursive tradition rather than a coherent culture or a set of ideas with clear implications for organizing society (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004).

One implication of this is that though Islamists may refer to the same theological concepts, there is no agreement on how to interpret them. One example with regards to militant Islamism relates to the principle of excommunication or *Takfir*, where Salafi-Jihadist groups like al-Qaeda have set themselves up as decision-makers for whether it is legal to murder Muslims through excommunication. This is very different from a group such as Hamas, for example, where many members of the Muslim Brotherhood see violence against Israel as justified, but not necessarily against Muslim regimes (Schwedler 2011: 351). There is therefore no straightforward way of applying religious concepts to interpret the actions of Islamist actors.

The monotheistic religion presented by the prophet Muhammad was both adapted to the needs of tribal society of his time, while also bringing about important innovations such as positioning the individual, as opposed to the tribe, as having social and moral responsibilities based on universal principles (Black 2011: 11). Despite the oft-repeated notion that there is no distinction between the realms of politics and religion in Islam, the religion does not offer a

pre-defined core of political maxims which can readily be applied to the political realm. The prophet did not leave a clear set of instructions when it came to governance. Islamic political tenets have instead been interpreted from a mix of the Quran, Hadith, the interpretations of theologians, and influenced by local traditions and pre-existing political systems such as the Arab tribal societies and the Persian empire. Ayoob (2008: 12) argues that even the notion of the indivisibility of religion and state in Islam was a fiction devised to legitimize dynastic rule, institutionalising the subservience of religious authority to the caliph. The division between politics and religion became a division became reality following the death of the prophet, especially after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate, ending the role of caliphs as both temporal and spiritual leaders (Coulson 1964; Lewis 1979). As such, there is no “authentic” set of political tenets which can easily be derived from scripture without recourse to interpretation and tradition.

One key implication of this for political scientists is, as argued by Hegghammer (2014: 247) that the application of theological concepts to label, categorize, and ascribe motives, to political actors is an inherently problematic exercise. Terms such as Salafi, Wahhabi, and Jihadi, are theological concepts without straightforward political implications. The use of these terms by political scientists can therefore muddle and confuse, rather than clarify differences among Islamist groups (Schuck 2013: 486). One dataset, for example, confusingly gives Islamist rebel groups the labels “Islamist,” “Salafist,” “Wahhabi,” “Wahhabi/Salafi,” “Sunni/Wahhabi”, “Islamic Radicalism,” without it being clear where the boundaries and overlap between these labels are (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020).

This does not mean that theological concepts are irrelevant to the study of Islamist organizations. However, the social scientist must be sensitive to how such the political significance of Islamic language and symbols is continuously shaped and given meaning

through the interaction between religious figures, political actors, and civil society leaders, who seek to define and re-define the boundaries of legitimate politics.

It is still possible to discern some broad differences between Islamist and other rebel groups. This particularly relates to the transnational dimension in terms of the exchange of ideas, resources, and fighters (Hegghammer 2010; Kalyvas 2018: 42). They are also distinguished by the way in which references to Islam are used to justify violence and principles of governance, and to make transnational appeals (Svensson and Finnbogason 2021: 5). Yet, the invocation of Islam by political actors will not resonate uniformly across Muslim audiences. First, because political actors have pre-existing reputations which can appeals to religion seem disingenuous (Ahmad 2019; Eickelman 2004). Second, because attempts at religious outbidding can backfire if there is a discrepancy with the beliefs of the target audience about what constitutes “true” Islam. Third, there are multiple doctrinal divides within Islam, and among militant actors, which limits cooperation, for example across the Shi’ite-Sunni divide.

Nevertheless, the inherent political vagueness of theological concepts, and the emphasis placed in some strands of Islam does allow for the manipulation of religious language under some contexts. One powerful example of this in the inter-state realm is that the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran initiated a rivalry with Saudi Arabia over control over the “mantle” of Islam, as the regimes of both states claimed to embody an authentic form of Islam to gain internal and external legitimacy (Barzegar 2008; Gause 2010; Keynoush 2016; Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr 2006; F. M. Wehrey 2017). Iran’s theocratic regime actively relied on appeals to religious co-adherents to transcend the ethnic divide between Iranians and non-Iranians such as Arabs, to forge alliances with revolutionary and often militant non-state actors. This represented a direct threat to Saudi Arabia’s regime, as the Saudi royal family relied on its claim to be the defender of Islam and the holy city of Mecca, both to shore up

internal support and to exercise influence abroad (Matthiesen 2015; Ochsenswald 2007). It countered this threat by promoting its own brand of Islam which saw Shi'ism, and therefore the Iranian regime, as heresy.

The question of Islamist distinctiveness further extends to research on whether Islamists enjoy unique advantages in elections (Cammett and Luong 2014). There's still some debate whether the participation of Islamists in elections should be interpreted as simply a strategic decision or commitment to democratic principles (Brooke 2019).

What seems more clear is that there has been a general breakdown in the consensus of who are the legitimate interpreters of the religion across multiple Muslim societies. Since the dawn of Islam, there has been multiple cycles of Muslim clergy, called the Ulama, being challenged by religious revivalists on the one hand, and political elites who seek greater autonomy on the other (Ayooob 2008: 27). The phenomenon of Islamism we are currently observing has its roots in a form of populist pan-Islamism which gradually emerged over the 20th century and which spread through transnational networks established through modern communications such as the printing press, railways, and sophisticated financial systems (Brooke and Ketchley 2018; Roy 2011; Hadiz 2016; John T. Sidel 2021). It is a symptom of specific social dislocations such as rapid industrialization and urbanization, and thereby also individualization, which fostered modern mass politics, in some ways akin to the social challenges which gave rise to socialism and fascism in Europe in the inter-war period. These developments destroyed the monopoly on religious interpretation traditionally held by the clerical class which was viewed as corrupt by many. It allowed for a new generation of religious revivalists who emphasized individual interpretation through the "priesthood of the individual" (Ayooob 2008: 153).

There is an incredibly insightful literature on how micro- and meso- level social processes have underpinned this shift towards Islamism, especially within area studies. One example is the book *The Call From Algeria* by Robert Malley (1996). Malley cogently describes the rise of “Third Worldism” in Algeria and how the ideological grip the National Liberation Front (FLN) had on the country gradually faded by the 1980s. As the developmental state failed to deliver on its promises of economic security and welfare under failed attempts at state-led economic development, the Arab nationalist and socialist ideology of the FLN also ceased to captivate the masses. In a parallel to developments in Egypt where Gamal Abdel Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, increasingly relied on Islam to shore up internal support, so was Houari Boumédiène followed by figures such as Chadli Bendjedid whose attempts at economic liberalization and religious invigoration paved the way for Islamic actors in Algerian politics.

Another example is Akbar Ahmed’s (Ahmed 2013a) attempt at producing a more general explanation for Islamist militancy, arguing it is intricately intertwined with tensions between peripheral tribes and modern nation states. Muslim states have historically either been ruled by tribal dynasties, or militarily reliant on personal alliances with the tribes. However, this system is falling apart as the modern nation state is self-reliant through taxation and conscription, which has allowed the state to rip apart old agreements and encroach on the historical lands of tribes to assert its own authority. The War on Terror has sped up this process because states such as Pakistan gained access to new resources to engage in a form of internal colonialism against the peripheries. Some tribal actors opted for militant Islamism to gain access to transnational networks and resources to restore the balance of power against the central state.

A third example of such mid-level theorizing is Aisha Ahmad’s argument that Islamist actors tend to emerge in contexts of disorder because of the support from

businesspeople (Ahmad 2017). This follows from the belief that Islamists are less corrupt and uniquely capable of reducing the transaction costs of doing business because they are better able to transcend clan and tribal divides.

Yet another example is Vali Nasr's argument in *The Shia Revival*, in which the rise of Islamism is at the core a consequence of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the claim to the mantle of Islam, after Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 (Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr 2006). Muslim insurgent groups differ to what extent they are tied to local ethnic or tribal communities or have a global profile and goals, and it is all the more complicated analysing such local factors in conjunction with broader regional or global developments.

This literature is rich, insightful and interesting, but there have been few attempts at explaining the phenomena of Islamist insurgency through the lens of political science with the ambition of producing generalisable insights about how they emerge and why. The lack of clear theoretical frameworks for explaining such groups leaves the literature unable to deal with the root causes and significance of some of the most important civil wars which have defined international politics of the 21st century.

2.3 Theories of Ideology and Civil War

In the wake of the Cold War academic attention shifted away from the dynamics of the US-Soviet rivalry, towards speculation about the "new" wars fought over issues of identity such as ethnicity, especially in Africa (Kaldor 2012; Mundy 2015). Despite major developments in the 1990s such as the fallout from the Soviet withdrawal and the Taliban's victory in the Afghan civil war, the topic of religious ideology received surprisingly little attention from political scientists. The early literature on civil wars was instead visibly coloured by the warlord-phenomena in parts of Africa, especially figures such as Charles

Taylor in Liberia, who stood out as the archetype of a greed-driven warlord who seemingly fought for personal gain. This image of the self-interested rebel stood as a contrast to the perceived ideologues or Che Guevara-style revolutionaries of the Cold War who purportedly fought for more egalitarian reasons.

Key works within the literature consequently tended to assume that rebel groups could be treated as undifferentiated in terms of their motives, making greed the fundamental driver of rebel action, and opportunity costs became the primary predictor of rebel behaviour (P. Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003). This early strand of civil war studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s was also strongly intertwined with a reliance on econometric methods and ontological assumptions. Studies of civil war therefore tended to rely heavily on large-n, cross-national studies, and usually on global datasets for the purpose of finding *the* explanation for the outbreak of civil war. In doing so, the goal was to be able to predict when and where future wars would erupt.⁷

Subsequent research revolved around disagreement between researchers who saw rebellions as a product of the machinations of loot-oriented “greedy” rebel leaders, and scholars who instead emphasized the grievances of ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups (Gurr 1971; Tilly 1978). Neither strand of research devoted much attention to ideology. Greed-type explanations assumed ideology to be a strategic veil to disguise the self-interested motives of rebel actors, grievance-explanations have tended to take ideologies as static and a reflection of the internalized grievances of actors, but without considering how ideologies change and shape political actors. Ideology and group-identity was essentially rendered to be of secondary importance, if any importance at all.

⁷ This ambition for political scientists to be able to predict future conflicts has been carried on by a research cluster called ViEWS, directed by Håvard Hegre. See (Hegre et al. 2019).

The early literature did not succeed in finding reliable predictors of war (Cederman and Weidmann 2017), nor coherent mechanisms to explain the outbreak of war, partly because these studies were sensitive to operationalization and measurement procedures (Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Ward, Greenhill, and Bakke 2010). They also relied heavily on proxy-variables to capture the theorised mechanisms (Bormann, Cederman, and Vogt 2017; Fearon et al. 2007). Another issue was the equifinality of explanations where similar empirical evidence, for example the relationship between GDP per capita and war was presented as evidence of different and incompatible mechanisms (Blattman and Miguel 2010: 23). Other issues included the reliance on a “closed polity approach” where transnational or systemic influences (Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch 2009: 404; Kalyvas and Balcells 2018: 418), and sub-national dynamics, were overlooked (Sambanis 2004).

Subsequent research has sought to remedy this by relying on increasingly fine-grained data which has pushed the study of civil war towards IR through an increased focus on transnational processes (Checkel 2013: 5). This includes attempts at capturing transnational diffusion of instability through ethnic ties, refugees, or state support (Cunningham, Skrede Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Salehyan 2009; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006), the relationship of rebel groups to ethnic and linguistic groups and their access to state-power (Cederman and Vogt 2017; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), as well as geographic data (Tollefsen and Buhaug 2015). It also includes a greater focus on group-characteristics, including ethnic-profiles, leadership composition, gender, organizational structure (Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012: 266; Prorok 2018; Wood and Thomas 2017).

Yet, there are persistent problems with the datasets utilized in the study of civil wars, for example due to the tendency to rely on journalistic accounts which are based on standards of verification which may differ from the standards of reliable research (Dawkins 2021). More fundamentally, conflict datasets do not rely on clear theoretical assumptions in their

coding, sometimes grouping widely different phenomenon such as genocide, terrorism, and riots, into the same categories assuming they pass a certain threshold of deaths. Though there has been a trend towards relying on increasingly disaggregated data to capture sub-national dynamics, persistent problems remain in the construction of datasets as the relationship between units of observations are not captured. The focus on dyadic rivalries, while missing the interrelationships among dyad and the broader political contexts of war is one aspect of this which has been criticized (Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019).

One answer to the failure of the early literature to produce robust explanations of civil wars was the micro-dynamic turn in civil war studies. The micro-theoretical focus meant abandoning the search for master variables which explain the outbreak of ever war through global datasets in favour of studying local cases in depth, building robust causal explanations though sacrificing external validity in the process. A major insight was that conflicts are rarely reducible to the broad ideological, national, or ethnic cleavages over which they are purportedly fought (Kalyvas 2006). It also showed that certain general patterns of war may only be detected at the micro-level, notably with regards to the relationship between the degree to which insurgents or the state are able to maintain territorial control, and civilian victimization by either party.

This approach was less successful in aggregating local patterns to national or global levels, or in defining the generalizability of such patterns to other local contexts (Balcells and Justino 2014: 1345; Eck 2012: 125). This has led to calls for future research to strike: ‘...a middle course between overgeneralized macromodels and myopic microinvestigations’ (Cederman and Vogt 2017: 2008). This could entail building on the micro-theoretical approach of studying local dynamics in specific regions, for example the Sahel, to identify the contextual and structural conditions which makes political dynamics in the region unique. In doing so, and repeating the same exercise in other regions, it might also be possible to

parse out which processes and structural conditions are recurring across contexts and which therefore might be more general patterns of civil war (Thurston 2020: 194). Such a repeated bottom-up empirical exercise could allow us to move beyond the tendency in the early literature to assume that everything in civil wars are either completely identical or unique, to carefully uncover what is or isn't inherent features of civil war.

Micro-theoretic work still tended to rely on rational actor models of rebel groups, treating them as black-boxes for the purpose of focusing on behaviour under specified external conditions. However, the emphasis on causal complexity and robustness, and to some extent on historical contingency, paved the way for new research which recognised that war should be studied as an inherently political phenomenon and that fundamental insights are lost through strict reliance on econometric methods and assumptions (Cederman and Vogt 2017: 2000). It also allowed for more sophisticated treatments of ideology in civil war, not least by revealing ideology to be a multi-faceted phenomena with different implications in sub-state contexts.

The broader civil war literature tended to treat ideology as epiphenomenal or as a secondary factor, even in the grievance-literature which often assumed that ethnic identities are monolithic and stable (Balcells and Justino 2014: 1344; Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch 2009: 407; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010: 88). The conceptual and theoretical toolbox of civil war studies consequently remains fundamentally unable to deal with questions such as why rebel groups adopt specific ideological profiles, how groups with different ideologies are similar or differ from each other, and how this matters for the dynamics of war with regards to patterns of violence or conflict resolution (Pierson 2004: 104; Wimmer and Min 2006: 869).

Ideology can be understood as: '...a set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the challenges the group confronts, the objectives to pursue on behalf of that

group, and a...program of action' (Sanin and Wood 2014: 214). At its core, it captures how a set of political beliefs shapes how a group of people perceive and interact with each other and with outsiders by rendering a schematic image of the political world (Gould 1995: 15; Ugarriza and Craig 2013). It can also determine the range of acceptable political actions and decisions by the actors in question. Scott Straus, for example, argues that ideology is essential in shaping the decision making of elites who commit genocides, both influencing how these elites perceive target populations as threats, and what the acceptable solutions are (Straus 2015: 11). Similar arguments have been made with regards to rebel groups, in that ideology influences whether rebels see indiscriminate violence as an acceptable option and against whom (Thaler 2012).

The previous inattention to ideology is being remedied as it has become recognised that it plays an important role in threat perception, strategic propensities, and conflict capacities (Gates 2002; Maynard 2019; Wood 2003). Ideology provides at least part of the explanation for how rebel groups overcome collective-action problems with regards to mobilization, and ensure internal cohesion (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015; Gates 2002; Ugarriza and Craig 2013).

Relatedly, "time" as a dimension is also receiving more attention, especially how groups evolve organizationally. Jessica Braithwaite and Kathleen Cunningham point out that rebel groups are often assumed to be fixed in time, missing how groups evolve organizationally and otherwise (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020). This insight is related to a point made by Staniland (2012) that rebel groups do not appear out of thin air, but are built on pre-existing networks and organizations which are reappropriated for the purposes of rebellion. While Staniland focused on the significance of organizational legacies for material capacities and groups' performance in war, the focus on legacies of pre-war institutions opens for research on the ideological trajectories of groups.

These different strands of research on civil war also opens for a research agenda which is hinted at by Balcells and Kalyvas (2010). They argue that the nature of conflicts locally, as well as the character of rebel groups and how they wage wars, is strongly intertwined with the meso- and macro-level. The implication is that rebel groups are conditioned by macro- or even systemic forces which influence groups either as a form of “zeitgeist” or directly through specific material incentives. This notion of systemic forces is far more pervasive in IR than in conflict-studies, but the insight that there is something fundamentally different between historical eras which impacts not just how groups behave, but also are constituted, is an important lesson for the field.

One manifestation of this is that ideologies appear in waves among rebel groups, for example through Third-Worldist nationalism in the years after the Second World War, variants of communism and socialism during the cold war, or Islamist Jihadism following the Soviet Bloc’s downfall (Gleditsch and Rudolfsen 2016; Kalyvas 2018). Broader global or regional trends are therefore highly salient to the choice of rebels of how to frame their struggles.

There has been important scholarly work which has tried to position violence today in light of broad historical trends, such as the debate over the purported historical decline of violence initiated by Pinker (2011) which has inspired and enlivened debates on the historical trajectory of political violence (Gurr 2000; Gleditsch et al. 2013; Goldstein 2012). Another example is the debate over whether “new” civil wars after the cold war are different than before, as rebels are more violent, less ideological and greedier than in the past as states are weakened by globalization and the rise of transnational black markets (Kaldor 2012; Walter 2017b), or not (Kalyvas 2001). With regards to African armed groups, it has been observed that guerrilla movements in the 1990s and early 2000s in multiple cases did not bother with ideological labels or rhetoric, likely because of the lack of external patrons as was the case

during the cold war (Bøås and Dunn 2007; Reno 2007). This led some scholars to contrast ideological movements to warlords who were typically lacking a clear ideological programme. However, more recently, there's been a rise of groups who position themselves as a part of a global jihad, and who continuously have to maintain a balance between appealing to local communities and leaders, and global audiences (Bøås and Dunn 2017: 12).

Though such debates which invoke the “big picture” are important, the question of how to connect broad historical trends to local conflict dynamics, and group-level characteristics remains theoretically problematic (Balcells and Justino 2014; Reno 2011). Important questions about the generalizability of local findings, and historical contingency remain (Blattman and Miguel 2010; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; Maynard 2019). In particular, the fact that there are ideological trends among rebel groups remains fundamentally enigmatic, as we do not know how certain ideologies gain traction at the expense of others, nor why some groups opt in to such trends, and others do not.

This pertains to Islamist groups as well. Islamist insurgent groups are comparable to other groups, by their nature of being insurgent groups rather than terrorist groups, criminal networks, or otherwise. Yet, existing research has not dealt with how ideology makes such groups distinctive or similar to other rebel groups, nor why some groups opt for an Islamist ideology rather than something else. Some research does acknowledge that militant Islamism is not a unitary phenomenon (Crenshaw 2017; Lefèvre 2021), and recognises that it is a feature of current historical-processes, including access to resources from rival states (Bamber and Svensson 2022; Svensson and Nilsson 2018). The specialist literature on Islamist actors has been more attentive to the ways in which Islamist mobilisation is shaped by historically contingent and local ideological dynamics (Kepel 2006), social structures such as tribes (Collombier 2018; Knysh 2017), economic interests (Ahmad 2015; 2017), and social processes such as urbanisation and industrialisation (Georgi M. Derluguian 2005; Malley

1996; Dorman 2009). This attention to the embeddedness of Islamist rebel groups in specified pre-conflict social contexts is missing in the civil war literature. We, consequently, lack the micro-theoretical foundations to explain why some rebel groups adopt Islamism, while others do not. The macro-historical shift towards Islamism as the predominant ideology of rebellion in the post-Cold War era therefore remains a theoretical enigma, both at the macro-level, but also in terms of the incentives and constraints at the group-level.

Some explanations for Islamist rebellions point to the importance of religious discrimination and grievances as a catalyst for religious groups and minorities to turn to violence (Akbaba and Taydas 2011; Vüllers, Pfeiffer, and Basedau 2015). Yet, the exact mechanisms through which such grievances are translated into political action and violence remain enigmatic. It is consequently unclear why many cases of discrimination against ethno-religious minorities do not translate into Islamist insurgencies, for example in the case of the large-scale persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Another theoretical line of argument is that rebel leaders pick and choose ideologies with an eye to what strategic advantages ideologies may confer, not least through ideological outbidding (Sanin and Wood 2014: 218). Religious or ethnic ideologies may lead to such advantages by fostering cooperation across narrower identities such as clan-ties, ethnicity, or class, allowing rebel entrepreneurs to solve collective-action problems (Gates 2002; Razi 1990).

The key assumption which underpins these types of arguments is that religious or ethnic identities, as well as grievances, are not particularly rigid, and they are therefore strongly subject to political manipulation by entrepreneurial political actors (Sambanis and Shayo 2013: 299). This theoretical approach, inspired by economics, is often referred to as “instrumentalism” to highlight the instrumental use and weak personal commitment rebels have towards religion and ideologies (P. Collier 2000; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014;

Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000). It harkens back to the black-boxed rational actor models of the early civil war literature, and carries on the legacy of treating ideology as epiphenomenal and focusing instead on ideology as the outcome of different constellations of self-interested and greedy political actors who interact in pre-defined opportunity structures to gain an upper edge against each other (Darwich and Fakhoury 2016; Malmvig 2014).

With regards to Islamist actors, instrumentalist arguments focus on the benefits such groups actors can reap by taking on an Islamist posture for the purpose of attracting local and foreign support (Toft 2013). This point was made in an early contribution by Toft (2007; 2021) who argued that outbidding dynamics among elites was essential to understanding ideological choice. Though she also pointed to broader factors such as the lack of anything comparable to the Thirty Years War, the presence proximity of oil reserves, and holy sites, she did not integrate these into a cohesive theory. Others, such a argue with regards to the case of Chechnya, that Islamization was a function of the influx of foreign fighters (Bakke 2013; Wilhelmsen 2005).

A more theoretically developed instrumentalist argument was later made by Barbara Walter (2017b; 2017a), who argues that the rise of Islamist militancy in the form of Salafi-Jihadism is the product of rebel groups seeking to outbid each other to gain strategic advantages in war. Such purported advantages include being better at attracting supporters (Isaacs 2016; 2017), the ability to appeal across ethnic and tribal divides (Ahmad 2015), access to transnational flows of financial resources, and thus becoming more resilient towards counterinsurgency efforts (Toft and Zhukov 2015).⁸

Ideology may also be a solution to internal principal-agent problems, and a way to encourage cohesion and raise moral among group-members (Gates 2002; Weinstein 2007).

⁸ See also the literature on Islamist political advantages in electoral politics, which has received greater academic attention than the question of Islamist advantages in war (Brooke 2019; Cammett and Luong 2014)

The advantage religious ideology may have is that it appeals to a far larger audience than ethnic appeals would (Grzymala-Busse 2012; Breslawski and Ives 2019; Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011). She also argues that groups with more extremist ideological positions, such as Salafi-Jihadists, are more effective at outbidding because they can portray themselves as incorruptible compared to their rivals to locals, while also gaining access to foreign sources of recruits and financial resources (Berman 2003; Berman and Laitin 2008).

Opportunism is all-pervasive in politics, including among Islamists, and strategic deliberation does play a significant role in explaining why would-be rebels opt for one ideology over another. The desire to attract funding, material support, recruits, and the cooperation of the civilian population, certainly might make the option of branding one's group as Islamist very tempting to rebel leaders. This compares to how armed groups during the Cold War could take on communist or anti-communist positions to attract support from either of the two superpowers.

It also not the case that the invocation of Islam by political actors will resonate universally among Muslim audiences (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004). First, because these actors have pre-existing reputations which can make the invocation of Islam seem disingenuous (Ahmad 2019). Second, because attempts at religious outbidding can backfire if there is a discrepancy with the beliefs of the target audience about what constitutes "true" Islam. The invocation of Islam by political actors is therefore not an act with straightforward or easily predictable consequences. The utility of one ideological position over another to a political actor is not something inherent to the ideology itself. It is a function of the social structures, norms, and behaviour of pre-existing political actors such as outside states and other rebel groups, which give specific ideologies strategic meaning. Assessing strategic utility also requires us to consider negative repercussions, not just positive effects (Lynch, Schwedler, and Yom 2022). One benefit, such as the ability to transcend national borders, can

lead to problems because transnational norms are incompatible with local traditions (Bakke 2014; Gerges 2017). One example is a failed attempt by al-Qaeda at establishing a presence in Somalia in the 1990s due to its failure to adapt to local tribal dynamics. Adopting a transnational position therefore leads to a complex balancing game between local and global audiences where the goal of satisfying either leads to the alienation of both (Svensson and Finnbogason 2021: 8).

Furthermore, short-term benefits to adopting Islamism may also be outweighed by long-term costs. Some Islamist groups, notably ISIS, have proven able to score important battlefield victories without this necessarily translating into winning the war. The most obvious case of a militant Islamist victory was that of the Mujaheddin against the Soviet Union, and the subsequent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. Beyond that, the record is rather dismal. Even attracting foreign fighters is not necessarily associated with increased probability of victory (Bakke 2014; Hegghammer 2010).

As pointed out by Alexander Thurston (2020: 8), the notion that jihadists are either strictly “rational” or “believers” is neither close to reality, nor theoretically necessary. There are costs to becoming fluent in convincingly demonstrating Islamist piety, and it is perfectly plausible to both be a firm believer in an ideology and a politically shrewd actor (Grillo 1989; Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 21). Flexibility and strategic adaptiveness are essential, even for the committed ideologue, to be successful. Groups which adopt militant Islamism are:

...anathematized – blacklisted or excluded from mainstream politics – within national and global political orders. One effect of blacklisting is that jihadists do not necessarily expect or even hope to win wars on any conventional political timeline or through conventional political bargaining (Thurston 2020: 10).

The utility of ideological choice therefore contingent on the political reality in which the group operates, where the beliefs and interests of civilian populations, other militant groups, and states, will determine the utility of having an Islamist political profile. It might for example make sense to adopt this position if a group has decided that political bargaining simply is not an option. Another possibility is that extremist positions become more likely as the number of organizations within a community increases, thereby raising the need to distinguish oneself (Vogt, Gleditsch, and Cederman 2021). Theories which focus on strategic deliberations with regards to ideology must therefore be highly specific about the factors which influence the utility of different ideological positions, including the negative aspects, or otherwise risk being both an underspecified and overdetermined explanation.

This boils down to the fact that individuals and the groups they are part of do not operate in a social vacuum. They have established reputations, in-group norms, and personal beliefs. This also means that the ideological rebranding of a group can be extremely costly, especially if it undermines perceptions of the group's credibility, and sincerity to the ideology. Ahmad (2019: 84) highlights a failed attempt by General Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek warlord who attempted to rebrand his ethnonationalist group Junbesh-i-Milli as an Islamic group, but failed to convince the other Mujahideen groups because of his previous actions. A reputation for having acted contrary to Islamic tenets may therefore ruin a group's religious credibility, making Islamism a non-option (Bhatia 2007). The spectre of ideological choice may therefore be limited by the fear of loss of credibility, membership defection, and an end of outside support (Drevon 2017). Starting from the assumption that specific ideologies are inherently beneficial may therefore fundamentally obscure how strategic deliberation actually takes place, applying a backwards-teleology on to the actors without actually considering how positives were weighed against the negatives (Berlin 2002b). This is also where historical context comes into the picture.

The continued prevalence of non-religious insurgent groups among Muslim communities in places ranging from Baluchistan, to Kurdistan, and Western Sahara, should alert us to the need for being specific about the conditions under which religious rhetoric actually is considered effective, or even contemplated at all, by rebel leaders themselves. Religious outbidding may even be a complicated process for Islamist rebel leaders who must balance the beliefs and interests of rebel group-members, controlled populations, and international audiences, not to speak of their own personal beliefs and values (Abrahms, Maynard, and Thaler 2018; Maynard 2019; 2022).

Balcells and Kalyvas (2010) point out that there was a relationship between the greater dynamics of the Cold War at the systemic level, and the efficacy and tactics of different armed groups. This also made communism and anti-communism viable choices for rebels. The structural dominance of ideologies at different historical junctures plays a role in the acceptability of ideologies among target audiences and within groups themselves (Checkel 2017; Nyhan and Reifler 2010: 308). Ideological momentum, be it globally, regionally, or locally, is therefore an essential component of whether or not an ideology is a viable option for would-be rebels. The utility of different ideological positions must therefore be demonstrated, rather than assumed. Abandoning the assumption that groups emerge out of a vacuum, and rather examining how their origins are linked to broader societal changes, and countercultures, allows for a more thorough engagement with the political significance of ideologies to political movements.

The ideology of rebel groups, as well as other characteristics such as their organizational structure and their tactics, are in some sense expressions of political ideas that have resonance to varying degrees in the institutions and networks these groups appear from (Neumann 2013: 884). Organizational cultures and within-group norms can create “boundedly rational path-dependencies” where ideology functions as the cognitive prior

through which new ideas are interpreted (Checkel 2017: 597; Jervis 1976: 191; Zaller 1992: 22-28). Institutional and network ties gives a tangible expression of value-systems, and provides a study-object to understand the ideological nature of rebel mobilization. According to Arjona and Balcells, overlooking the role of institutions in analysis of individual and collective behaviour would be astounding in any sub-field of political science, but remains widespread in the study of civil war (Arjona and Balcells 2014: 1361). Thus, one way of dealing with the ideological nature of insurgent groups is to ask what kinds of institutions and networks these groups first emerged from. As recommended by Georgi Derluguian (2005: 12) "...the objects of study should be situated in their extended environments and analysed by locating them within pulsating and slowly evolving webs of relations."

This opens for a more comparative approach to Islamist rebel groups which hitherto has been missing from the civil war literature. Few attempts have been made at comprehensively mapping out the landscape of Islamist insurgencies, and comparing the trajectories of Islamist groups to each other, and to other groups. A relevant theoretical contribution in this regard is made by Staniland (2014) in *Networks of Rebellion*. The book addresses a major theoretical gap by conceptualising organizational differences among groups, and how these organizational structures are products of pre-war social ties. Staniland argues that the performance of rebel groups in war is a function of their initial organizational resources, which again is a function of the structure of the pre-war networks out of which insurgent groups grow. This approach therefore draws our attention to the pre-war institutional and network origins of groups, and allows for the comparison of the trajectories of groups from this initial context, through the decision to mobilize, and their behaviour in war.

While Staniland's focus is on the material capacities and organizational structures of groups, I argue that the same exercise can be used to understand ideological trajectories. The

processes which makes religion salient rather than ethnicity is external to social networks themselves, but follows rather from a selection process whereby social capital is shifted towards religious institutions and networks (Krause 2018: 40). If there is some degree of path-dependency in the characteristics of rebel groups, from the networks from which they arose, then we should expect that the composition of civil society is crucial in understanding the nature of insurgent groups as well. Pre-existing social structures can determine whether rebellions develop around one identity, for example class, or another identity such as nationalism (Gould 1995: 44). Rebel groups should therefore not only be studied in isolation, but put into specific contexts where shifts in civil society are traced alongside the rebel groups themselves, to show how the emergence of new social alliances and networks through broader societal shifts also set new conditions for how political mobilization can occur.

The common influences which caused such social disruptions and reconfigurations fall under the broad term “modernity.” This entailed economic globalization and industrialization which disrupted traditional modes of organization by undermining the economic position of small landholders, artisans, and bazaar traders. Another aspect was political modernization through state-building (Hadiz and Robison 2013; Hadiz 2016; Valbjørn and Gunning 2021). March (2015) describes the state as an “...an asteroid that crashed into the ecology of premodern Muslim society...” The state developed through the military and economic pressures of Western imperial powers, or transplanted by colonial powers and manned with Western-educated bureaucrats. One consequence was that the colonial and post-colonial states were in many cases not viewed as neutral arbitrators between different segments of society, failing to secure loyalty to the centre through the construction of a national identity (Anderson 2006). Outlining the impact of such broad institutional shifts is essential to truly uncover the dynamics behind Islamist insurgencies.

Chapter 3 Macro-Historical Processes, Inductive Inferences

3.1 Institutional Shifts and Changing Patterns of Mobilisation

It is not easy to capture or measure the deeper historical processes which induce broader social and institutional shifts across multiple societies, or their connection to war, and yet it is essential to do so. Skocpol (1994) argued that explanations for the outbreak of conflicts and social revolutions would be incomplete if they only focused on state-society relations without taking into account world-historical contexts. This particular approach towards the social sciences where grand-comparative historical books were plentiful has fallen out of fashion in the social sciences. Important examples include works by Anderson (1974), Huntington (1968), Moore (1967), Tilly (1978), Wallerstein (2004), and of course Skocpol (2015). These works were highly influential in the early study of certain forms of political violence, especially revolutions, but had limited influence on the study of civil war as early pioneers of the field drew more from economics and econometric methodology (Collier 2000).

Inattention to these deep-historical processes means we are losing sight of essential features of wars and their origins. Such processes and their influence on the ideological zeitgeist is not purely an abstract or theoretical phenomena. They manifest themselves through the ways in which the self-perception of communities and nations, ideas of social justice, and social cleavages, are intertwined with and embedded in social networks and institutions which tie disparate individuals together and forms political communities. This understanding of civil war is therefore thoroughly structuralist in assuming the conditions for war are not brought about by any one actor such as an ideological vanguard, though these may provide the final impetus for war. Skocpol argues that "One can begin to make sense of such complexity only by focusing simultaneously upon the institutionally determined

situations and relations of groups within society and upon the interrelations of societies within world-historically developing international structures" (Skocpol 1979: 18; 1994: 8). It entails taking into account how actors interact in a broader social-institutional reality, along with global political and economic realities, which shape local political dynamics.

For rebel groups, the norms and ideas which permeate pre-existing networks, organizations, and institutions, serve as a template for the articulation of grievances of disparate individuals into a more or less coherent set of political ideas which can be marketed to broader audiences (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015). Rebel groups themselves are strongly influenced by the legacies of the institutions and networks from which they emerged, and these legacies are manifested, not just in their organizational make-up, but also in their ideological profile. The institutional composition of a society, and the distribution of social capital among networks and institutions with different ideational and normative profiles, holds an important clue to the puzzle of ideological shifts at the societal and group level.

Gould (1995) grapples with this in relation to the 1848 Paris riots, and the 1871 Paris Commune rebellion. He argues that the former was organized around the grievances of the working class, whereas the 1871 Paris commune became a struggle between urban city dwellers and the state as the enemy came from outside the city walls. The difference between the two events in terms of how these revolutionaries defined themselves and their struggles was ultimately a function of the types of social networks which became politically salient, and from which people were mobilized for the purposes of protest. He notes:

The collective identity of workers as workers only emerges if the social networks in which they are embedded are patterned in such a way that the people in them can plausibly be partitioned into "workers" and "nonworkers"; but once this is possible, social conflict between collective actors who are defined in terms of this partition will heighten the salience

and plausibility of the partition itself. The intensification of the boundary's cognitive significance for individuals will, in other words, align social relations so that the boundary becomes even more real (Gould 1995: 15).

Thus, the difference between 1848 and 1871 was that mobilization occurred along lines which placed primacy on communal identity rather than class. All individuals carry multiple identities which may overlap or be mutually exclusive. However, the constitution of individuals as “workers,” “Arabs,” “Muslims,” or otherwise, in any given context is a question of the *participation identity* of the individual (Gould 1995: 13). The participation identity is the social identity which gains primacy during the process of mobilization. The primacy of any participation identity is a function of the distribution of social capital among different networks and organizations with different ideational profiles. Social capital signifies the ability of these social ties in mobilizing support around specific issues, and their ability to frame conflict-divides in a way which defines the “we” against the other, while simultaneously articulating how the latter is responsible for the grievances of the former (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1981).

Islamism, in its many variants, represents a political response to broader social forces which fall under the label “modernity” (Hadiz 2016: 4). This refers to the dual forces of an expanding and centralizing state, and the emergence of a technologically advanced and globalized economy defined by increased division of labour and a monetary economy. Their significance lies in their disruption of traditional social institutions and ways of managing social relations locally, as well as livelihoods. Such disruptions transformed communities in uneven and contradictory ways, and ultimately paved the way for mobilization under the banner of more populist and radical articulations of Islam

Social boundaries are in the first place the product of individuals pooling their resources to produce goods more efficiently, and explains at the deepest level why individuals are able to imagine themselves as part of a collective and identify their fortunes and misfortunes with this collective (Hechter 2000; Schelling 1960: 54). While this is a source of in-group solidarity, it also sets boundaries between those worthy of in-group loyalty, and the rest (Sack 1986: 56). While the modern international system is described as defined by unit-homogeneity, meaning the most important actors are all sovereign nation-states, the boundaries for in-group solidarity and loyalty do in many cases not correspond to the borders of the state (Bull 2002; Waltz 2010). The mismanagement of the transition of Muslim societies into political and economic modernity has in many cases led to the disruption of traditional authority, without the state replacing them as the focal point for welfare, security, and conflict resolution. The state itself was in many cases a colonial legacy and continued to secure obedience through the threat and use of force, rather than cultural assimilation. This has had the consequence that for many Muslim communities, citizenship did not necessarily imply loyalty to, or identification with, the nation-state, which has allowed other actors to wye for their allegiance.

The political function of ideology to an organization is to articulate the grievances of the group, while providing a map of social relations, including protagonists and foes. The salience of one social identity and ideology over another in a society is thoroughly tied to the ability of pre-existing institutions and political alliances in mobilising people around these idea-systems (Wimmer 2002). This also means that the viability of Islamism as an ideology for political mobilization is tied to institutional composition of civil society. If such social networks are carriers of ideologies, then they may also hold the key to explaining why political mobilization occurs along specific ideological lines and the momentum of political

ideas in a defined system, and this may be studied empirically by tracking the ability of different types of networks and institutions to mobilise over time.

A starting assumption for this is that ‘...the weight of history, choice and contingency shapes how organizers can mobilize’ (Staniland 2014: 33). This also means that studying the strategic deliberations of rebel entrepreneurs with regards to ideology, should take into account their embeddedness in particular communities and networks (Sanin and Wood 2014: 223). Such networks or institutions consist of “...persons (network nodes) linked by different kinds of relationships...” and the character of these links will have a legacy-effect on organizations that grow out of these networks (Wood 2008). Social systems are subject to some degree of ideational inertia which sets boundaries for the degrees to which political actors can deviate from existing norms without incurring sanctions from group-members or broader audiences (Wendt 1998; 2006: 188). Such inertia also implies that there is some degree of path-dependency in the development of new outlooks on politics, and political action, be that at the societal level, or within specific organizations (Pierson 2004: 39).

This is because ideas have not just a causal, but also a constitutive effects on individuals, and groups as well through organizational cultures. This also sets the frames through which new ideas and information are perceived and received (Checkel 2017: 597; Legro 2005: 13; Jervis 1976: 191). It sets the boundaries for ideological innovation such that attempts at introducing ideologies which are fundamentally incompatible with pre-existing norms may lead to a backlash from group-members. Even if we start from the assumption that rebel leaders themselves can be modelled as identical rational actors, the strategic viability of different ideologies will be tied to the pre-existing beliefs and values of the target audiences (Benford and Snow 2000; Olson 1993: 569). Ideological shifts among groups and communities are therefore difficult for any single political actor to induce, especially in relatively stable political contexts (Maynard 2019: 11). Political leaders do have agency to

challenge existing norms but doing so can also be risky by potentially triggering a backlash within one's own organization or among an external target audience (Ahmad 2016; Bakke 2014: 157; Sanin and Wood 2014: 222; Schubiger and Zelina 2017).

Rebel groups are not created from nothing. They develop from pre-existing social bases and organizational structures which are appropriated for the purpose of rebellion (Staniland 2012: 14). The question is when does it become possible for rebel entrepreneurs to appropriate pre-existing social structures for the purposes of militancy. One possibility is that such attempts are more likely to succeed at critical junctures of political turmoil where uncertainty creates room for ideological innovation (Ahmad 2019: 85; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 368; Pierson 2000: 252; Slater and Simmons 2010: 889). External shocks and political crises can dramatically alter ideational priorities and values within pre-existing groups, and political entrepreneurs may exploit feelings of uncertainty and fear to promote new narratives (Gould 1995: 18). The strategic use of violence can also allow actors to impose their frames on a situation, for example by attacking the state to provoke security forces into lashing out indiscriminately against a group (Laitin 1995). A concrete example would be killings of Shi'ite and Sunni civilians in Iraq, for the purpose of instigating a sectarian war, forcing institutions associated with sectarian identities to choose sides.

The primacy of ideologies is a function of the institutional framework and political alliances which, along with the political manipulation of elites, defines which social boundaries are salient and which captures the imagination of individuals as belonging to a specific community, in opposition to another group. As emphasized by Wimmer (2013: 96), pre-existing networks and institutions give political actors incentives to draw boundaries around particular identities, and capturing how such institutions change is essential to understanding how these identities become salient.

Rather than relying on successive ad hoc assumptions about the character of rebel groups and the strategic nature of ideologies, it might be possible to draw inductive inferences by establishing how the social contexts within which rebels emerge constrain ideological choices and therefore also informs strategic deliberations with regards to ideology (Samii 2016). This entails examining how changing social structures, institutions, and alliances pave the way for new ideologies, allowing leaders to claim authority over symbols and imagery associated with Islam, to unite disparate individuals under a common theme articulated along Islamic lines. Systematic comparison the ideological trajectories of Islamist groups from their network-origins to the point of rebellion may allow us to infer theoretical pathways by which Islamist insurgencies may break out, and how these are distinct from that of other types of insurgencies.

This inductive and theory-building approach entails tracing such insurgencies back to the critical junctures which set institutions and organizations on certain trajectories, to parse out the reasons why Islamist insurgencies developed in some contexts, and not others (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Pierson 2004). There might be multiple such pathways, and the inductive approach should not be prejudiced towards assuming that one particular pathway is universally valid. The goal is rather to explore whether there are recurring contextual factors, processes, and mechanisms which can inform generalizable theoretical statements about the origins of Islamist groups. This can be captured by focusing on how civil society is organised over time.

This approach of inductive iteration draws inspiration from comparative-historical research by scholars who focus on macro-processes through contextualized comparisons, such as Skocpol (1979) and Tilly (1990). It holds no prejudice towards whether there is one or multiple pathways to Islamist insurgency, and also seeks to build a complex set of

necessary and sufficient conditions, rather than single-variable explanations (Yom 2015). This entails starting from contextual complexity and recovering generalizable statements from this wealth of contextual factors. Theorizing about the connections between priors and outcomes becomes more complicated as the temporal distance between these increases, but this may also come at the cost of making interesting conclusions (Collier and Collier 1991). One solution to this is to combine inferences from studying long-term and broad historical processes, and combining this with more empirically rigorous and in-depth studies of micro-cases over time.

The issue of external validity is important in this case, as the inductive approach has the risk of leaving us with a collection of disjointed causal mechanisms which by themselves do not necessarily hold great insights about the origins of Islamist insurgencies (Cederman and Vogt 2017: 2008; Eck 2012: 125; Justino 2009). One way to overcome this is to follow the study of local dynamics by a second step in which comparative insights across are drawn across regions, not only within states, but also across widely different territories, comparing the pathways to Islamist insurgency in Somalia, AfPak, Nigeria, and Somalia, to see if there are commonalities which might be generalizable. The underlying assumption is that ‘...while contexts may differ, mechanisms recur’ (Kalyvas 2006: 10).

This entails following an iterative approach between theory and empirics to establish a typology of mechanisms to map out the processes by which Islamist insurgencies appear. (Tilly 2003: 4). Such a typology or collection of pathways to Islamist insurgency might also allow us to infer how Islamist insurgencies are fundamentally different, or the same, as other types of insurgencies. Nearly all research does in reality rely on an iteration between theory and empirics, and the goal here is to be explicit about this process (Laitin 2007). Rather than relying on fully developed hypotheses, the macro-historical analysis follows “theoretical hunches” about which factors are most important (Mann 1994: 42; Yom 2015: 626). The

overarching logic behind the inductive study of the macro-historical shift is inspired by Darwinism, though I focus on the survivability of pre-war institutions, and not the groups themselves. I assume that certain institutions and networks have traits which increase their longevity and attempts at imitation under specific external conditions, while groups which do not have these traits are more likely to be selected out over time, assuming the external conditions remain the same.

To be clear, this is not meant to provide predictions at the micro-level for specific groups, but rather represents broader intuitions about how macro-historical processes influence the character of civil war, through their influence on pre-war institutions over time. Crucially, I agree with Deborah Yashar that the ideological character of political movements, violent or not, is a function of the character of the pre-existing social networks which constitute civil society at relevant political junctures (Yashar 1998).

There are three elements to this:

Optimization: Rebel leaders will attempt to adopt traits to their organizations which they believe will make their groups more successful in war. Biological organisms cannot pick and choose their genes, but leaders of organizations do have some degree of agency to shape their organizations within the boundaries of organizational inertia, which I argue is a function of the characteristics of the pre-war networks this organization is built on. For example, a rebel group mobilized from religious seminaries is more likely to be able to mobilise as an Islamist group, compared to a socialist labour union.

A useful insight from Darwinism here is that no trait is inherently advantageous to organizational survival, as the advantageousness or disadvantageousness of each trait is a function of external conditions. Similarly to the intuition behind Kenneth Waltz' theory of international relations, the rebel leaders themselves may hold varying beliefs about what

behaviour and traits actually are optimal, but if they make the wrong decisions, they will be punished for it and potentially selected out over time (Waltz 2010).

With regards to the rise of Islamist political movements, the question becomes whether it is possible to identify a set of factors external to rebel groups themselves which have made religious networks more resilient compared to other groups, thereby making civil society increasingly defined by religious organizations and therefore making mobilization along Islamist lines viable and more commonplace.

Conditionality: The significance of any group-trait to a group's success is therefore conditional, not fixed. If external conditions remain the same, we should expect groups with a specific trait to be propagated. If these external conditions change, the same trait might be disadvantageous and groups with this trait might become more infrequent as they are outcompeted. An obvious example of this is that communism was a beneficial trait for some groups during the Cold War, but lost much of its utility after the Soviet Union's collapse. This selection process, like evolution, is myopic. Specific traits are not inherently better or worse than others, their utility changes as outside conditions change. This also means that the notion that Islamism is the strategically optimal choice for rebel groups is untenable unless we define the conditions under which this actually holds true.⁹

Agency: Groups who fail to recognize the group-traits which are optimal under any specific set of conditions, or which recognizes these traits but fail to adapt to them, will on average be weaker, or fail. This is also the point where the Darwinian-analogy fails. Groups learn from each other, and lessons can be implemented in ways which is not possible through natural selection.

This approach does not let us predict the trajectory of individual entities, but can be used to explain the increasing pervasiveness of specific traits. With regards to Islamist

⁹ Neither Walter (2017a; 2017b), nor Toft (2007; 2022) identify why or when Islamism confers advantages,

groups, I argue that the macro-historical trends throughout much of the Muslim world has led to religious networks becoming more pervasive in civil society because processes of modernity has undermined other modes of social organization such as tribal and village institutions. Added to this is the emergence of states which have moved away from welfare provision, to becoming security states who outsource public goods provision to private actors, often mosques, religious seminaries, and Islamic charities. This logic is essentially demand- rather than supply-driven, as the pervasiveness of specific institutions as part of civil society is a function of their ability to respond to specific demands by local populations, namely the public goods provision which neither traditional institutions, nor the state are willing or able to provide. As Skocpol argued that social revolutions were a feature of a particular type of society, so I argue that Islamist insurgencies is tied to particular societies, and I argue that these can be studied through the institutions which make up the social fabric (Beissinger 2022: 10).

Thus, there is nothing inherently advantageous to Islamism, nor is the broader rise of Islamist organizations a natural or pre-determined process. Rather, it is a response to specific social dislocations and relations which have favoured religious networks, such that social capital shifted towards networks which would mobilize politically along Islamist lines, rather than something else. The intuition is that the broader shift towards Islamism follows from changes in underlying societal factors which have made groups who adopt Islamism more likely to survive, while other groups have been selected out over time. To be clear, this argument applies to Islamist organizations as part of civil society, so the groups from which Islamist insurgent groups emerge, rather than the insurgent groups themselves.

In the next section, I proceed to follow this intuition through a macro-historical overview of the broader rise of Islamist radicalism, which culminates in some broad

inferences and theoretical intuitions which I rely on for the subsequent comparative empirical study.

3.2 A Macro-Historical Ideological Shift in Four Stages

3.2.1 Incomplete Modernity

Gellner (2008) argues that nationalism is a product of political modernity which succeeded because of its social function at the advent of industrialism rather than its intellectual power. Modern national identities are not natural categories, but followed from social disruptions produced by economic and political modernisation as the personalised relationships of agrarian societies were replaced by an economic system in which individuals had to have the skillset and mobility to change jobs and homes, in response to the demands of the market. This mobility depends on “context free communication” where a standardised vernacular and culture remove the barriers for individuals to resettle and acquire new skills. This functionalist understanding of nationalism therefore suggests that nationalism was a response to transition from agrarian to industrial society.

Gellner saw Islam as being the functional equivalent to nationalism in Muslim countries, playing a role in the social fabric of Muslim societies which Christianity never did in Europe. This, he argued, was because industrialisation in Europe occurred when national identities were already somewhat solidified. His hypothetical parallel is that a pan-Romance nationalism could have developed around clerical Latin if industrialization in Europe had happened in the high Middle Ages, before solidified national identities (Gellner 2008: xxvi). This is in some sense where Islam and Muslim countries are at, he argues, and political reformism along Islamic lines is therefore a reaction to economic modernity developing in conjunction with national identities. This reformism is a reaction to the collapse of traditional social ties, and the individualization of knowledge which followed from mass education and

greater access to outside information:

The dissolution of the vigorous old local and kin structures...goes hand in hand with the elimination of the saints cults which had ratified the mini-communal organization, and their replacement by a reformed individualist unitarian theology, which leaves the individual believer to relate himself, singly, to one God and one large, anonymous, mediation-free community- all of which is virtually the paradigm of the nationalist requirement (Gellner 2008: 77).

The accuracy of the analogy may be disputed, but what does seem plausible is that the homogenizing-pressures towards a national culture is a source of tension in multiple Muslim countries. Gellner (1991) points to the writings of the 14th-century proto-social scientist Ibn Khaldun in this regard.

Ibn Khaldun envisioned human affairs as being driven by what Anthony Black describes as a form of historical materialism. He argues that there are two natural social categories defining human relations, agricultural-pastoral society and urban civilization. These are distinguished by varying degrees of natural social cohesion called *asabiyyah* and *mulk* which refers to political power. In agricultural-pastoral societies, *asabiyyah* develops naturally in the form of tribal- or clan-systems, because being a close-knit and egalitarian group is essential for protection against the overbearing threat from other groups, as this system by its definition does not involve a common power of which all groups are in awe (Black 2011: 173). Ibn Khaldun's conception of anarchy therefore differed from that of Thomas Hobbes in that Ibn Khaldun argued that the threat of violence promoted in-group cohesion and relations of trust (Gellner 2008; Hobbes 2017).

This did not apply to the cities, however, where the state or royal power essentially has a monopoly of power, and where individuals are rendered into subjects. Ibn Khaldun's conception of order is closer to that of Hobbes in the cities where order is maintained through the state's threat of force rather than solidarity. As order is maintained through the common awe of royal power, *asabiyyah* loses its social function in cities, and becomes more artificial and less ingrained in the character of the populace. This social fragmentation is further amplified by the urban economies being defined by the division of labour, which promotes self-interest over egalitarian values in Ibn Khaldun's view (Gellner 2008; Ibn Khaldūn 1969).

Political authority asserted through the threat of violence alone will necessarily be fleeting as lasting stability also requires control over people's imaginations. Ibn Khaldun argued that only Islam could establish this social glue in the cities (Eickelman 1998).

A common pattern across multiple Muslim countries has been that the colonial and post-colonial state grew sufficiently strong to disrupt traditional sources of social cohesion, but failed to replace them (Gellner 1991: 6). State-guided attempts at centralization and economic development failed to position the state as the ultimate focus for political loyalty among significant segments of the population, while the undermining of traditional authority, the transition to a monetary economy, industrialisation, and urbanisation, paved the way for new social alliances and experimentation with new identities to capture people's imaginations and articulate new grievances (Gurr 1971; Huntington 1968).

In Western Europe, the state wrested control over education, poverty relief, conflict mediation, and physical security, from the church, as well as from local lords. The involvement of religious authorities in democratic politics was also a defining characteristic of party-formation in multiple countries, setting the terms by which religion entered the political arena, though this was not a frictionless process (Warner 2000). This is evidenced

by the late democratization of many catholic countries which Philpott (Philpott 2004: 37) argues followed from the Catholic Church's acceptance of the Westphalian segmentation of the Christian world.

In the Middle East and the broader Muslim world, however, high-capacity bureaucracies developed already in late antiquity, allowing the state to control most of the land, which it distributed in the form of temporary and revocable land grants. The distribution and ultimate control over land was therefore concentrated in the emperor through a system of *iqta* where land was granted as a temporary privilege, and not as a right of a politically independent social group (Richards 2013: 36). These empires tended to rely on soldiers from ethnic minorities, or on slave soldiers such as the Ottoman Janissaries or the Egyptian Mamelukes, to remain in power. These slave retinues would at times form their own dynasties, such as the Egyptian Mameluke Sultanate (1250-1517, then as a Mameluke dynasty under Ottoman suzerainty until 1811), the Ghaznavid empire (977-1186), or the Iraqi Mameluke dynasty (1704-1831). The successive Persian empires tended instead to rely on personal relationships between the ruler and select tribes which from which the shah's military power derived.

These states tended to be consolidated only in urban areas, however, and territory which they nominally controlled was often the domain of tribal actors. The power of the state itself rested on the ability of the central state to negotiate with and placate these peripheral elements, as the tribes were in many cases the major source of military power for the royal dynasties. The presence of peripheral actors to challenge the centre remains a feature of many Muslim countries today, and such tribesmen have in several cases ranging from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Mali and Algeria, been important social bases for militant Islamist groups. The persistence of such social segments which are politically important but uncontrolled by the state stands in contrast to most instances of state-building in Western Europe which is

often presented as a linear process of power being centralised around a Weberian state. This is not to say there was no resistance to this process, with the case of the Scottish Highlanders having received particular academic attention, but overall the process of internal colonialism was more successful in Western Europe than most Muslim-majority polities (Hechter 2000).

In both Muslim colonial states and independent empires such, the power of the central state was propped up through alliances with peripheral local elites, and state-building was therefore not necessarily a process of the state monopolizing governance. This was also the legacy post-colonial governments had to navigate (Cook 2014: 9; Göçek 2010: 10; Kroneberg and Wimmer 2012). Historically, the reliance on slave-soldiers or tribes, along with the iqta-system, may have prevented the rise of independent political classes equivalent to the landed gentry in Feudal Europe. It has also been suggested that this state of affairs meant that Islamic institutions became the primary intermediaries between the state and society (Black 2011: 51).

Still, the European nation-state model was eventually exported to the colonies, and independent states were essentially forced into emulating European states, setting about processes of internal assimilation which would define 20th century politics in Muslim countries (Cook 2014).

A key characteristic of political modernity is that political participation is extended to all subjects of a central power which is territorially fixed and mutually exclusive from other similar entities. This is driven by a plethora of processes such as industrialization, urbanization, the expansion of education and means of communication which allows the individual to participate in politics in ways which were previously reserved for traditional authority such as tribal elders or landholders (Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Ruggie 1993).

Modernization does not necessarily mean institutionalization or formalization of rights, and rapid increases in participation may also undermine political institutions, leading to political decay. According to Huntington (Huntington 1965) “Modernization means mass mobilization; mass mobilization means increased political participation; and increased participation is the key element of political development.” However, as he also points out, political development is a reversible process. For example, rapid urbanization invites the development of mass movements without the institutions, labour unions, or political parties which channels their political demands in formalised ways (Huntington 1965; 1968). Without the appropriate institutions, mass participation may lead to political radicalism, and potentially violence. Thus, the crucial question is how this expansion of the politically participating part of the population is integrated into formalized politics, and how their demands are expressed through political action.

The ability of a society to deal with these changes depends on the pre-existing institutions in society. Different forms of colonization led to states having different institutional setups upon independence (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). Huntington (Huntington 1965) argues: “If the traditional political institutions are weak, or if they have been displaced and suppressed during periods of colonial rule, adaptation is impossible. In societies which have undergone colonial rule, incubation can serve as a substitute for adaptation.” The key takeaway is that the ability of a society to deal with political shocks is contingent on the strength of its institutions. However, the processes of modernity, and the rise of mass politics through increased political participation, has in many cases undermined the traditional institutions which could have provided the social cohesion to deal with these developments. The state has in many Muslim countries failed to replace these traditional institutions as nodes for loyalty, welfare provision, law, or security, leaving these communities in an in-between state of incomplete modernity.

Modernization implies the atomization of society, while the emergent states pulverized civil society by seeking to make it subject to one ideology and leadership. Patronage networks developed among elites which served to maintain internal loyalty rather than loyalty to formal institutions (Gellner 1991). Revolutionary politics is inherently a feature of politics in “inbetween societies” where traditional institutions have been unsettled by social and economic development, but not yet replaced by rationalized institutions. The critical issue is how this transition occurs, and whether the social crises associated with modernization happens in a society not institutionally “ready” for such a shift, leading to disorder rather than national integration and rationalisation. In contexts where traditional institutions are too weak to provide public goods, where the state is weak or absent, and civil society is fragmented, religious institutions may emerge as nodes for social cohesion and political mobilization along Islamist lines.

As a next step, I give a broad overview of the macro-historical emergence of Islamist militancy in relation to the transition to modernity. This shift can be divided roughly into 4 periods. Its early intellectual and organizational formation began in the age of colonialism and lasted until the Second World War. Early Islamism emerged in this period as a form of mass politics led by non-clerical figures who saw Islam as the solution to the social and political problems of the ummah. The second period begins after the Second World War with the beginning of decolonization and the rise of new elites who set upon the project of nation-building. These elites looked to non-religious ideologies, such as socialism, for guidance on governing, and Islamist political forces were largely suppressed during this period. Some conservative states, especially Saudi Arabia, began seeing Islamism as an ideological counter to the threat of secular ideologies such as Arab nationalism, and devoted their newfound wealth to spread a specific interpretation of Islam throughout the Muslim world.

A third period sees Islamism emerging as a powerful political force. The Iranian Revolution in 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the resulting influx of foreign fighters, demonstrated the power of Islamism as a revolutionary ideology at a time when pan-Arabism was declining. This period also saw Iran and Saudi Arabia compete for the mantle of Islam, supporting sectarian militias and educational institutions to undermine the influence of the other. Islamist regimes also emerged in Sudan in 1989, and in Afghanistan in 1996.

Lastly, the September 11. attacks in 2001 marked the beginning of the War on Terror which led to the destabilisation of countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. This period saw the spread of groups inspired by al-Qaeda's ideology, along with intensified repression by authoritarian regimes who could attract funds by ostensibly fighting terrorists, and also saw a significant rise in Shi'ite-Sunni violence.

3.2.2 Formation – Intellectual and Organizational Roots 19th century – 1945

The roots of modern political Islamism date back at least to the late 19th and early 20th century, but was in some ways a culmination of even older processes. Beginning with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, the gradual encroachment of European imperial powers on Muslim lands initiated a period of reckoning over the relative decline of the Muslim powers which was further spurred by the decline of the Ottoman Empire (Naqshabandī 2005; Sayyid 2022; Nadiri 2014). This eventually spawned an intellectual corpus which tied Islamic revival to anti-colonialism, developed by figures such as Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838/1839-1897), Rashid Ridha (1865-1935), and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) (Keddie 1966: 74). These Islamic modernists sought to reconcile religion and rationalism to meet the challenge of European encroachment, and these included both conservative approaches and liberal and feminist authors such as Qasim Amin (1863-1908). In the case of al-Afghani, the reason for Europe's relative ascendance was due to the rise of

superstition in the Muslim world. A return to true Islamic principles was necessary, and this entailed an emphasis on reason and science which he saw as fully compatible with the religion (Keddie 1972).

This early strand of Islamic reformism is often referred to as “pan-Islamism” due to the emphasis on, and rising consciousness of the common plights of Muslim societies. Pan-Islamism was a product of its age. Technological advancements in transportation and communications, and rising literacy rates led to the creation of a transnational public sphere in which pan-local groups through the circulation of individuals, books, newspapers, and ideas (Hechter 2000: 24). According to Khalid (2005: 204) “...the very concept of the Muslim world came about as a result of these changes, which made it possible for the first time to imagine a community encompassing all the Muslims of the world...” While the concept of a Muslim community or *Ummah* had always been part of Islam, embodied most notably in the *Hajj* to Mecca, these technological innovations brought the rather abstract concept of an ummah closer to reality for more Muslims. This also included the principled rejection of the nation-state as an imported concept which split the ummah apart, though the practical reality of this rejection is less straightforward (Dalacoura 2001: 237). Figures such as al-Afghani began travelling across Muslim countries to encourage Muslim solidarity against the European colonisers. While pan-Islamism by no means embodied a coherent ideology, the perception that a Muslim revival was needed resonated among anti-colonial resistance movements from West-Africa to Southeast Asia (Keddie 1966: 74).

More fundamentally, this intellectual trend represented a shift in religious authority. With greater education, the ability to interpret Islamic tenets moved away from traditional clerics and other elites, towards new generations of intellectuals with secular educational backgrounds (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 34). The interpretation of Islam was therefore

decentralized and allowed reform-minded individuals to articulate their ideas along religious lines to inspire the masses.

Pan-Islamism was also strategically promoted by various states to foment discord within the territories of their rivals (Keddie 1969: 20). The Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) projected himself as the leader of all Muslims to exercise influence internally and abroad (Eligür 2010: 40). However, the notion of the Ottoman empire as a caliphate, was essentially an invention of the 18th century, to shore up internal stability as the empire declined vis-à-vis the European powers (Cook 2014: 8; İnalcık 1970: 320-323). One curious influence this had was the 1920 Khilafat movement in British-India where tens of thousands of Indian Muslims tried to emigrate to Afghanistan due to Britain's hostile relationship to the Ottoman Empire (Qureshi 1979: 59). The Ottoman invention of tradition also influenced intellectual works on Islamic governance in the 18th and 19th century which promoted the Ottoman state as the ideal model for upholding Islamic law.

In some cases, Muslim-identity served as the basis for nationalist-movements where no common ethnic identity existed, the Indian Muslim League being a notable example (Alavi 1997; Wallerstein 1999). According to Nikki Keddie (1969: 17), the ethnic terms which would be associated with modern Middle Eastern nations such as “Arab” or “Turk” were of marginal importance, or even carried negative connotations, at least before the late 19th century (Osman 2014: 34). Pan-Islamism therefore became intertwined with anti-colonial activism in lieu of strong national identities in places ranging from West-Africa to Southeast Asia. Political elites would in many cases utilize the Islamic identity as a substitute for ethnic nationalism to overcome particularistic loyalties and encourage mass-mobilization against European colonial regimes (Burke 1972: 98; Keddie 1966: 75; Qureshi 1979: 46).

Rashid Rida (1865-1935) was particularly important in articulating how Islam held the solutions to the woes of Muslims. He integrated classical notions of the caliphate with modern theories of governance, and emphasized the “golden age” of Islamic governance under the first four caliphs who succeeded Muhammad. The last Caliphate, the Ottoman Empire, was abolished in 1923, which inspired Rida to argue that the lack of a religious head of state in the form of the caliph meant that Sharia had to be the basis for modern political institutions.

There was also a rise in literalist interpretations of Islam, such as Salafism (Al-Rasheed 2008). While some intellectuals such as Sheikh Abdou (1849-1905) argued for the compatibility between Western logical and scientific contributions, and the religion (Osman 2014: 32-35), the Salafi movement emerged as a counter-pole. It rejected modern influences and sought a return to the “authentic” state of Islam in the age of the prophet through Quranic literalism.

One strand of modern Islamic scholarship, beginning maybe most prominently with the Egyptian Abd al-Raziq (Navabzadeh and Amini 2016) in the early 20th century, and continuing with Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im today, see governance as a secular domain, distinct from personal piety and morality (Na'im 2011). However, the more pervasive belief in classical Sunnism is that Sharia is essential to maintain a pious community, as opposed to putting faith in the piety of any one ruler. A key premodern influence on Islamism is Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) who put the implementation of Sharia as the key to emulating the righteous rule of the early caliphs and was therefore at the centre of Islam as a project. These concepts have gained new meanings within the framework of the modern state as Islamists tend to accept key features of the modern state and institutions such as the centralized bureaucratic administration and borders (Hallaq 2013; Ibn Taymīyah 2000).

Most social scientists avoid seeing political Islam primarily through religious doctrines, instead emphasizing Islamic fundamentalism as reactions to modernization in its many forms (Eickelman 1998: 261; 2000; Tibi 2012). While it has become something of a truism that Islamism is related to modernity, it is not clear exactly how, with one line of debate revolving around whether Islamism is a reaction to globalised capitalism, and whether it is a “populist” reaction to social insecurity and entrenched elites (Hadiz 2016: 35; Nasr 2009). There is also a line of argument which sees the rise of Al-Qaeda and Salafi-jihadism as analogous to the societal shifts which produced other radical ideologies with origins in the West such as Leninism, Nazism, or Jacobinism (Gray 2003: xix). Some scholars have invited comparisons between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and European fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. This is due to their common desire to restore some degree of cultural authenticity and moral purity, while also targeting corrupt elites for abandoning the true spirit of the nation or the ummah (Strauss 1981). Another aspect is that these movements received popular support from the social classes who are excluded from political power and economic gains, especially parts of the disillusioned middle classes (Fischer 1982). Other purported parallels include the Brotherhood’s organizational structure which included youth societies and para-military groups (Al-Azmeh 1991: 45).

Such analogies should not be taken too far, either in terms of causes, or the content of the ideologies themselves. Yet, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that there are parallels in the root causes political radicalism in many Muslim countries today to that of Europe in the first decades of the 20th century (March 2015: 110; Gerges 2009). While political scientists may draw lessons from different types of ideological groups, we should not assume *a priori* that they are exactly the same. However, it is possible to examine how they were responses to specific social dislocations and the preoccupation with the erosion of values and traditions accompanying the transition to modernity (Euben 1995: 15).

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood pioneered the introduction of Islamism as a form of mass-politics and a particular mode of organization, and *Ikhwanism* in both peaceful and militant forms would define Islamist politics in multiple countries (Munson 2001: 490). It was established in 1928 in reaction to the de facto subjugation of Egypt to British influence financially, militarily, and culturally. Like the pan-Islamists of the time, the Brotherhood claimed that the solution to relative decline of the Muslim world lay in Islam. However, it was unique in that its leader Hasan al-Banna successfully organized this into a mass-movement, emulating European political movements, and the Brotherhood gained influence over trade unions businesses, mosques, and state officials. While he rejected what he saw as the materialism of the West and of communism, al-Banna still embraced what he saw as positive developments from Europe into his movement. A similar approach to organization was adopted by Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) in India and later Pakistan, though he outright rejected the modernist programme (Black 2011: 302).

While Banna was killed in 1949 due to multiple instances of violence between the Brotherhood and the state, its organizational model became extremely influential. It inspired a more populist form of Islam which became intertwined with anti-establishment politics throughout the Muslim world. While his model of political Islam encouraged propaganda and education to bring about Islamic law, and not violence, his successors such as Sayyid Qutb would sanction the use of force (Yemelianova 2005; 2022).

The rise of early Islamism coincided with the growth of a liberal, secular Arab nationalist movement with figures such as Sati Al-Husri in Syria (1880–1968) who sought to mobilize the nation, as opposed to Al-Afghani and Abduh who thought of themselves as Muslims first. This also meant there was significant cross-fertilization of ideas, along with competition for support from specific social bases. Whereas initial Islamic movements received support from small-scale artisans, minor rural landholders, and traders in the

bazaars, the Brotherhood succeeded in expanding among the rural and urban poor, and the working class (Hadiz 2016; Pargeter 2013). It did so by advocating for social justice through Shariah and Islamic charity called Zakat (Biagini and Ardovini 2022; Calvert 2010). It was highly successful as such, substituting the leftist narrative of class struggle for an Islamic one, and spreading it through grassroots preaching, the provision of services, and the establishment of its own labour unions. It also especially made inroads among literate populations where the state had limited presence (Brooke and Ketchley 2018).

Another example is the movement of Abd al-Krim, who rebelled against French and Spanish colonial influence in Morocco led to the creation of an independent republic in 1921-1926. His movement represented a tribal counter-part to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's urban focus. He opposed the egalitarian system of the Rifian tribes, seeking a more hierarchical model of governance, while also challenging Sufi institutions which he saw as laced with superstition and unjust elitism. In doing so, he sought to transcend the differences between the tribes, denouncing the non-hierarchical nature of tribes as anarchical. However, this movement did not have the same legacy beyond Morocco.

Religious authority had traditionally been in the hands of clerics associated with the state, or Sufi shaykhs who had close ties to tribal elders. These Sufi Shaykhs had also in many cases been the leaders of initial resistance against colonial encroachment, leading military movements against the European powers in places ranging from Afghanistan, to Somalia, Sudan, and West Africa. However, the Islamist movements represented a fundamentally new form of political mobilization which was no longer based on tribal ties, nor on traditional religious authority. In Morocco and Algeria in the 1920s and 1930s, workers in factories and agricultural workers began utilizing strikes as a tool to better their conditions and protesting against the regime, and in many cases against traditional authorities as well, including tribal leaders and shaykhs. Armed struggles broke out in Morocco (1921-

1926), Libya (1922-1931), Iraq (1920), Syria (1918-1921, 1925-1927), and Palestine (1936-1939), along with multiple Kurdish uprisings. While these failed to bring about independent nation-states, they marked the development of a complex alliance of urban, liberal nationalists and broader disenchanted masses, who brought about consciousness of a new political community in the form of the nation and sought the actualization of the nation. Sufi Orders were in some sense usurped by other reforming organizations through new forms of activism built on networks outside of Sufi orders (Chalcraft 2016: 237).

Yet, these various pan-Islamist and Islamist movements lost much of their political force by the 1950s. While groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood remained influential, they came to be overshadowed by nationalist movements by the era of decolonization after the Second World War. Iconic leaders such as Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser now embodied the anti-imperialist, but secular aspirations of Muslim countries (Mellon 2002: 302-315). While Ernest Gellner saw Muslim history as a form of oscillation between urban and rural lifestyles, the post-colonial system pushed the balance towards the urban. With this shift, there was a rise of a form of Islami which was unitarian, individualist, and scripturalist, standing in contrast to the ritualistic and mystical side to rural religion (Fischer 1982: 112). The pervasiveness of particular religious practices and ideas is not just a question of intellectual power, but also their compatibility with the societal order.

3.2.3 Latency - Modernizing elites 1945-1979

Islamic political movements did not succeed in dominating either the anti-colonial efforts, or the administration of the early post-colonial states (Hadiz and Robison 2013). Instead, power over the post-colonial states went to nationalist intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, as well as military professionals who in many cases were products of the colonial

bureaucracy and education system. This pattern held in the case of the Ba'athist parties in Syria and Iraq, the Destour Party in Tunisia, The National Liberation Front in Algeria, and the Indonesian National Party. In Egypt, the constitutionalist al-Wafd party was side-lined and dissolved as the Free Officers, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, overthrew the monarchy in 1952, with support of the Muslim Brotherhood. The brotherhood itself was eventually violently repressed after an assassination attempt against Nasser in 1954 (Rubin 2010). In Brotherhood's branches in Syria, Iraq and Egypt were all repressed as the nationalist parties entrenched their positions.

Indeed, the period from after the second world war and independence, pan-nationalist and socialist or state-capitalist ideas were fundamental to attempts by the state in centralizing power. Colonialism, and its decline, prompted national reinvigoration brought about by modern mass politics and the rise of new ruling classes, often through the military. This was largely associated with urban artisans and merchants, rather than the landed aristocracy of the past (Aksikas 2009: 18).

The emphasis on national identity caused consternation among some Islamist intellectuals such as Abū 'l-A 'lā Mawdūdī who saw this as dividing the Muslim umma, and his organization Hizb al-Tahrir suggested Muslim states should be considered as part of one country. The rejection of nationalism as a form of disbelief was also advocated by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who wanted a common Islamic struggle against outsiders, by Muslims with no identity other than religious creed (Cook 2014: 45). Qutb was repulsed by what he saw as Western immorality during a visit to the United States in 1948-1950, and he became involved with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood upon his return.

After the 1952 Egyptian revolution and the rise to power of Gamal Abdel Naser, Qutb would suffer an 8-year stint in prison, during which he encountered the book *L'homme, cet inconnu* (1935) by the pro-Vichy French writer Alexis Carrel (1873–1944). Carrel argued for

the need for an elite to guide humanity through the materialism of modernity (Black 2011: 309). This may have influenced Qutb's argument that a vanguard of true believers had to guide Muslim societies out of the state of ignorance or *Jahiliya*. This vanguard could also take it upon themselves to excommunicate other Muslims to justify the use of violence against them, a privilege traditional maintained only by clerical authority (Qutb 1991). Qutb was executed in 1966, but left a legacy of being the pre-eminent intellectual influence on Salafi-jihadi groups such as al-Qaeda.

Qutb's execution was emblematic of the broader showdown between two broad ideological views about the role of religion in dealing the challenges of political modernity. Political elites throughout the Middle East implicitly saw Islam as a source of backwardness which was incompatible with industrialization and political modernity, and secularisation was seen as essential for Muslim states to reach modernity (M. Berger 1970). The political elites of several countries sought to emulate European states in this regard. Two prominent examples of this are Iran's last Shah, Mohammed Reza (1919-1980), and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) who sought rapid industrialization while removing religious influences on law and governing institutions, de-emphasized the religious heritage of their countries, side-lined the clergy, while seeking to produce national unity around ethnic identity rather than religion. The assumptions of modernization regarding religion were wherefore not only academic, but shaped the policies of local elites, along with the approach of Western states and international institutions towards Muslim countries.

The state's push for industrialization and agrarian reform led to large government investment in mechanized farms which displaced peasants and tribespeople who moved to the cities. Rather than finding new job opportunities, they became part of a subproletariat disconnected from their extended families and traditional villages. These became a

recruitment pool for revolutionary activism, especially as Iran's overreliance on oil became evident as oil income fell after 1975 (Keddie 1983).

Part of the reason why this belief was common in some Muslim policy elites was that these post-colonial states inherited institutions and administrative structures, led by Western-educated technocrats. Even the state structures of countries who had not been subjugated during the age of colonialism, such as Turkey and Iran, were strongly influenced by the outside pressures of Western powers out of a perception of necessity. They modelled state-building on that of European states to a great degree by inviting Western advisors and having Western-educated administrators, leading to the creation of national armies, centralized bureaucracies, and secularized legal systems (Owen 2004). These same leaders did often rely heavily on Islamic references, however. Hafez Assad in Syria made much of going to prayers after he took control in 1979, Colonel Ghaddafi in Libya became head of the Sanusiyya order, Nasser's Egypt tried to challenge rival states through Islamic conferences appealing against the reactionary forms of Islam in Saudi Arabia and also against the atheist communists in Iraq. This included the reorganization and state control over al-Azhar university. The Saudis, meanwhile, countered Egyptian influence through al-Azhar by establishing a World Muslim League in 1961 to sponsor Muslim organizations, particularly student organizations.

Modernization implies a set of social processes which upends existing hierarchies, social alliances, and traditions, in favour of industrialization, centralization and the internal expansion of the state, and cultural homogenization. This modernization agenda was pursued by various forms of state-capitalism, embodied first with the Nasserism-era from 1952 to 1967, where the state took it upon itself to pursue industrialization through contingent integration with the global economy. Though this came to be known as "Arab socialism," it was closer to a state-capitalist system in which import-substitution was used to dictate the

terms on which trade occurred, rather than setting up a non-capitalist system per se (Aksikas 2009: 29). This approach was, not least, a legacy of the colonial-era belief that Muslim countries had to catch up in terms of technological modernization, while simultaneously setting their own terms for how this modernization should occur, pursuing its own anti-imperial economic policies in the search for political independence. What truly distinguished Nasser's approach from that of Iran, however, was the attempt to harness the power of the masses through an explicitly populist approach, which he used to attract domestic support, and to rile up unrest in rival Arab states.

The incomplete process of nation-building in many Muslim states meant that political leaders frequently resorted to ideological outbidding against their rivals. Arab leaders during the "Arab Cold War" of the 1950s and 1960s would threaten the internal stability of rival Arab regimes by questioning their commitment to the pan-Arabic cause. Ideological posturing was, in fact, just as much of a security threat to some Arab states as that posed by military power (Gause 1992: 451; Kerr 1971). Middle Eastern political elites were therefore acutely aware of the threat which the lack of ideological and cultural coherence posed to internal stability, and cultural assimilation became a significant part of their modernization projects. This involved giving citizens a sense of having a stake in the state through nationalism, but also by demolishing traditional and local institutions and replacing these with legal-rational institutions (Nasr 2001: 9).

Ultimately, these approaches failed. First, because the social reforms by the Arab-nationalist regimes of states such as, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, were heavily top-down reforms which focused on the military and bureaucracy for the purpose of creating a strong central administration. The economic reforms associated with these projects also carried the seeds of its own failure by forcing the proletarianization of rural dwellers, small farmers and artisans, not least by increasing urbanization while failing to provide adequate job opportunities and

social services. The result was not just economic problems, but deeper disenchantment with the regimes of the time and their anti-imperialist ideologies (Aksikas 2009: 21). Most importantly, many post-colonial Muslim states failed to form monopolies of authority, not least because the state itself was often viewed as a colonial legacy which divided nations and tribes with its artificial borders, and a threat to local traditions and institutions with its centralizing institutional force (Khoury et al. 1990: 15).

State-imposed modernization-processes offered citizens a glimpse of what modernity offered, but the social disruption from state-guided economic reformation, incomplete centralization, and heavy-handed approaches towards political opposition would ultimately undermine these efforts and pave the way for Islamism as a revolutionary ideology (Berman 2003: 258). These often had unique organizational and mobilizational capabilities (Ashraf 1988).

3.2.4 Revolution and Jihad 1970s-2001

The major ideological forces throughout most of the Muslim world before the 1970s were anti-imperial, “Third Worldist,” leftist, and secular articulations of national aspirations (Mellon 2002). Yet, according to Hadiz (2016), it was the state-led development agendas of regimes influenced by these ideologies which would pave the way for mass-mobilization around Islamist ideology. The processes of industrialization, bureaucratization, the spread of state-education, and the spread of new communication technologies, allowed for the internal expansion of the state, not just through force, but through cultural homogenization which also made populist mass-politics viable as political participation expanded. This was furthered by state-driven economic agendas relying on the protection and subsidization of domestic industry in the form of large industrial plants which both marginalized the small producers and traders of the bazaars, while also expanding the working class (Hadiz and Robison 2013).

Such policies were built on the promise of rapid development and more equitable distribution of economic goods (Owen 2004: 27). However, state-led economic transformation did not lead to a prosperous private sector as capital came under the control of a form of state bourgeoisie who controlled, but did not privately own capital (Richards 2013).

While the 1950s represented the high-point of nationalism in mobilizing the masses, the lofty ambitions of regimes such as that of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt were dashed by the late 1960s with the failure of the United Arab Republic, the Yemen civil war, and the Six Day War (Berman 2003: 260). The nationalist projects of post-independence elites were also sometimes victims to their own contradictions, as states and their borders were in themselves colonial legacies (Owen 2015). As ethnic, tribal, and religious groups were separated by these borders, the loyalty of many Muslims to transnational kinship groups would sometimes conflict with loyalty to the state they legally were subjects of.

Economic problems following the policy of import substitution became severe in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, and Algeria in the late 1960s and 1970s as foreign currency reserves were drained due to the import of machinery and raw materials. Few Middle Eastern states developed into major exporters which would have allowed for the replenishment of these reserves (Richards 2013: 18). Yet, the proletarianization and urbanization which followed from these same policies led to the rise of new social forces which ultimately were let down by the economic promises of their regimes. It gave the masses a glimpse of modernity and prosperity, but ultimately failed to bring about such an order. This, along with the oil glut of the 1980s and a youth-bulge, made for an increasingly unstable political situation.

The case of Iran is particularly telling. Fred Halliday (1983: 190) points to the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution as the outcome of the rising social tensions which followed from

the Shah's modernization policies. Not least through the economic disparity and cultural gap between Westernized elites, and rural migrants who settled in cities in the hopes of gaining employment. One particularly impactful policy was the Shah's attempts at land-reform, one of the major pillars of the "White Revolution" in 1961-1963 which fuelled urbanization by effectively abolishing serfdom, making large numbers of people available for salaried work (Hooglund and Stenberg 2012; Hooglund 2021; Majd 1987). It also hurt the landowning class, which had links to the Islamic clergy. Anti-Shah activism was strongly supported by those whose livelihoods were in the traditional bazaars who deeply resented how political connectedness was key to reap the benefits of the modern economic sectors (Skocpol 1982).

In this context, religion provided a language which resonated across disparate social classes which were aggrieved in different ways by the transformation of Iran's economy (Zubaida 1996; 2000). The turmoil following 1963 paved the way for Ayatollah Khomeini to emerge as the most recognizable figureheads for opposition to the Shah. Khomeini felt that the clergy had neglected their responsibility to discipline secular authority, and explicitly rejected any division between Islam and politics. He eventually developed the idea of the "Guardianship of the Jurist" (*vilayat-i faqih*) which is an institution of religious scholars which would define the boundaries within which secular authority would be allowed to operate whereas the traditional view among the clergy was that a government was legitimate as long as it does not explicitly act contrary to religious tenets (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 49). Another figure, Dr. Ali Shariati (1933-1977) argued that the liberation of the oppressed was essential to Islam, and his works led to a Shi'ite form of Islamism which drew inspiration from anti-imperialist intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) and Marxism (Fanon 1967; Shari'ati 1979). Shariati was also rather anti-clerical as he criticized the hereditary and monopolistic powers of second-rate religious scholars. Nevertheless, the traditionally

apolitical ulama became increasingly involved in political affairs in resentment of the Shah's policies, providing the social capital on which the revolution would be built.

The revolutionary movement of 1978 and 1979 was built on popular resentment towards the Shah over the perception that he was selling national resources to foreign actors, increasing inequality, social reforms, and his repressive tactics towards the opposition. While this movement was built on a coalition of secular intellectuals, the ulama, and bazaar merchants, the social capital for mass mobilization was heavily concentrated in the hands of the clergy. In fact, the clerics had also been the primary group with the social capital to challenge the Shahs, especially of the Qajar dynasty, during previous political crises such as the 1905-1906 Constitutional Revolutions in which it allied with westernized constitutionalists. Thus, the ulama were embedded in and controlled social networks which allowed for Islam to be harnessed for revolutionary purposes, to a greater degree than their secular rivals (Halliday 2005: 88). It was this organizational capacity for mobilization along religious lines, rather than abstract theoretical arguments or inherent characteristics of Shi'ism, which made religiously-inspired ideology a powerful force in Iran.

A similar pattern of economic disruption to the White Revolution was near-universal to Muslim countries, ranging from Algeria to Indonesia, beginning at the latest in the 1970s (Hadiz and Robison 2013; Malley 1996). The state-led developmental efforts of the 1950s and 1960s were more or less abandoned in favour of economic liberalisation in the 1970s and 1980s, sometimes assisted by the IMF and the World Bank (Owen 2004: 115-117). In Turkey, the Democratic Party inspired a resurgence of Islam, by winning the 1950 election due to rural resentment against privileged state elites (Keyder 1987).

In multiple cases, the developmental policies of the post-colonial authoritarian regimes failed to deliver while also disrupting traditional social safety nets based around

extended families, tribes, and villages through the introduction of a wage-economy and urbanization. It is precisely this type of social disruption, following from attempts at rapid restructuring of the economy, and the failure of the state to manage negative repercussions of this, which paved the way for Islamic networks to become the foremost providers of social services. It allowed for a new form of Islamic populism, built around the grievances and aspirations of the urban middle class and the urban and rural poor whose aspirations were dashed (Hadiz 2016; Haklai 2009; Roy 1994; Zahab 2004; John Thayer Sidel 2006: 52; Wickham 2002).

In the case of Algeria, Robert Malley (Malley 1996: 221) argues that the nature of the Algerian state was one which had completely monopolized social, economic, and political life. The state ideology of Third Worldism provided coherence and a sense of a shared national project, and its recession also meant the atomization of the Algerian social fabric. In its place, new religious institutions arose organically, both for existential security, but also for basic service-provision. Similarly, in Egypt, Mosques came to function, not only as places of worship, but as community centres with libraries, clinics, and canteens. In Somalia the principal anti-colonial and post-independence political movement, the Somali Youth League, rarely invoked religion in its discourse (Clapham 2017: 54).

Independence in 1960 led to a short-lived democratic system, demolished in 1969 in a coup by Siyad Barre who pursued a pan-Somali agenda and scientific socialism to challenge traditional institutions including clans and Sufism (Lewis 2002: 227). Islamist actors remained marginal, however, until at the late 1990s and early 2000s. when Islamic community centres began appearing in Mogadishu. These were established on the initiative of clan-elders and local religious figures, and funded by the business community, and became the primary providers of medical care, education, welfare, and eventually acquired court-like functions (K. Menkhaus 2006). There was therefore significant temporal delay in the

emergence of Islamist movements. In some cases, Islamists remained a rather marginal force, or never gained relevance as armed actors at all.. For example, in the case of Western Sahara, the Polisario Front, which has essentially fought against first Spain, and then Morocco, since the mid-1970s, remains a strongly nationalist organization (Zunes and Mundy 2010: 28). Islamist groups among the Kurds such as Ansar-al-Islam have also been rather marginal compared to the power of KDP and PKK, and the same applies to an even greater degree to the Balochi insurrection against Pakistan.

Still, as a broader historical trend, it would be Islamist movements which filled the ideological vacuum as socialism declined, especially in contexts where authoritarian states were able to effectively suppress secular opposition groups (Hadiz 2016). This significant variance does, however, tell us that this is not an inherent or inevitable feature of Muslim politics. It is rather tied to specific political institutions and networks which attracted social capital, not least because religious networks and institutions such as mosques grew in importance as the state withdrew from civil society (Berman 2003: 260).

In Europe, similar social challenges, not least following from the transition to economic liberalism in the 19th and early 20th century, inspired waves of national revival. This included the belief in an “organic” nation which required harmony among its members to survive, and signified a response to the individualism that is inherent to economic liberalism and industrialized society. In its most extreme articulation this took the form of social Darwinism, fascism and glorification of violence. In its moderate articulation, it led to the development of sovereign nation-states.

Michael Mann (Mann 2004: 355) argues that “...Fascism was not a crisis of liberalism since institutionalized liberalism weathered all these crises without serious destabilization. Fascism was a product of a sudden, half-baked attempt at liberalization amid

social crises.” He also saw it as following from the uprooting of social relations, especially of the youth, as young males are disconnected from families, and gain access to organized sports and higher education. Similarly, a key part of the puzzle in explaining Islamism, is that political participation increased through the uprooting of traditional life, and the search for new modes of community in an individualist urban society. Authoritarian leaders in some cases encouraged Islamic institutions to fill this demand, seeing it as preferable to other organizations which could turn socialist. According to Hadiz (2016), the ideological momentum of Islamism is fundamentally linked to the ability of Islamist political entrepreneurs in harvesting the economic anxieties of and lack of upward mobility for the urban poor and the middle class who stand outside elite patronage networks, to build cross-class alliances.

Islam became the identity that tied these disparate elements together against the revolutionary elites who had themselves become oligarchs. They grew from attempts at coping with the dismantlement of the post-independence developmental regimes, both ideologically and in terms of economic liberalization, including the state’s withdrawal from social life where it often actively encouraged Islamic institutions to take on increased social functions in the absence of nationalism (Derluigian 2005: 73). As a reaction to the failures of the nationalist and revolutionary movements of previous decades, both intellectuals and the popular masses increasingly looked to Islam for solutions to their grievances. Islamism became the go-to ideology for mobilization, uniting both the urban poor who relied on Islamic charities for welfare, with a middle class which feels marginalized due to not having the personal connections to advance economically. Labour migration to urban areas and across borders, along with networks of mosques and an informal Islamic financial sector who often provide educational and social services have been essential in defining Islamism as an alternative to socialism (Dalacoura 2001: 238). While such networks may not be directly tied

to militant groups, they nevertheless define the discourse on which popular resentment can be built. Some forms of Islamist militancy equal that of previous communist insurrections in terms of arising among the locally disenfranchised who have national goals, despite the transnational connotations of ideological discourse (Ayoob 2008: 153; Bayat 2007: 586).

Islamist organizations began to directly challenge the Left for support among urban workers, for example through the establishment of Islamic labour unions (Hadiz 2016: 71). These Islamist political movements tapped into the sources of mass-politics of the time, harnessing the grievances of those who felt disenfranchised and whose hopes of economic were dashed in the 1970s and 1980s (Sidel 2006: 52). Islamism did not simply embody rising social conservatism, but rather signified demands for radical change.

In the former bastions of Arab nationalism such as Egypt and Algeria, state leaders encouraged this shift towards Islam to shore up their regimes. In the case of Egypt, Anwar Sadat harnessed Islamist political forces to crack down on leftist opposition to economic liberalization (Ayoob 2008: 35). Political authority and religious authority in Egypt thus remain closely entangled (Bano and Benadi 2018). The Muslim Brotherhood might have been significantly weaker had it not been for Sadat's patronage of the group. Gamal Abdel Nasser also understood the importance of controlling religious institutions and discourse, but Sadat began relying more overtly on political alliances with Islamists. Tamir Moustafa (2000: 10-13) has highlighted how the balance of power between state and religious institutions change over time. He argues that the co-optation of institutions such as Al-Azhar, also paved the way for more radical and militant Islamist groupings such as Takfir wa al-Hijra, who denounced the clergy as heretics. Increased Islamist militancy increased the state's need for the ulama to co-operate in countering the ideological narratives of the militants, which allowed the ulama by the 1990s to carve out a more autonomous sphere than it had in

the past. The result was that Islamic language tended to dominate both oppositional and pro-regime rhetoric.

The situation in Algeria was similar, where the state de-emphasized Arab nationalism in favour of religion to attract support, and it trained and hired Imams and controlled their mosques, though this eventually backfired as the Islamists made electoral strides and eventually launched an insurgency after a coup was launched in 1991 to negate an Islamist electoral victory (Sidahmed and Ehteshami 1996; Zhang and Zoubir 2020). In multiple countries the Islamists remained the only significant opposition as leftists and nationalists were crushed by the regime, often through temporary alliances between regimes and Islamist organizations (Zubaida 2000: 61). This, however, also paved the way for articulations of Islam for the masses against perceived corrupt elites. Though the same regimes turned against their Islamist allies when they became too powerful, they were never repressed as successfully as their secular counterparts (Calvert 2010).

The momentum of Islamism was further spurred by the momentous events of Iran's Islamic revolution, and the war in Afghanistan. The 1979 Iranian Islamic revolution which demonstrated Islamism's revolutionary potential. Iran's new theocratic regime struggled to make direct connections to Sunni-groups despite its attempts at exporting its governance-model elsewhere. For Sunnis, it would be the struggle against the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan after 1979 which would truly inspire a new brand of militant Islamism. Foreign fighters involved in the Afghan jihad also established lasting transnational networks through which ideas, fighters, and financial support was transmitted to places like Bosnia, Chechnya, and Algeria for years after the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan. These were sustained financially through massive donations from private actors in the Arab Gulf countries (Dalacoura 2001: 239).

The Afghan jihad was also associated with the “privatization” of jihad, an idea especially associated with Abdullah Azzam who told Muslims to ignore authorities to join the jihad (Hegghammer 2020: 305). The jihad also became an outlet for Islamists who were frustrated by their exclusion from domestic politics, and who also saw the ideological threat from the Arab left as a broader extension of Soviet policies. Azzam, for example, was extremely hostile to leftism in all forms due to the power of leftist groups in Palestine (Hegghammer 2020: 133). This was also solidified the shift in Islamic militant activity from the leadership of the traditional clergy, to laymen, often inspired by demands for equity by the lower classes in their homelands, and resentment towards immoral elites thought to be responsible (Fischer 1982: 105).

Mustafa Hamid, one of the Arab foreign fighters who interacted with both the mujahideen and figures involved in al-Qaeda described the ideological significance of the Afghan jihad:

...the defeat of 1967 shocked a generation of Arabs. Israel’s siege of an Arab capital (Beirut) in 1982, while other Arab countries looked the other way... It caused a very big wound in the dignity of the Arab youth who were left with a sense there were no real states, only oppressive regimes weak in the face of foreign interference...It was in this environment the Afghan jihad took people back to Islam...Islamic ideas and movements began to rise again (Hamid and Farrall 2015: 22).

Another dimension to this was that Saudi Arabia, in particular, invested part of its wealth into promoting a specific understanding of Islam to counter the threat which Iran’s revolutionary regime represented to the conservative regime. Iran’s new theocratic regime was explicit about its intention of exporting the revolution, and the House of Saud became one of its primary rhetorical targets due to its alliance with the US. The Iranian revolution

therefore triggered rivalry which has played out in third-party countries, especially countries with sizeable Shi'ite populations, such as Pakistan, Lebanon, Yemen, though also in the Sunni Palestinian Territories (Allen 2013).

This rivalry gave Islamism salience throughout the Muslim world in the same way as the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union gave communism salience during the Cold War. In fact, it marked an extension of Saudi Arabia's long-standing policy of countering revisionist states through Islamic rhetoric. When Gamal Abdel Nasser's popularity skyrocketed after the 1956 Suez Crisis, Saudi King Faysal tried to dilute the influence of pan-Arabism by portraying himself as an Islamic leader (Al-Rasheed 2008). This was possible because the House of Saud functions as the protector of the holy city of Mecca. In fact, it was necessary as there was no widespread sense of Saudi nationalism to counter the pan-Arabist narrative. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a young state which was formally established in 1932. In lieu of a developed sense of national identity, the House of Saud relied on an alliance with Wahhabi clerics to shore up its internal legitimacy (Matthiesen 2015; Ochsenwald 2007). Its Islamic credentials were therefore of the outmost importance to the security of its rule

This is also why the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran was perceived as such a significant threat by the Saudis. Upon seizing power, the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini actively sought to foment unrest elsewhere, and it repeatedly attacked the House of Saud as betraying Islam by being beholden to the US (Gause 2014; Korany, Hilāl, and Kheir 2010; Aarts and Nonneman 2005). Both states sought to outmanoeuvre the other by claiming the mantle of Islam, and this developed sectarian undertones. Iran was rarely able to ally with Sunni groups with Hamas being the most important exception before the Syrian civil war (2011-) ruined the relationship. Saudi Arabia on the other hand, has sought to isolate Iran politically by supporting a Sunni "Wall" of anti-Iranian regimes in Iraq, Pakistan, and

elsewhere (Gause 2010; Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr 2006). At different points Saudi Arabia has supported the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, Jama'at-Islami in South Asia, Hizb-Islami in Afghanistan, Hamas, FIS in Algeria, and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam in Nigeria (Ayoob 2008: 54).

This does not mean that militant groups throughout the region are simply products of the Iran-Saudi rivalry, as groups such as Hezbollah display significant ability to exploit Iran-Saudi tensions to their own benefit (Hamzeh 2004). Nevertheless, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been central to the regional ideological context within which such groups operate, and has made Islamism an attractive option for groups to attract external support. This was a stark contrast to the 1950s and 1960s when the main-lines of contention in the Middle East were between secular and nationalist regimes who relied on ethnic rhetoric, particularly pan-Arabism, to exercise influence abroad (Barnett 1993).

By the 1990s, non-Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world were increasingly challenged by religious alternatives, such as Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas) to rival the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), The Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, and the establishment of Hizbullah among Shi'ites in Lebanon from AMAL. Islamists managed to pressure the newly united Yemen in 1994 to declare itself an Islamic state, while the Taliban under Mullah Omar defeated rival Afghan warlords in 1996 and subsequently established an Islamic Emirate (Yemelianova 2011).

A key condition for modern nation states to operate efficiently is that its citizens no longer define themselves primarily as members of a local association, a tribe, or an ethnic group, but rather see themselves as part of an imagined community centred on the state which transcends these divides (Wimmer 2018). Yet, in many cases the state itself was a product of either European imperialism, or the subjugation of Muslim one ethnic group by another

Muslim ethnic group or sect. The state was further de-legitimized by the recurring tendency for the state being beholden to clientelist networks, leaving people without access to these networks to fend for themselves.

The result has been that these states have had the capacity to pursue modernization through industrialisation, urbanization, and political centralization, disrupting traditional institutions such as clan and village ties as providers of welfare, while failing to take make the state itself the object for the loyalties of its citizens. In the absence of the state as the provider of public goods to its subjects, the onus has been for various components of civil society to step in. In many cases, this responsibility has fallen on religious networks centred on mosques and religious seminaries, either with the tacit or explicit permission of the state. Social capital has therefore in multiple cases shifted away from traditional institutions, but to religious institutions rather than the state. “Islamization” is therefore manifested in the shift in social capital towards religious networks, away from other types of networks, thereby making mobilization along religious lines a viable option for political entrepreneurs.

This role for religious institutions to respond to the social problems which follow from the transition from modernity, has shaped the content of political Islam to in some cases be tied to the grievances of the disgruntled lower middle class and urban and rural poor. Political expressions of Islam is therefore often tied to radical social demands in a more populist and anti-clerical way than the anti-colonial Sufi uprisings of the past (Hadiz 2016; Starrett 1998: 232). This, not least because the clergy is often seen as being too close to existing elites.

Zubaida (1996: 150) argues that ; “Islam has become a dominant idiom for the expression of a range of different political positions, social aspirations, and frustrations.” Robert Malley argues that Islam possesses “an *efficacy* as a language of radical insurgency”

but also points out that “Islam offers more than enough latitude to justify social protest and political immobilism, progress and retrogression, militancy and quietism (Malley 1996: 234). The concrete expression that Islam gains in the political realm, I argue, is a function of the social ties, networks, and institutions on which religious political movements are built. The ambiguous relationship of the modern state to these institutions has had the oscillating effect of such groups at times supporting the status quo by strengthening civil society, and at other times challenging the state itself. There has been a qualitative shift from the distributive state towards the security state as state disengagement from social life through the elimination of subsidies, privatization and contracting out of businesses, and the privatization and schooling and social services, often to Islamic institutions. Social disengagement leads to the rise of informal economic activities and public goods provision as non-state actors take it upon themselves to govern (Ismail 2006).

Modern political Islam has therefore been strongly shaped by the rise of post-colonial authoritarian regimes which at times deferred to religious networks to either outcompete oppositional political parties, or to take on social functions such as welfare provision. At the same time, such Islamist actors have often been full integration into the political mainstream through participation in fair election through fair elections, which in many cases would have been a sure way to political power (Hadiz 2016: 35). In Turkey, rapid industrialization and economic crises paved the way for communism among the urban underclass and ethnic Kurds. At the same time, Islamists gained ground among migrants from the rural areas into shantytowns in the cities, as the Islamist National Salvation Party provided job opportunities, welfare, and social connections, and state repression of the communists allowed Islamists to become a stronger political force (Kandil 2016: 175). Yet, Islamists were repeatedly denied or thrown out of public offices by the Turkish military, until the early 2000s.

Thus, while the religion itself is not new, the social basis for religious political expression has shifted away from being the onus of traditionalist clergy or Sufi Brotherhoods which were intertwined with royal power. To a range of disparate social activists and revolutionaries, Islam became a vehicle for modern mass-politics to appeal to those not given the promised fruits of modernization (Eickelman 1998: 266; Lee 2011). There is something about multiple social shifts, including social fragmentation, rising literacy, urbanization, and the globalization of tribes, which has reshaped Islam's political significance. It allowed Islam to be articulated into a populist ideology where the "pious" masses stand in opposition to elites.

3.2.5 The War on Terror 2001 – 2020s

A key feature of Islamist militancy in recent decades is its association with peripheral actors, often tribes who historically have resisted encroachments by states on their traditional lands. While modern states in Western Europe developed around ethnic-markers, and the development of national-romanticism in the 19th century helped create a narrative of how modern nation states were the end-result of the struggles of primordial national groups, the same was not as true in many Muslim countries. In the Middle East, there were few cases of something like a proto-nationalist identity developing before the 19th and 20th century, with Iran being a possible exception (Keddie 1969: 18). However, even in this case, the administrative and cultural reach of the Iranian state in its rural hinterlands was limited, especially in areas populated by ethnic minority-groups and semi-nomadic tribes. The projects of nation-building around an Iranian state and state-led development were therefore strongly focused on the urban and Iranian-speaking areas in northern and central Iran (Kashani-Sabet 2013; Matthee 2015).

The pre-modern states in much of the Muslim world were therefore inherently pluralistic, though strongly authoritarian, in the sense that the centre would secure its hinterlands through political alliances between the state and the leaders of tribes and minority-ethnic groups (Keddie 1969). Lustick (1997) contrasts this to nation-building in the US and parts of Europe where the character of modern nations were defined by historical instances of genocide, ethnic cleansing, or forced cultural assimilation for example in the US displacement and extermination of the Native Americans, the Albigensian Crusade in France, or the English conquests of Scotland and Wales. He also argues that the option of completely destroying peripheral forces has disappeared from the repertoire of Middle Eastern states, because as in the case of Saddam Hussein's campaigns against Iraq's Kurds, outside actors are inclined to prevent this from happening.

The same processes of the state carving out and monopolizing authority and service-provision within its borders are still ongoing in many Muslim countries. A governance unit is "...that territorial unit which is responsible for providing the bulk of social order and other collective goods—including protection from confiscation, justice and welfare—to its members" (Hechter 2000: 9). Group identities tend to form around these systems for welfare, which for most of human history have not been nation-states, but rather personal family, village, and tribal ties. The loyalties of those who are formally recognized to be citizens are not necessarily directed towards the state itself, and people may attempt to carve out spheres of local governance or to appropriate the resources of the state for their own narrow social groups (Dixit 2007; Williamson 2002). Systems of informal governance will often develop to take on functions which the state cannot provide satisfactorily. For example, there's a tendency for residents in "informal" neighbourhoods to develop parallel legal institutions, and there are such examples of religious courts in low-income neighbourhoods of Istanbul and Cairo (Belge and Blaydes 2014). Such institutions may attract the loyalties of locals,

even above the state itself. Fundamentally, there's a link between the organization of civil society, and how political grievances are articulated and expressed.

Loyalty to sub-national groups have, maybe paradoxically, in some cases developed in tandem with the emergence of authoritarian regimes who treat certain types of informal governance as complimentary to their own authority. One example is Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq where he recruited members for his most loyal forces from specific tribes seen as loyal to him personally. Iraq went through a period of detribalization in the 1960s and 1970s, but became increasingly dependent on tribe-state ties to remain in power during the 1980-1989 war with Iran, and especially after the Kuwait war and the Shia and Kurdish insurgency in 1991 (Dawod 2018: 21). This included state patronage of the clerical Sadr-family among the traditionally irreligious Shia (Krohley 2015). The patronage of clerical and tribal actors and repression of other organizations, partially explains why Iraqi Shi'ites organized around religious lines upon the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. This may not have been possible before the late 1980s. Some of these groups, such as Muqtada al-Sadr's Badr brigade, have their strongholds in the slums of cities like Baghdad where they remain a more important provider of welfare and security than the state (Ibrahim 2010: 10). What cases such cases illustrate is that even in areas where the state might have a strong military presence, there might develop local and informal forms of governance through religious networks which become the primary providers of public goods such as welfare or education in lieu of the state (Dorman 2009).

The ideological content of the various strands of militant Islamism was strongly influenced by the Iranian revolution and Shi'ite groups such as Hezbollah from 1979 among Shi'ites, and increasingly by the experiences of foreign fighters to Afghanistan among Sunnis. Furthermore, specific ideas associated with the Salafist or Wahhabist brand of Islam with roots in Saudi Arabia was spurred on by a transnational network of clerics and madrasas

with ties to the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi establishment to counter the influence of hostile actors like Iran (Prokop 2003: 84). This puritanical strand of Islam traditionally considers Sufis and Shi'ites to be apostates and idolaters and therefore not Muslims and has been associated with sectarian violence in recent decades, especially after the Iraq invasion in 2003 (Nasr 2000; 2006).

The Sunni jihadism which developed in the 1950s and after had largely been a domestic phenomenon until a generation of Arab mujahideen travelled to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets in the 1980s. Al-Qaeda, which was established in Afghanistan in 1988, represented a marriage between Egyptian radical Islamism through Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian contingent and Arab ultra-conservatism through Osama Bin Laden's financial resources and Saudi and Yemeni supporters. Adopting Sayyid Qutb's idea of the need for an ideological vanguard to bring about a pious society but turning Qutb's strategic priorities on their head by targeting the West rather than Muslim regimes, al-Qaeda became infamous in the West through attacks on the World Trade Centre in 1993 and 2001, U.S embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam in 1998, and the USS Cole in 2000.

The War on Terror after the September 11, 2001 attacks would give these militant variants of Islamism a major boost as Afghanistan and Iraq were destabilized. Furthermore, Muslim regimes such as Pakistan, and non-Muslim regimes with Muslim minorities, such as Russia, realised the opportunity to utilize the US war on terror to crack down on oppositional forces and or uncontrolled peripheries. By declaring such operations to be targeting terrorists, states could either attract material support from the US, such as in the case of Pakistan or achieve some degree of international legitimacy for offensives against peripheries as happened with Russia's operations in Chechnya.

This showdown between centre and periphery has furthermore fundamentally reshaped how peripheral groups respond to challenges from the centre. Jihadism has become intertwined with a reimagination of tribalism in the last thirty years as new types of actors have emerged in the peripheries to challenge the encroaching state (Martin 2014). In tribal societies, social cohesion is the product of organically developed social institutions, not least through acute awareness of genealogy which plays an important role in defining in- and out-group belonging (Beck 1991: 67). This is also associated with particular tribal codes, and institutions such as elder-councils, which manage both internal disputes, and between tribes. While tribal systems are defined by the lack of a monopoly of power for any one actor, they rely on complex traditions and institutions for conflict-resolution through common understandings of codes of honour, elder councils, and religious veneration.

Globalization and modernity is not just reshaping how states act towards their peripheries, but is also fundamentally changing tribal systems themselves. Economic globalization has made tribes significant power players in global black markets as producers or intermediaries in the trade of illegal goods such as narcotics. This access to global markets have also given tribes access to resources to challenge the central state. This includes reaping monetary benefits of taxing trade, legal or illegal, access to weapons, and the opportunity to form strategic alliances with transnational organizations who can provide ideological and military training (Roy 2018: 5). This has not only shifted the balance of power against the state, however, but also allowed individuals from lower lineages who are marginalized by traditional succession rules, to challenge tribal institutions and elders. In several cases this involves rebelling against tribal elites which have been nominated by the central state, allowing it to rule indirectly through its tribal clients (Khoury et al. 1990: 13). Tribal leaders who received the patronage of states often gained access to state-subsidies as well, giving them the discretion to favour their own, simultaneously alienating tribesmen who did not

have the right personal connections. State patronage thereby both reinforced the traditional tribal system by ruling peripheral lands through tribal proxies, but also undermined the tribal system by favouring pro-government tribal leaders who lost legitimacy in the eyes of tribesmen who saw them as corrupt and unwilling to represent the interests of the tribes against the state.

These frustrations were channelled through new ideologies. There's a long history of clerical figures emerging among the tribes in the 18th, 19th, and the early 20th century as military leaders. Tribal clerics were often of marginal political significance, they would sometimes utilize their capacity to negotiate among the tribes to emerge as figureheads to rise up against the colonial or post-colonial state. This includes the alliance between the House of Saud and Wahhabi clerics, the Mahdist uprising in Sudan, the Somali Dervish War, Fula expansionism in West Africa, and the mullahs of the Pashtun belt who multiple times organised insurrections against the British colonial state.

These clerical figures, usually Sufi shaykhs, emerged as vehicles for spiritual rejuvenation and thereby political mobilization in times of political crisis among the tribes through their function as brokers among segments of the population (Knysh 2017: 177-182). In addition to functioning as third-party intermediates between tribes, shaykhs were also often venerated as saints after their deaths, and their tombs were seen as neutral grounds which accommodated travellers and locals and provided social services. Such shrines also served as meeting points between different tribes, giving living shaykhs the ability to play a mediating role in inter-tribal disputes (Black 2011: 133).

In the 20th century, however, Sufism was increasingly seen as conservative, politically quietist, and associated with existing power-structures which created some degree of resentment towards it among reformers and radical activists who have held it responsible for

maintaining superstitions and for defending corrupt elites. Such attacks came from figures such as Maududi and Qutb, but also from other Salafi ideologues who saw most forms of Sufism as a form of superstition (Hartung 2013; Toth 2013). Salafism emphasized personal interpretation of the religion over defence of authority, allowing younger generations and tribesmen from lower lineages to break with tribal elders and clerics to challenge them in either discursive disputes or through violence (Collombier 2018: 161).

The meaning of jihad changed from the notion of protecting Muslim lands, to peripheral tribes claiming they are part of a global jihad against distant enemies which Muslim regimes are pawns of. The ability of such actors to draw ideological inspiration from or declare allegiance to groups such as al-Qaeda implies connecting articulating local grievances through a transnational ideology which may give access to networks of financial or material support. While tribalism is condemned by Salafi groups as dividing Muslims, the access to this ideology allows tribes to contest the state, not just from below, but also from above by involving outside actors (Roy 2018). Doing so can shift the balance of power in favour of tribes in the game of contestation between the state and peripheral actors, and has played this role among Sunni groups in Yemen, Afghanistan, Mali, Pakistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Variance in the emergence of Islamist actors is to a large degree contingent on the ability of the state to adapt to these developments. The regimes of Niger and Chad established national Islamic associations to regulate the religious sphere, while Mauritania and Mali which contributed to the rise of Salafi jihadism there (Elischer 2019).

As noted by Olivier Roy (2018; 7) instrumentalist explanations do not explain why tribes stick to jihadism when it backfires through increased repression from the state and foreign forces. There might be tangible material advantages to Salafism because it allows for cross-group trust in trade and smuggling networks, but there is also a dimension of genuine belief as younger generations of lower lineage have in recent decades emerged at the expense

of tribal elders and Sufi leaders. The power of Salafism in these areas is not just a strategic counter to the state. It also represents a form of social radicalism among marginalized actors who seek to rearrange the local order. The infusion of religion into this has reshaped tribal peripheries from kinship-rivalries to a cosmic struggle (Khoury et al. 1990).

One conclusion to draw from this is that Islamism enjoys different degrees of ideological momentum both globally, but also locally in various regions, sub-regions, cities, and neighbourhoods. This momentum is tied to specific organizations, networks, and social alliances, which also means that it should be possible to trace the degree to which Islamism may resonate in various societies at different points in history through the institutions that pervade in these societies. Civil society is often fragmented or non-existent as the state dominates from above, paving the way for religious institutions to operate from below (Hertog 2010: 30). Many of these people who live in places of incomplete industrialization, recent urbanization, with the consequence that state institutions are superficial (Derluigian 2005: 75). In such contexts, people instead turn to informal networks and patronage, and these same networks can be used for mobilization either if the state oversteps certain boundaries, or if state institutions collapse. The presence of Islamic institutions is what determines the viability of Islamism as an ideology of insurgency.

3.3 Initial Theoretical Inferences and the Guiding Model

One inference which may be made from the historical outline above, is that the macro-historical trend towards Islamism becoming viable as an ideology for political mobilization is intimately tied to shifts in the broader social-institutional configurations in Muslim societies. The processes behind this shift can be seen through the broad lens of modernization, or rather incomplete modernization, as the internal expansion of the state, industrialization, internal migration, new communications technologies, and the expansion of

political participation has undermined traditional institutions and hierarchies while paving way for new ideas and modes of organization (Gellner 1991: 6).

Such social disruptions allowed for the development of modern mass politics in its populist and individualized forms, which has had significant influence on the development of Islamism. It was built on the shift of religious authority away from traditional authorities, towards the individual, paving the way for Islamism as an anti-hegemonic ideology carried by the grievances of disenfranchised segments of the population. It has been posited that religious networks were more resilient compared to secular alternatives because of the organizational leeway that mosques were conferred in even the most repressive Muslim regimes, along with a tendency of authoritarian regimes to utilize Islamists to repress the left (Sahliyeh 1990: 13). This was accompanied by the narrowing of ideological options for expressing dissent as liberal, social democratic, and other leftist organizations, either due to repression or due to the general decline of socialist options due to the collapse of the Soviet Union (Halperin 2005; Pratt 2007).

Derluquian (2005) argues with regards to the Soviet republics in the Caucasus that Islamism was a reaction to the collapse of the developmental state whose attempts at social reform and economic modernization led to social dislocation through the decline of the rural economy, leading to the creation of a large urban sub-proletariat. This underclass, uprooted from ancestral lands and familial ties, and were left to their own devices as the state withdrew from social life, creating a social vacuum into which more fundamentalist practices of Islam gained root. This was manifested in the transfer of social capital away from traditional institutions, towards new forms of networks which were often organized around religion, either because of competitive advantages for religious networks, or because these were the last viable option for maintaining social cohesion (Fukuyama 2001; Safran and Liu 2012: 273).

The character of political mobilization is therefore strongly intertwined with the spread of social capital among various networks in a society at any time. Indeed, the character of rebel groups is endogenous to the pre-war networks and institutions from which they originate. Yet, the pre-war social landscape of institutions and networks, and their legacy effects on the ideational and tactical profiles of rebel groups and how civil wars unfold, is severely understudied.

The major exception to this is Staniland's (2012; 2014) work on rebel group performance in war as a function of the material and organizational capacities of pre-existing social ties which would-be rebel leaders must appropriate to mount an insurgency. Staniland (2014: 221) points out that there is an intimate connection between ideology and the process of rebel-group formation, though he decides to take the origins of ideologies as given. I seek to build on this approach by both explaining the origins of particular social bases, and the ideational legacies of these social bases on the ideological trajectories of rebel groups (Checkel 2017).

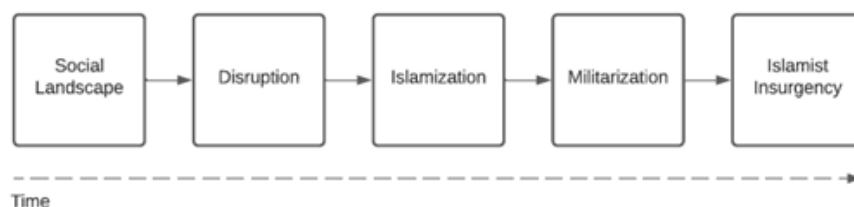
The networks on which rebel groups are built will already be imbued with norms and values which sets the broad boundaries within which would-be rebel leaders articulate the political frames and goals of their groups. Therefore, the prevalence of different types of networks and institutions prior to wars, may have significant influence on the ideological programme of emerging rebel groups. Simply put, the ideology of rebel groups is endogenous to the mobilization process, and the pre-war institutions they emerge from.

This assumption is heavily influenced by Gould's (1995) observation that whereas the 1848 revolution in France revolved around class-identity, the 1871 Paris commune was built on neighbourhood-solidarity. This ideological shift, he argues, was a consequence of mobilisation in 1871 occurring along network-connections which cut across class. This made

communal identity plausible as a *participation identity* in 1871 in ways that it could not have in 1848. Similarly, an individual may identify as ‘Arab,’ ‘Somali,’ ‘Hawiye,’ or ‘Muslim,’ but the process of mobilization may give primacy to one of these identities as a political frame. This ideological frame, shaped by the social ties on which mobilization is built, defines the identity and grievances which tie a group of people together, against a defined political opponent (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015; Straus 2015; Maynard 2022).

I argue that there is something fundamentally missing to civil war studies if we ignore the ideational legacies of pre-war institutions on the trajectories of rebel groups. However, I also argue that the focus should not only be on the networks rebel groups emerged from, but also on the broader social landscape which defined society before it plunged into warfare. This is because the mechanisms to explain the outbreak of war are found, not only in the groups themselves, but in the broader societal context in which they operate. To guide the following inductive empirical sections, I propose the following model:

Figure 4: Guiding Inductive Model



Note that the purpose of this model is to guide the empirical study of specific cases, drawing out attention to the critical junctures which may steer a society towards an Islamist insurgency. It is not in itself a theoretical explanation of this outcome. It consists of the following components:

- 1) A Pre-war Social Landscape: Revolutions and wars are defined by a pre-existing social landscape of networks, associations, institutions, and other social ties which define the broad ideological contours of political mobilization (Gould 1995). The distribution of social

capital among networks with different ideational profiles prior to an event such as revolution or war, defines relevant conflict cleavages and the ideological contours of emergent political movements (Ayubi 1995; Gellner 2008; Malesevic 2015). Skocpol argued that social revolutions were recurring features of a particular type of society, that of agrarian societies which were being transformed into centralised and bureaucratic national states, but which collapsed through a combination of internal and external factors (Skocpol 1994: 5).

This means that we cannot fully understand why wars break out, unless we also uncover the processes which gave rise to particular networks and institutions which had the social capital for militant mobilization at critical junctures and times of political crisis. It means focusing on the broader social-institutional context which promoted certain types of institutions over others, and how different social contexts favoured some types of institutions over others. Likewise, the viability of Islamism as an ideology of rebellion is a function of the prevalence of particular types of institutions and networks in a society, and the character of these must be uncovered to fully understand the rise of Islamist ideology among rebel groups. Would-be rebel leaders must typically rely on pre-existing networks and organisations in the initial stage of mobilisation which are imbued with norms and values which set certain boundaries for ideological innovation. Leaders certainly do have agency to promote new ideological frames, but straying too drastically from existing norms may backfire, especially in politically stable contexts (Ahmad 2019; Pierson 2004).

The key question in studying the pre-war social landscape is to what degree pre-existing social institutions or the state are strong and resilient against political shocks. Huntington (1968) argued that revolution was integral to modernisation, and something that will occur in in-between societies, neither in traditional societies with simple economies, nor in highly modernized societies, but is rather an aspect of modernization and is most likely to occur in societies which have experienced some degree of social and economic development

which unsettled traditional society. Furthermore, civil society should not be understood as the antithesis of radicalism and militancy, but civil society has shifting functions which absent strong political institutions may become the basis of violence rather than social cohesion.

The rise of Islamist groups depends on whether pre-existing social institutions are able to survive external shocks and times of political crisis, or even slow-processes which fuel social grievances. In cases in which they do not, religious networks may often function as nodes for social cohesion which gives them relative importance, allowing a shift in social capital which makes Islamist mobilization more viable. At its most fundamental level, the political significance of these social configurations follows from their ability to fulfil demands for security and public goods provision (Wimmer 2013). The degrees to which these demands are fulfilled may also have significant influence on whether insurgencies develop and how mobilization occurs.

Theories of ideology and civil war therefore need to focus, not only on the “supply” of ideological stances by rebels, but must also factor in the “demands” of the populace they seek to govern (Alesina and Spolaore 1997; Tilly 1990; Weber 1965; Gellner 2008). Societies can be distinguished by the degree to which they are cohesive and fragmented, measured by the institutional structure of civil society (Gellner 2008; Huntington 1968; Woltering 2002). The types of institutions, or lack thereof, which define pre-war social landscapes determines how a community responds to political turmoil. I argue that the most basic demands of the populace will revolve around whether existing institutions can provide 1) security, measured through the degree to which the capacity for violence is fractionalized among many or few actors, and 2) their ability in satisfying the demands for public goods (Alesina and Spolaore 1997; Tilly 1990; Wimmer 2013; 2018).

This has a major implication in terms of how to study civil wars, namely by starting from the assumption that civil wars are not all the same. Rather, as illustrated by table 2, pre-

war societies are defined by fundamentally different social-institutional contexts, and this will influence the probable causal pathways to war as well (Weber 1965). For example, the fractionalization-dimension constrains the methods available to revolutionary actors, as a context in which power is concentrated in one actor will be more likely to experience protests and indirect violence through terrorism, while insurgencies are more likely to occur in more fractionalized societies.

The provision of public goods may range from the personal fiscal needs of the populace, to education, or a functioning judicial system and a predictable environment for doing business. What is most important, is that certain social structures generates certain needs, and the needs of a tribal village in a mountainous periphery will differ from that of sub-proletarians in an urban slum (Beissinger 2002: 10). This also means that the grievances which fuel in these different societies may fundamentally differ, even if groups which arise from both contexts are Islamist.

Table 2 Pre-war Social Landscape

Fractionalization of Capacity for Violence	Public goods provision	
	High	Low
High	Archipelago - Localized Governance City States, Tribal-Confederacy, Neighbourhood-Fiefs	Disorder Failed states, Conflict-Zones
Low	Cohesive Governance Nation-State, some absolutist monarchies/benevolent dictatorships	Nightwatchman – Dysfunctional State, Oligarchy, Tyranny, Empire

The basic intuition in table 2 is that when fractionalization is high and public goods provision is low, there will be greater political *disorder* as the populace's governance-demands are unfulfilled. Conversely, a situation of *cohesive governance* will likely to be more politically stable. In an *archipelago*-system, the capacity for violence will be spread across multiple political actors, but these are internally cohesive and able to govern effectively locally. A *nightwatchman*-system is defined by a high concentration of the capacity for violence in one or a few actors, but these are either unwilling or unable to provide other public goods.

These categories are associated with different social-demands and conflict-issues which drives political conflict. Each category may be associated with multiple mechanisms for civil war, but some mechanisms may only be logically compatible with one of the categories. For example, civil wars are by definition less likely to erupt in systems of cohesive governance or nightwatchman systems where power is concentrated in one or a few actors, which means violence is more likely to take the form of mass protest, repression, or terrorism. This unless an external shock causes the central power to collapse, in which case it would move towards an Archipelago-system, or a state of disorder. The specific mechanisms which fuel Islamist insurgencies will not all be the same, but there might be recurring "sets" of mechanisms associated with different societal-types. For example, in contexts approximating a state of disorder, new actors may step in to take on governance-functions in response to demands from the populace, including civilians, community leaders, and businesspeople who seek safety or reduced transaction costs for doing business (Ahmad 2015; 2017; Spruyt 1994; Weber 1997). Religious institutions are not necessarily inherently better at taking on such roles, but have in many cases been more resilient than the alternatives because other groups were the target of repression (ʿAnānī 2021; Hadiz 2016; Zubaida 2000), or due to unprecedented access to financial and other forms of support from the local

business community or from abroad (Cammett and Luong 2014; Munir 2021; Brooke 2019). Consequently, Islamic institutions have in many cases taken on functions previously reserved for traditional village or tribal institutions, or the state, to emerge as providers of welfare or security, and therefore of social cohesion (Brooke 2017; 2019; Magadlah 2021).

The logic in Table 2 applies to all rebel groups, not just Islamist rebel groups. However, if we are to explain why an Islamist insurgency emerges in one context, but a non-Islamist insurgency develops in another, it is imperative to ensure that these are actually comparable in terms of their underlying political dynamics, and the social demands which triggers political mobilisation. Whether or not this demand is fulfilled by Islamist groups, rather than something else, is a matter of historically contingent positionality. Specifically, it is a question of whether religious networks and institutions are best positioned to respond to these social demands and conflict issues, or whether social capital lies elsewhere. The fact that it in many cases has been Islamist groups which have mobilised in response to such underlying social issues is not necessarily due to some competitive advantage for religious organisations. It is instead associated with a specific point in history where alternatives such as trade unions, political parties, or traditional institutions have been repressed or delegitimised (Hadiz 2016: 4; Zubaida 2000: 61). They have in many cases been the last effective source of social cohesion as processes of modernization such as industrialisation, monetarisation, and economic globalisation has spurred on social fragmentation, rendering traditional village or genealogical ties ineffective, especially where the state has been unable or unwilling to take on such functions (Malley 1996; Derluguian 2005; Wallerstein 1999).

If the rise of Islamism as a political ideology can be understood as “Islamization” of a society, then this should be studied, not just as an abstract zeitgeist, but through the relative

importance of the institutions which carry these idea-systems and give them social and political significance.¹⁰

Public demands for stability in a disorderly context can therefore be one pathway to Islamization. Whether or not these institutions in turn militarize is dependent on the ability of a militant-ideological vanguard to seize leadership positions and outcompete moderates.

Conversely, in societies with lower levels of fractionalisation with institutions capable of providing public goods, there will be greater institutional continuity which prevents similar shifts in social capital towards religious institutions, which also means that the mechanisms which drive an Islamist insurgency in a system closer to the archipelago- or nightwatchman-systems will have fundamentally different causes than one which arises in a disorderly system, because the social demands and grievances which fuel an insurgency may also differ fundamentally across societal-types.

2) Disruption: When political stability and the institutions and authority which underpins it is disrupted, room is paved for experiments in new forms of organization, conflict resolution, and community building. The upsetting of the political order by a political shock creates certain social demands which either requires the invention of new institutions, or the reconfiguration of existing ones. It is not inevitable that these social demands will be filled by religiously-oriented institutions. This is rather a question of which actors and institutions are best positioned to fill these social demands at a particular juncture, and it is a matter of historical contingency, rather than an inherent feature of Islam, that these social functions have been taken on by religious institutions in widely different Muslim societies in recent decades (Gellner 1991; Ibn Khaldūn 1969).

¹⁰ Skocpol (1994: 18) discusses how Iran's pre-existing Shia Islamic culture only proved conducive in a specific social-institutional context in the 1970s, and not before.

Such disruptions can occur rapidly through external shocks such as wars or natural disasters, but can also occur through more incremental shifts whereby existing institutions become inept and fail to fulfil the social function which they were initially devised to fulfil. Such incremental changes can therefore be linked to the broader processes of modernization which include the monetarization of traditional barter-based or sustenance-based economies, migration patterns, and education which undermine traditional authority. The rationale of having a government is to provide and regulate collective goods, which includes having a judicial system, or providing security for its subjects (Weber 1978: 905).

In lieu of these functions being taken on by state-institutions, civil society actors are likely to take initiative in setting up their own institutions, which may or may not be at odds with the authority of the state. This has historically been the function of tribal institutions and other kinship-ties. Criminal networks may also take on such functions, for example by enforcing property rights in illegal markets (Ostrom 1990). Ideology may significantly influence the ways in which people set about to solve such social issues. There is, for example, a reoccurring tendency for there to be a demand for Shariah to be implemented in contexts where state institutions are weak or absent (Barnes and Hassan 2007; Ibrahim 2019; Brynjar Lia 2015; Skretting 2022; Eltantawi 2018).

Particular attention should therefore be paid to the critical junctures at which political turmoil leads to new social alliances and greater tolerance for ideological innovation, not least as political entrepreneurs seek to outbid moderates and re-appropriate existing associations for political action (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Slater and Simmons 2010).

3) Islamization: As pre-existing social ties and institutions cease to serve their intended social and political function, new modes of organization may emerge in response to demands for public goods provision. If networks and institutions organized around Islam take on new social functions in lieu of state or traditional institutions, the ideational terms on

which social organization and political mobilization revolves shifts towards religious identity. These institutions may in some contexts supersede the state and traditional institutions in attracting the loyalty of the populace they govern (Hall and Biersteker 2002: 216). Communities may develop around the institutions which tie disparate individuals together, which also means that new institutions may redefine the distinctions between insiders and outsiders and broader social cleavages (Hechter 2000; Hegghammer 2010).

Social ties organized around Islam provides a useful basis for such experiments in local governance because it has a familiarity of language and imagery, as well as legitimacy, which transcends ethnic, tribal, linguistic, and clan-divides (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004; Svensson and Nilsson 2022; Cammett and Luong 2014). This cross-group legitimacy may also be a partial explanation why religious networks under some contexts have a greater capacity to take on tasks such as public-goods provision (Brooke 2017; 2019), not least due to having the support of the business community (Ahmad 2017; Ashraf 1988; Mozaffari 1991), or because of financial support from abroad (Formichi 2020; Vannetzel and Yankaya 2019; Jaffrelot and Louër 2019; Gul 2010b; Crenshaw 2017; Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr 2006). Ultimately, the question of which pre-existing institutions will step in to fill vacuums of governance depends on the distribution of social capital, which in some contexts will favour religious institutions. The “Islamization” of civil society entails such a shift in social capital away from secular alternatives, towards religious institutions.

Dense associational webs can develop in such contexts as Islamic institutions and figureheads become all-encompassing among locals, helping build a sense of community and collective identity. Berman argues that this has been the case in Egypt where state repression has left only Islamic associations as sources of social cohesion in civil society, as well as providing a platform for articulating grievances against the state (Berman 2003: 266). Such

communities can both serve as alternatives to the state, but also a form of protest against a state-order.

Such shifts are often driven by local charismatic leaders in the form of preachers who seek to transcend the segmentary features of tribal societies (Caron 2016; Knysh 2017; Lewis 1955). This is also intertwined with a fragmentation of authority within Islam whereby Sufi shaykhs no longer hold a monopoly on religious mobilization. While this may have democratized religious interpretation, it has also made it more dangerous by creating a more competitive market for religious outbidding in the form of more populist variations of Islamism (Hadiz 2016: 188). The shift in social capital towards new types of institutions also allows for mobilization along new ideological lines, in this case Islamism (Paffenholz 2010: 70). Religious ideology gains a function equivalent to nationalism as "...a collective sentiment or identity, bounding and binding together those individuals who share a sense of large-scale political solidarity aimed at creating, legitimating, or challenging states" (Marx 2003: 6)

4) Militarization: The above logic assumes that certain types of Islamic institutions emerge in response to the demand for solutions to specific social problems, or as a form of protest against established institutions or the state. The rise of Islamist institutions need therefore not imply a rise in violence, and many Islamist institutions recognise the sovereignty of the state and government (Elischer 2019). Furthermore, the use of violence may often be a heavily contentious issue within such institutions as members congregate around rival leaders and factions with different visions for their organisations. Militancy may often be considered a red line not to be crossed during times of political stability (Schwedler 2011: 360).

The shift in social capital towards Islamic institutions therefore implies greater capacity for mobilisation around Islamist ideology, but does not necessarily imply violence.

The turn to militancy therefore requires that a violent entrepreneur or ideological vanguard manages to repurpose such institutions for the purposes of violent action. Such actors may be more likely to succeed in this endeavour trigger events in which feelings of outrage, injustice, and insecurity, can be exploited to seize leadership positions by portraying themselves as better able to protect against, or punish external transgressors (Ahmad 2019: 84).

The reverse also holds true. If friendly relations with outside actors are maintained, and the state integrates Islamic institutions into the formal political sphere, then non-violent Islamists may be able to marginalize militants and prevent militarization. The militarization of Islamic institutions therefore depends on the ability of militant vanguards in capturing pre-existing networks for the purposes of war, and this is a crucial factor in explaining spatial and temporal variation in the outbreak of Islamist insurgencies (Elischer 2019).

Logic summarized: Civil society is composed by a landscape of associations with different ideological profiles and capacities for mobilization. The distribution of social capital among such networks and institutions plays a central role in why particular ideologies are ascendant in particular political movements. We can only uncover why an Ideology such as Islamism became ascendant by uncovering the social-institutional foundations of political movements which mobilized around this ideology. Disruptions to pre-existing institutions paves the way for new associations to fulfil the demands of the populace or narrower segments of the population such as the business community. If this role is taken on specifically by Islamic institutions, there will be a shift in social capital and momentum towards Islamic organizations which also makes Islamization more viable as an ideology for political mobilization. This does not inevitably imply militancy, but Islamist institutions may be more likely to militarize if hostility by outside actors allows militant sub-factions to outcompete moderates to seize the reins of the movement. Moderate Islamists may be able to resist such pressures if a cooperative relationship is fostered with outside actors.

There are also different pathways to Islamist insurgency, and the underlying mechanisms which drive them are tied to different pre-war societal types which are associated with different political challenges and grievances.

Negative expectations: I do not expect Islamist insurgencies to emerge where 1) pre-war institutions are relatively strong and survive external shocks, and 2) where existing institutions collapse, but governance-functions are taken on by non-religious institutions, or 3) where religious institutions do govern but in coordination with outside actors.

Alternative Explanations: This approach focuses on local institutions and how these transform into bases for violent mobilization. However, Islamization can also occur through other channels, for example if transnational networks establish themselves locally, or if existing institutions rebrand themselves as Islamists to gain political and strategic advantages. A high prevalence of ideological rebranding at the organizational level, or the creation of Islamist rebel movements by non-locals may run contrary to the intuition in this thesis due to the strong focus on legacy-effects of institutions. That being said, I also expect that ideological rebranding, and transnational influence will be more effective under specific societal-types.

Chapter 4 Methodological Framework

4.1 Inductive Comparison of Historical Processes and Institutions

The focus of this thesis on macro-historical ideological shifts in civil wars, and the ways in which these are intertwined with micro-level mechanisms fuelled by pre-war social-institutional structures, leads to something of a quandary. These aspects of civil war have not been a top priority in the literature, meaning that the theoretical work on these different parts, and not to speak of their interrelationships, is still in its infancy. Though this complicates the research process, it also provides an opportunity for more experimental approaches to empirics and theory-building in ways which are less encumbered by scholarly traditions.

To this end, I continue to rely on the inductive and theory-building approach used so far, but I move from a general macro-historical focus, to exploring national and sub-national variance to pin-point the mechanisms which spawned Islamist rebel groups. Through the repeated tracing of Islamist rebel groups from their pre-war origins, to the point of insurgency, and the comparison of such groups to non-Islamist and even non-rebel groups, it may be possible to make broader and even generalizable inferences about the nature of Islamist insurgencies, but also civil war more broadly (Leites 1970; Lyall 2014; Seawright and Gerring 2008; Waldner 2015). The goal is therefore to attempt to find general truths while examining special cases.

This opens for a comparative-historical analysis which implies relying on complex logical structures of multiple critical conjunctures and conditions in historical sequences, rather than searching for individual variables as causes for outcomes (Yom 2015: 635). One early example of a comparative-historical study is Barrington Moore's (1967) *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* who focused on how historical sequences led countries towards specific political systems, and the reasons for divergent outcomes are found by

comparing where these sequences begin to diverge (Ragin 2014; Ragin and Amoroso 2018). Later work which relied on comparative-historical analysis continued in this vein of focusing on macro-historical processes and large-scale causal factors such as the legacy of colonialism, and the effect on outcomes such as state building, economic prosperity, revolutions or the emergence of democratic systems (Skocpol 1979b; Huntington 1968; B. Moore 1967). This research tradition focused on how combinations of broad processes and configurations produce particular contexts from which causal inferences may be drawn (Mahoney and Thelen 2015). Contrary, for example to much econometric work on civil wars, history is in this approach not just a source of more data (Rueschemeyer 1992; Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens 1997; Mahoney and Terrie 2008; Mahoney and Thelen 2015; Mahoney 2000; Mahoney 2000).

The invocation of history is common in political science, but often more as a way of generating empirical data, without a clear grasp of how issues of temporality matters to how processes unfold (Pierson 2004: 5). While it is recognized that history matters, the theoretical implications of temporality are often not fully accounted for, beyond simple controls for time. In this regard, it might be helpful to think about causal relationships not simply in terms of one variable affecting another, but as unfolding processes defined by mechanisms which explain the relationship between an initial state, and an outcome (Pierson 2000a; 2000b). The processes of history are instead the main focus, emphasizing the “politics” of political science, by providing theoretical accounts of linkages between preceding chains of events and an outcome, rather than showing simple correlations. This also entails focusing on the combined effects of processes and institutions, rather than singling out one process or institution at a time (Fioretos 2011; Skocpol and Pierson 2002).

While this could make for a reliance on overly abstract social processes, there was through the historical institutionalism a tendency to focus on institutions as concrete

manifestations of long-running political processes such as state building. This does not necessarily imply an exclusive focus on macro-processes, as historical contingency was often used to give a sense of the necessary contingencies which gave context to the agency of key-actors, especially at critical junctures where the legacies of the past are less overbearing.

Such comparisons may allow the researcher to identify the factors and conditions which are critical for a specific outcome, and to further theorise when a certain succession of events will lead to the same outcome (Mohamedali, Mahoney, and Nguyen 2016; Mahoney and Thelen 2015: 215). This approach involves formulating causal sequential arguments for how values on antecedent causes or conditions (x) proceeds through a series of junctures and events (a, b, c) to produce a specific outcome (y). Consequently, the expectation is also that changes in x leads to changes in y as x may be necessary for the chain of events a, b, c to follow. Theoretical intuitions about causal relationships can be strengthened by comparing one case with a positive outcome on y , to another case in which is as similar as possible on all relevant dimensions, but which deviates in terms of x and therefore in terms of y , supporting the notion that the relationship is not spurious (Lyall 2014; Mill 1897; Ragin 2014).

A major underlying assumption to this historical approach is that some social processes take a long time to unfold, but that they nevertheless are detectable through careful comparisons. Such slow-moving and long-running processes may manifest themselves in ways which are quite subtle, and this is further complicated by the potentially significant temporal distance between the causes which initiate a sequence of events, and the final outcome of interest. Reliance on a relatively small number of cases allows for such a detailed examination which pin-points the causal mechanisms which underpin social causation (Skocpol and Pierson 2002; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Fioretos 2011; Capoccia 2016). Through a historically grounded and multi-level comparison of polities, the causes of

institutional resilience or collapse, and the politicisation of identities and their legacies may be traceable, identifying not just critical junctures, but conjunctures (Yashar 1998: 30; 2005).

Such temporal relationships can take numerous forms. Paul Pierson (2003) distinguishes between cumulative causes, threshold effects, and extended causal chains. Cumulative causes are extremely gradual changes which incrementally change the outcome. Gradual changes may not necessarily lead to changes in the outcome of interest until a critical level is reached, in which case we would be observing threshold effects. Another is that of path-dependency, where the path chosen at a critical juncture initiates or does not initiate a self-reinforcing process towards a particular outcome. It involves 1) the trigger event for a path, 2) a period where this initial trajectory is reinforced, and 3) an outcome which ends the path (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000a). A theoretically challenging aspect is the relationship between endogenous developments and exogenous shocks. Exogenous shocks may produce more dramatic and noticeable effects which in some cases may simplify the study of political change, but in doing so the more subtle endogenous and incremental processes of change have tended to be overlooked. With regards to institutions in particular, persistence and even inertia has tended to be a focus of scholarly attention, where change is explained by outside shocks or the sudden impact of agency (Mahoney and Thelen 2009: 3-12). The approach taken here is to attempt to detect the more subtle ways in which pre-existing institutions define relations among social groups such as tribes, ethnic communities, and classes, to have this serve as the template on which agency and exogenous shocks achieve meaning. The mechanisms which fuel wars may follow from fundamental forces tied to the social-institutional set-up of a society which sets two groups on a collision-course, for example through a socio-economic conflict between landowners and the landless, but the ways in which groups respond to this, including the triggers for war, may well be a function of exogenous forces and agency.

A key requirement for the validity of comparative studies is that the research objects are similar enough to be comparable, and that confounders can be controlled for. Large-N studies of civil war have tended to take this assumption for granted, following from methodological necessity, rather than coherent theoretical insights. Yet, this assumption is increasingly untenable in the wake of the revolution in causal inference, which has put into question both the notion that external validity can realistically be achieved through *ceteris paribus* assumptions and large-sample sizes (Angrist and Pischke 2010; Samii 2016; Yom 2015). It is only under ideal, and rare, circumstances that political science research can realistically generalize from local findings to a “global” population. This means that existing research has been sensitive to operationalization and measurement procedures (Hegre and Sambanis 2006), and relied heavily on proxy-variables (Cederman and Girardin 2007; Fearon 2017). Another issue has been the equifinality of explanations, where statistical correlations between the same variables have been presented as evidence for widely different mechanisms (Blattman and Miguel 2010: 23).

Furthermore, I strongly agree with a point made by Mearsheimer and Walt that the field of IR, and some sub-fields of comparative politics for that matter, has suffered from a dearth in original theorizing in favour of simplistic empirical research based on hypothesis testing (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013). Such research is important, but needs to be complimented by theories, including middle-range theory, which give such research solid micro-foundations, clarifies comparability of cases, thereby allowing for valid generalizations, such that theory to some extent should guide hypothesis testing (Achen 2002; Schrodt 2014; Signorino 1999). The argument is not that either qualitative or quantitative methods are uniquely suited to the study of civil war or other issues of political violence and mobilization, as methodological choice should depend fully on its applicability in answering the research question, along with the availability of relevant data. The contribution of this

paper is explicitly to provide an original theoretical contribution to a topic which hitherto largely has been studied through disparate micro-studies, or without systematic comparisons.

Given this state of affairs, notably the lack of comprehensive theories of the origins of Islamist rebel groups, I argue that inductive theory-building through the meticulous comparative tracing of carefully selected cases is the appropriate approach. To explain the macro-historical shift towards Islamism as an ideology of insurgency, I rely on repeated cross-national and sub-national comparisons to identify the mechanisms which led to insurgencies which were specifically Islamist. The trade-off for this approach is that parsimony is sacrificed for the purpose of producing reliable theoretical statements. This makes it necessary to rely on a small to mid-sized collection of cases.

Given the inductive approach of this study, along with the focus on developing micro-theoretical pathways to explain a macro-historical shift, I opt for cases which are as different as possible, but which have sub-regions which are as similar as possible except in terms of the outcome. Through sub-national comparisons of positive to negative outcomes, it may be possible to pinpoint why some regions experiences institutional equilibriums while others moved towards new ideologies, and war, and also to pin-point how contingency becomes a factor at critical junctures where path-dependent influences are less strong (Falleti and Lynch 2009; Falleti and Mahoney 2015: 215; Yom 2015: 635; Lieberman 2015).

I opt to rely on 3 nation-level cases to which are as different as possible to uncover a set of a set of theoretical pathways to Islamist rebellion. Secondly, I seek to make such inferences more accurate by comparing sub-national historical sequences in regions which are as similar as possible, to utilize local variance in the emergence of militant Islamist actors to pinpoint the causal factors behind this variance (Sartori 1991).

The inductive aspect is one of iteration, which does not entail a form of whimsical empiricism in which everything matters. Rather, it starts from a position of “theoretical intuitions” about causal priors, rather than predictive hypotheses, about what matters and what sorts of empirics would be of interest to inform the question at hand (Yom 2015: 42). Having such theoretical intuitions guide the process is essential, both to make the wealth of empirical data comprehensible, and also to counteract the problem of infinite historical regress. This also entails being open about how the research process goes back and forth between trying to make sense of patterns in empirics, and the theoretical conclusions that result from this, rather than pretending that such a theory was somehow conjured from the aether by the researcher (Checkel 2014; Lyall 2014). This approach can include both inductive process tracing within-cases, along with comparative analysis across. The comparative stage is a way to isolate the variables which matters for the outcome in question given the plethora of factors and variables which can emerge to the researcher during an inductive exercise (Falleti and Mahoney 2015: 211; Lieberman 2015). This comparative framework allows for the uncovering of the deep social-institutional similarities and differences which would not have been possible in a larger-N study. It allows for the articulation of theoretical mechanisms which connect cause and outcome in a more specific manner than is normally achievable through large-N comparisons. It can allow for the uncovering of historical sequences and divergent trajectories which lead to divergent outcomes under specified conditions (Ragin 2014; Mill 1897; Smelser 1976; George and Bennett 2005; Falleti 2016).

Notably, I do not rely on primary data for this, primarily because comparing three widely different nation-level cases, along with eleven sub-national cases, means that none of these regions can be done justice through quality scholarship if I were to collect original data from field work or other methods. More importantly, I do not believe that this is necessary,

nor particularly beneficial for the purposes of this thesis, due to the explicit goal of theory-building rather than uncovering new empirical facts. Many of the events outlined here are well documented through the work of historians, journalists, but also key actors who were involved in these events and which later published their autobiographies or shared their stories through other means. Immersion can certainly give new perspectives. However, the comparativist may find it optimal to rely on material already carefully by specialists to develop and examine theoretical inferences. As argued by Skocpol (1979b: XIV):

The comparative historian's task - and potential distinctive scholarly contribution - lies not in revealing new data about particular aspects of the large time periods and diverse places surveyed in the comparative study, but rather in establishing the interest and prima facie validity of an overall argument about causal regularities across the various historical cases...Plainly, the work of the comparativist only becomes possible after a large primary literature has been built up by specialists.

Certainly, the collection of primary sources may be preferable in situations where it is practically feasible for the researcher to do so. In the case of this thesis, there were multiple risk-factors and resource-constraints which prevented me from gathering primary data. First, the political sensitivity along with a fragile security situation in most of the cases studied here meant that there would have been significant risks to my personal safety. Some of these areas are almost completely inaccessible to outsiders, most notably Balochistan, while others such as Mogadishu requires significant security-precautions that were not accessible to me. The most feasible region to conduct fieldwork in would have been Somaliland, which I was eager to visit. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these efforts, making it infeasible to travel for a long time. Added to this was the worsening of a

personal chronic health issue which made me wary of travelling far away from my regular health-service providers. Attempts at reaching out directly over the internet for interviews also faltered repeatedly, seemingly because of my inability to establish trust due the lack of face-to-face interaction. Second, the relatively short length of my DPhil-degree, 3 years normally, meant that I had limited time to travel, not least due to having to take on a side-job to partially pay for the degree. Third, this also meant I had limited financial resources to travel and conduct fieldwork. The primary advantage of secondary sources is the ability to explore large research questions when it is not economically or practically feasible to gather primary data (Vartanian 2011).

Nevertheless, I do not believe this has negatively impacted the thesis, nor any of its conclusions. In fact, it is quite common for works of comparative historical analysis to rely on secondary data (Beck 2018; Goldstone 1982; Ritter 2014). Furthermore, several of the regions in question, with the notable exception of the Ogaden and Balochistan, have been extensively studied by multiple scholars, and key events and political developments have been widely covered and documented. Added to this is the explicit theory-building focus through medium-N comparisons, which puts less emphasis on finding new data, instead allowing for theoretical innovation through new analysis of existing research (Kelle 2015).

The theoretical insights in this paper does, however, open up new avenues for empirical research. In particular, it encourages explicit attention to local institutions and modes of governance, and how these shape ideological innovation in the process of mobilisation. The micro-structuralist theoretical argument developed here opens for a new mode of conducting fieldwork which goes in-depth into fewer cases. For example, I am very interested in conducting fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan where the Islamist group Ansar al-Islam reportedly emerged from specific villages, to understand what made these villages different than others. I would similarly be very curious to research Jundullah, a Sunni-Islamist group

with a Baloch ethnic profile which operated in Iran. The absence of similar groups operating in Pakistani Balochistan is striking, but research on this is infeasible to study due to security and access issues.

This thesis sets out a research agenda for studying mobilisation at the micro-level, but simultaneously seeking to produce generalisable theoretical statements through comparisons of institutional configurations. I believe it is unlikely that the collection of primary data would have changed any of the conclusions here, not least because the scholarship on all cases except Balochistan and Ogaden is so extensive. In this regard, the strength and purpose of this thesis is the development of new theoretical insights by relying on existing scholarship.

4.2 Case Selection

The population of relevant cases consists of countries which have experienced an Islamist insurgency. This entails a conflict in which at least one of the non-state conflict actors professed an Islamic-inspired ideology, and where the conflict has led to the death of at least 1000 people. While this threshold is arbitrary, it follows existing coding practices (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Gleditsch et al. 2002; Sambanis 2004; Sarkees and Wayman 2010), but more importantly it limits the universe of cases to a manageable level, as groups involved in less-violent conflicts are more numerous, but also more enigmatic as there in many cases is very little information on the ideological profiles of smaller groups (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020).

Table 4 represents the universe of relevant countries. It draws from the UCDP armed conflict dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022), cross-referenced with previous datasets by Gleditsch and Rudolfson (2016), the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020), Kalyvas (2018), and the

Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) dataset (Svensson and Nilsson 2018). The list does not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'ite groups, though there may be important differences among them, as the goal here is to understand Islamist militancy in its broadest sense. Furthermore, the list does not depict the entire universe of relevant groups, as the goal is to select countries which experienced Islamist insurgencies, rather than selecting groups per se. A list of relevant groups can be found in the appendix, but this only depicts groups which appear in these pre-existing datasets, and therefore does not depict smaller groups, or Islamist groups which operated as sub-factions of non-Islamist movements.¹¹

These lists are rarely consistent with each other with regards to selection criteria. Braithwaite and Cunningham (2020) confusingly label groups as Islamist,” “Salafist,” and others as “Islamist/Wahhabi.” Kalyvas (2018) includes mostly Sunni groups, but also Shi'ite groups such as RJF and al-Mahdi Army, but does for unclear reasons not include other Shi'ite groups such as Hezbollah. Gleditsch and Rudolfson (2016) and Svensson and Nilsson (Svensson and Nilsson 2018) also refer to vague categories such as “Kashmiri insurgents” as Islamist, though many insurgent groups in Kashmir have been nationalist. This follows partly from inconsistent coding practices in the UCDP-dataset where non-state actors sometimes are coded as organizations, other times as ethnic communities and tribes, seemingly suggesting that such societies are comparable to rebel organizations.

A criticism against earlier historical institutionalist work which relied on broad historical comparisons, especially on the topic of nation, building, was that these cherry-picked their cases (Geddes 1990). However, the case-selection strategy should follow from the research goals, and the deliberate selection of especially interesting cases may be a legitimate choice, especially if the goal is theory-building. Randomisation is far more important if the goal is to test hypotheses and to generalise results from samples to a broader

¹¹ See Table 1 in the appendix

population of cases (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Both large- and small-N case selection hinges on an explicit or implicit analysis of how the cases chosen are situated within a larger population of cases, but the justification for case choice should be laid bare in relation to the purpose of the research-project (Gerring 2007; 2008). Given that cases are selected according to the dependent variable, the case selection-strategy is non-random, but they are deliberately chosen according to their variation along relevant dimensions to provide the most insight into how Islamist rebellions break out.

My case-selection strategy is partially inspired by Andrew Wimmer's (Wimmer 2013) emphasis on "casting a wide net" of seeking maximum variance along relevant dimensions for the purpose of having cases which are as dissimilar as possible, but which still share an outcome, that of an Islamist insurgency. This approach is fitting for the purpose of this thesis because the goal is to explore whether there are one or many pathways to Islamist insurgency, and whether the underlying mechanisms are the same or not. Through this approach it might also be possible to acquire deeper insight into what features are inherent to Islamist insurgencies as a phenomenon, and to distinguish these from contextually contingent aspects of these wars which follow from local political dynamics (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

For the purpose of selecting cases which are as different as possible, I draw from Huntington's (Huntington 1965; 1966; 1968) description of political modernity as being defined by the rationalisation of authority, and decline of traditional hierarchies in favour of increased political participation. The rationalisation of authority, according to Huntington, involves the assertion of the nation-state's sovereignty against external influences, and of the internal sovereignty by the national government against local and regional powers through national integration. Political participation is not necessarily a question of democratization. Rather, it refers to the move away from traditional societies where politics is exclusively the

realm of elites. Modern politics is distinguished by mass-mobilization. One example of this is modern states facing tribal systems in peripheral areas.

This conception of political modernity as the basis for case-selection is appropriate because I seek to understand how Islamist rebellions developed in countries with widely different social-institutional configurations, and in essence, countries which have been differently affected by the transition to political modernity (Gerring 2008: 669). It is by no means an exhaustive typology of the different categories of such states, but it allows us to distinguish societies which are fundamentally different in certain aspects from each other. For example, it allows us to distinguish Islamist rebellions in centralised nation-states from such rebellions in tribal-societies, in peripheral regions from urban regions, and Feudal-systems with low political participation from individualised systems where political participation is direct.

Table 3: State Systems

Rationalized authority	Political Participation	
	High	Low
High	1: Nation State	2: Clientelistic Systems (Northern Caucasus)
Low	3: Confederated System (Pakistan – Khyber Pakhtunkwa and Balochistan)	4: Collapsed State/Pre-modern System (Somalia, Yemen)

Table 3 captures the intuition behind these distinctions. Modern nation states are defined by a high level of rationalisation as the state has consolidated internal and external solidarity. It also has high levels of political participation because internal consolidation means that the state’s relationship to its citizens is direct, rather than mediated through tribal

chiefs or feudal lords. Rationalisation may also be high in clientelistic systems, but political participation can be considered low because participation is mediated through leaders and networks who are the focus of people’s loyalties, rather than the state itself. A confederated system will have lower levels of rationalisation as power is decentralised to different types of political institutions, but may still experience higher levels of political participation because decentralisation allows individuals to move between hierarchies and political institutions. In this system, there may be a central power, but the central power is only in control of parts of its territory as local institutions govern ethno-religious minorities. Finally, collapsed or pre-modern systems are defined by low levels of rationalisation and participation by definition as internal consolidation is minimal and political participation occurs primarily through violence.

Table 4 is an attempt at capturing how different countries which experienced Islamist rebellions fit into these categories.

Table 4: State Systems by country

Country	Type
Afghanistan	4
Algeria	2
Chad	3
Egypt	1 (Sinai – 3)
Eritrea	1
Ethiopia (Somali)	3
India (Kashmir)	3
Indonesia	1
Iran	2
Iraq	3
Israel	1 (Palestinian Territories - 3)
Mali	4
Mauritania	3

Nigeria	3
Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Balochistan)	3
Philippines (Parts of Mindanao)	2/3
Russia (North Caucasus)	2
Saudi Arabia	2
Somalia	4
Sudan	2
Syria	2
Tajikistan	2
Thailand	2/3
Uzbekistan	2
Yemen	4

I supplement this with figure 5 (along with several similar figures in the appendix) to get a further sense of how this typology applies to different countries. One core issue with this is that the two dimensions of rationalisation and political participation are not captured neatly in existing datasets, though I attempt to approximate these through variables in the V-Dem dataset which was developed to measure democracy and not modernity (Coppedge et al. 2022). Another major issue is that these are measured at the nation-level, and do not capture sub-national variation, which is problematic since many insurgencies develop in the peripheries among ethno-religious minorities (Vogt et al. 2015; Bormann, Cederman, and Vogt 2017).

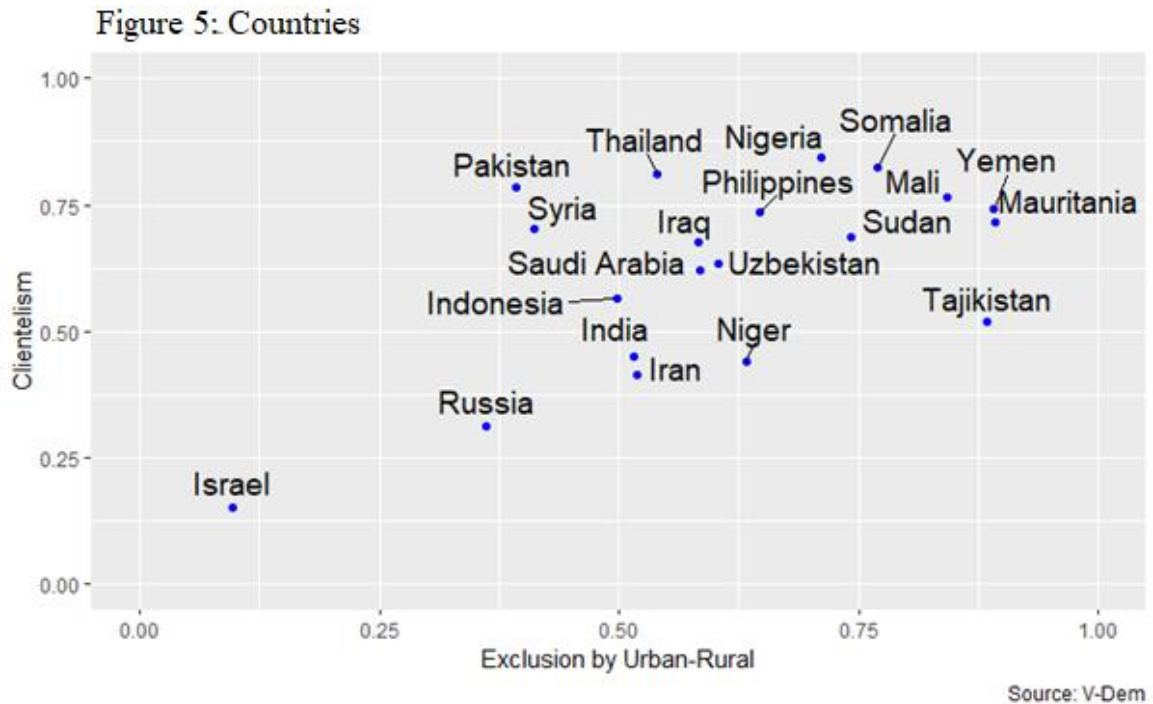


Figure 5 relies on two indicators based on expert surveys which measure “clientelism” and “exclusion by Urban-Rural” as proxies for participation and rationalisation. These are by no means perfect indicators, but we get a sense of differences among these countries.¹² At the nation-level, I opt to compare Russia with Somalia and Pakistan due to these falling in different categories in the above typology, along with the significant geographical and cultural distance among them.

To pin-point how Islamist rebellions developed in these countries I also rely on a second round of case-selection at the sub-national level, where I compare regions where Islamist rebel groups emerged to regions in which they did not (Mahoney and Goertz 2004; Wimmer 2018). The goal is simultaneously that these regions are as similar as possible, and that there is a significant literature on political developments there. In so doing, I aim to isolate the mechanism which leads to Islamist rebellion by reducing the possibility of confounders.

¹² See the appendix for further discussion of this, and of how shifting indicators affects the distribution

Table 5: Cases

Country	Region	Islamist rebellion
Somalia	Mogadishu	X
	Somaliland	
	Puntland	
Ethiopia	Somali Regional State (Ogaden)	
Pakistan	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	X
	Swat (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)	X
	Balochistan	
Russia	Chechnya	X
	Dagestan	
	Kabardino-Balkaria	
	Ingushetia	

Part 3 Empirics

The following chapters deal with the cases selected in the previous section. First, in the Somali territories, I find that an Islamist insurgency only developed in Mogadishu, but not in Somaliland, Puntland, or the Ogaden because institutional fragmentation in Mogadishu left religious institutions as providers of security and welfare. The rise of Sharia courts throughout Mogadishu in response to endemic disorder laid the foundation for rebel mobilisation to be Islamist, rather than something else. Second, I compare two Pashtun-dominated areas in Pakistan where two branches of the Pakistani Taliban appeared, known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Swat-district, and compare these to the Balochistan-region where no equivalent organisation made inroads among the Baloch. I find that Islamist organisations in the region were built on networks emerged beyond traditional tribal ties, especially around religious seminaries, but that the mechanisms which led to rebellion in FATA and Swat were distinct. In the former it was fuelled by young men from lesser tribes who both sought to rid themselves of the rigid hierarchies of traditional institutions, and an upper hand against rival tribes. In Swat it embodied a social revolution against the quasi-feudal privileges of landowners by the landless and the emerging middle class. In Balochistan, the continued strength of tribal institutions ensured that Balochi grievances were expressed through ethno-nationalist sentiments against Islamabad, rather than Islamism. Finally, In the case of North Caucasus, I compare Chechnya to Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia.

Chapter 5 The Somali Territories

*Clannism is a calamity
There is nothing that can improve or cure it.
It is worse than malaria and fever,
worse than fatal diseases.
It turns people into something less than human
and takes away their sanity.¹³*

5.1 The Somali Pathway to Islamist Civil War

While the Somali territories faced the common condition of state collapse in 1991, only Mogadishu experienced an Islamist rebellion. The comparative study of these territories reveals that Mogadishu was unique in that pre-existing non-state institutions were weak, and no group managed to re-establish order. Consequently, a series of experiments in governance-provision through Sharia courts developed, leading to a shift in social capital away from traditional institutions towards religious institutions, and this shift made mobilisation around Islamist ideology viable. Since the courts were defined by their religious character, the court-militias subsequently mobilised around an Islamic ideology in opposition to rival warlords. In the other Somali territories, the dominant groups relied on traditional institutions to rebuild the state, and this institutional continuity ensured ideological continuity, and Islamist forces were absorbed into the political mainstream.

5.2 Stabilisation and Fractionalisation

In early 2006, violent clashes between the militias of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and the troops of rival warlords associated with the Somalian government, escalated into an

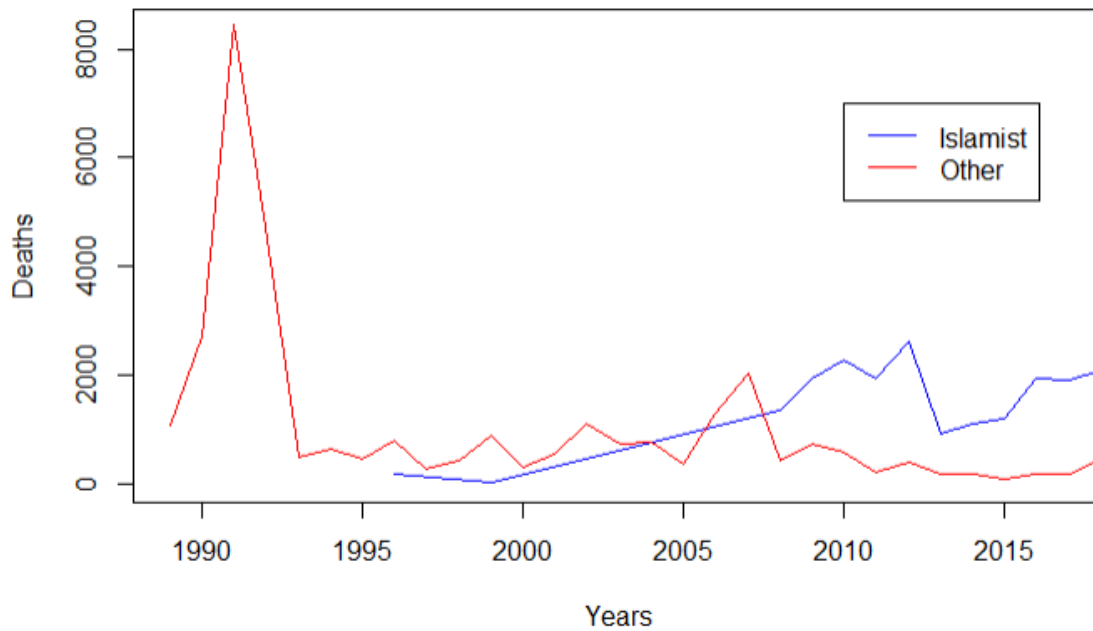
¹³ "Sound, Drum of Wisdom!" by Cabdulqaadir Cabdi Shube.

outright war for control over Mogadishu. Mogadishu and much of South-Central Somalia had been in a state of endemic disorder at least since 1991 when the authoritarian regime of Mohammad Siad Barre was overthrown by a loose coalition of clan-based militias. These factions turned on each other after Barre fled the capital as rival leaders declared themselves to be heads of the Somali state. Mogadishu consequently plunged into further warfare between warlords vying for control over the city. That is, until June 2006 when the ICU became the first single actor to control the capital in fifteen years.

The ICU's hold on Mogadishu was brief, and it was soon chased out by an Ethiopian intervention-force before splintering into a range of ideologically heterogeneous groups, ranging from Islamist moderates to the eventually al-Qaeda affiliated al-Shabaab. Nevertheless, the ICU's capture of Mogadishu symbolized a fundamental shift in Somali politics and demonstrated the power of Islamist ideology in a country which '...should have been an especially hard case for Islamist success' (Ahmad 2015: 91).

It is a hard case, partly because traditional Islam among the Somalis recognized politics as the realm of clan-councils rather than a clerical matter, except for in extraordinary situations (Verhoeven 2009: 415). In fact, the only Islamist organization to take up arms in 1991 was al-Ittihad al-Islāmiya (AIAI) (Menkhaus 2004: 56). However, AIAI proved unable to compete with the clan-based factions and was routed in battle numerous times, and essentially ceased to operate as a united actor by 1997 (Marchal and Sheikh 2015). Furthermore, al-Qaeda attempted at establishing a foothold in Somalia in the early 1990s as its leadership believed it could easily insert itself into the deteriorating political situation. However, it failed miserably, not least due to its ideological hostility to traditional Sufism. It is quite clear that anarchy alone is not sufficient to explain the eventual emergence of Islamist rebel groups, as neither local nor transnational Islamist groups gained any significant traction in the Somali territories until the mid-2000s.

Figure 6: Somalia Battle-Deaths 1989-2017



It is also a hard case because of the significant temporal and spatial variance in the Somali territories. The Islamist rebellion only developed 15 years after the Somali state collapsed, and it was confined to Mogadishu and other parts of South-Central Somalia. This is interesting as Mogadishu is traditionally considered to be comparatively liberal to other parts of Somalia, especially to the regions of Puntland and Somaliland (De Waal 2004; 2015: 121). Yet, militant Islamist groups gained no foothold in either Puntland or Somaliland which were in a similarly precarious position after 1991. Islamist rebel groups also failed to gain a significant foothold in Somali state in Ethiopia, historically known as the Ogaden, where ethnic Somali long had struggled for independence against the primarily non-Muslim regimes in Addis Abeba.

Figure 6 further illustrates why the Somali territories are interesting for the study of Islamist civil war. Violence in Somalia peaked in 1991/1992 which reflects the competition between warlords for control over Mogadishu. After this there is a shift to low-intensity

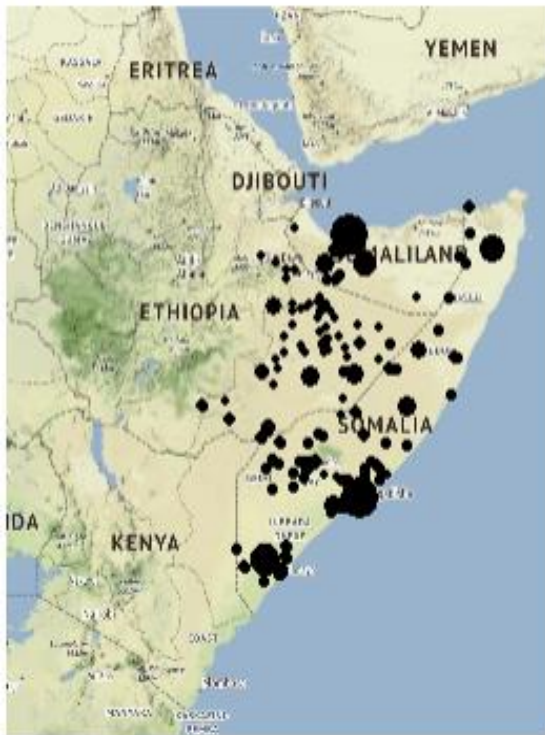
violence, and more curiously a clear ideological shift by the 2000s with Islamist actors becoming involved in a high proportion of violent clashes.

This temporal pattern was not uniform across the Somali territories. Figures 4 and 5 give a glimpse of the spatial distribution of Islamist and non-Islamist violent incidents over time. In figure 7 we see no clear pattern in the distribution of violent incidents involving non-Islamist actors in the period 1991-2003, as all territories were affected by warfare. In 2004-2011 the violence in Somaliland and Puntland was largely restricted to border the border areas, reflecting the internal stabilization of both territories, whereas Mogadishu saw continued violence.

Figure 8 shows an attempted insurrection by the group Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AI) in the 1990s which had very limited presence in South-Central Somalia and Somali state in

Figure 7: Violent Incidents Involving Non-Islamist Actors

1991-2003



2004-2011

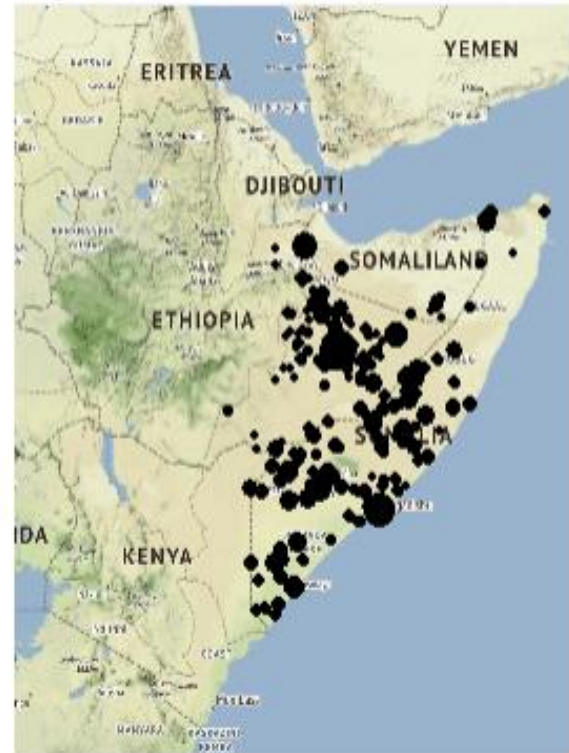
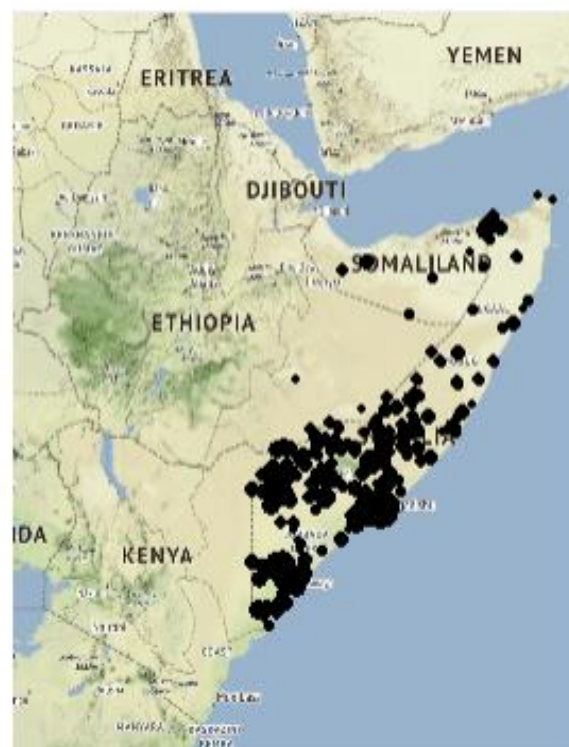


Figure 8: Violent Incidents Involving Islamist Actors

1991-2003



2004-2011



along with smaller incidents in the poorly controlled border areas in the northern territories.

This shift towards Islamist mobilisation only became possible through an institutional innovation in the form of Islamic courts which began appearing throughout Mogadishu in the 1990s in response to endemic insecurity in the city. The concept of Islamic courts with authority beyond private affairs is a recent innovation among the Somali as the traditional system for providing order and conflict-resolution has revolved around tribal customs called *xeer* (Mwangi 2012: 517). Their emergence was therefore endogenous to the disorder in Mogadishu, developing in a gradual and decentralised manner following from neighbourhood-level initiatives. The courts were consequently ideologically heterogeneous, not necessarily sharing much beyond the belief that the answer to Mogadishu's woes could be found in Islam. Some of the courts also became associated with non-traditional forms of Islam, such as Salafism which is a literalist interpretation with roots in the Arab Peninsula (Harper 2012: 75).

The courts became exceedingly popular through their effective security- and service-provision. However, the popularity and increasing assertiveness of the courts put them on a collision-course with Mogadishu's warlords which united in an anti-Islamist alliance supported by Ethiopia. With rising hostilities and violent clashes, a tiny but well-organized sub-faction of the ICU called al-Shabaab managed to outcompete moderate factions to seize a more leading position and steer the organization towards an insurgency (Barnes and Hassan 2007: 155; Maruf and Joseph 2018: 136).

Theoretical Expectations: Mogadishu's Islamist insurgency only became possible because religious networks were best positioned to respond to the city's specific social needs, namely the need for security. The emergence of Islamic courts meant social capital was shifted towards an institution which made mobilisation around an Islamist-ideology viable. The lack of similar phenomena in the other Somali territories can be explained by greater

institutional continuity and ability to maintain social cohesion, which prevented a similar institutional innovation. Civil war was a possibility in all the Somali territories, but an *Islamist* civil war only became possible in Mogadishu due to this shift in the social landscape. This also means that Islamist mobilisation should not have been a viable option in the early 1990s, before the emergence of the Islamic courts. The critical factor which explains variance is institutional continuity or discontinuity.

Negative Expectations: This pathway to Islamist insurgency which is built on institutional rupture and innovation is more likely to be a feature of a disorderly society, but not archipelagic systems where there is institutional continuity despite high levels of fractionalisation. I do not expect an Islamist insurgency to have been a possibility in Mogadishu before the institutional rise of the Islamic courts, nor in the other Somali territories where there was institutional continuity.

Cases: To examine these intuitions, I compare Mogadishu to Somaliland, Puntland, and the Somali-region in Ethiopia. They are comparable by being dominated by one ethnic group, the Somali, who speak the same language, who are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, have an intertwined history, and who share many traditions and institutions associated with the clan-system and Sufi-Islam (Lewis 2002: 64).

These territories are by no means identical and differ in terms of their colonial history. Somaliland was primarily ruled by Britain, South-Central Somalia and Puntland by Italy, and the Ogaden region by Ethiopia. Somali society was essentially stateless and governed by traditional institutions before colonialism, and the different administrative policies by the colonial authorities towards the Somali territories necessarily influenced the institutions which were inherited by independent Somalia (Tripodi 1999: 55). British and Ethiopian rule was largely indirect and relied on local clients which reinforced the strength of traditional institutions. The Italian approach to Mogadishu was more direct and sought to develop a

centralised state mirroring European states (Tripodi 1999: 79). Such differences should not discourage comparison. In fact, they are of key importance to studying the social-institutional effects on civil war, and the social landscape-variable is an explicit attempt at capturing these institutional differences.

The significant cultural similarities across these territories in terms of language, religion, and ethnicity makes it curious that three out of four cases are negative. Mogadishu could, in fact, have been seen as the least likely candidate due to traditionally being considered religiously liberal in comparison to conservative Puntland and Somaliland where there connections to the Arab Gulf states has had a significant influence on religion, especially through the spread of Salafism (De Waal 2015: 121). Somali state is the odd one out of these cases due to being under Ethiopian rule, but is also a very interesting case as one might have expected militant Islamist influences to pervade in the region where there has been a long-lasting independence movement against the Christian-dominated Ethiopian state. Cultural similarities and cross-regional ties therefore make these cases comparable without obviously explaining the differences in the outcome in question (Solomon 2015: 40).

There were, however, institutional differences among them. While Mogadishu, Somaliland, and Puntland were in a comparable situation in 1991 by being defined by significant fractionalisation and strong clan-ties, endemic warfare tore the traditional clan-system apart in Mogadishu, pushing it towards a state of disorder. Somaliland and Puntland, however, were fractionalised, but comparatively less so, and also defined by stronger institution. The dominant factions in Somaliland and Puntland managed to utilise these institutions to pursue state-building, allowing them to push for a more cohesive system of governance. Mogadishu's descent into disorder left religious networks with the responsibility to provide stability, whereas institutional continuity prevented a similar shift in Somaliland and Puntland. In the Somali-region in Ethiopia, the level of fractionalisation was even lower,

though the Ethiopian state was rather absent in the early 1990s. However, a policy of devolution of power from Addis towards local Somali authorities shored up the institutional cohesion of Somali state, allowing a push towards cohesive governance.

Public goods provision also functioned better because traditional institutions were stronger, and these institutions were relied upon to de-escalate social tensions and to support the state-building process. The level of fractionalisation was even lower in the Somali regional state in Ethiopia where militant Islamists failed due to being rejected by traditional clan-institutions.

Table 7 Approximate situation in 1991

Archipelago Somaliland, Puntland, Mogadishu	Disorder
Cohesive Governance	Nightwatchman Somali (Ogaden)

Table 8 Approximate situation in late 2000s

Archipelago	Disorder Mogadishu
Cohesive Governance Somaliland, Puntland, Somali (Ogaden)	Nightwatchman

Importantly, there is little evidence that Somali Islamist groups were the product of simple strategic rebranding. As indicated by table 6, there are no examples of non-Islamist groups overtly adopting Islamist-ideology, and the armed Islamist groups can be traced back to religious institutions and networks, though this does not exclude the possibility of individuals moving across these ideological divides. Religious outbidding does not explain the origins of Somali Islamist groups.

Figure 9: Four Somali Territories

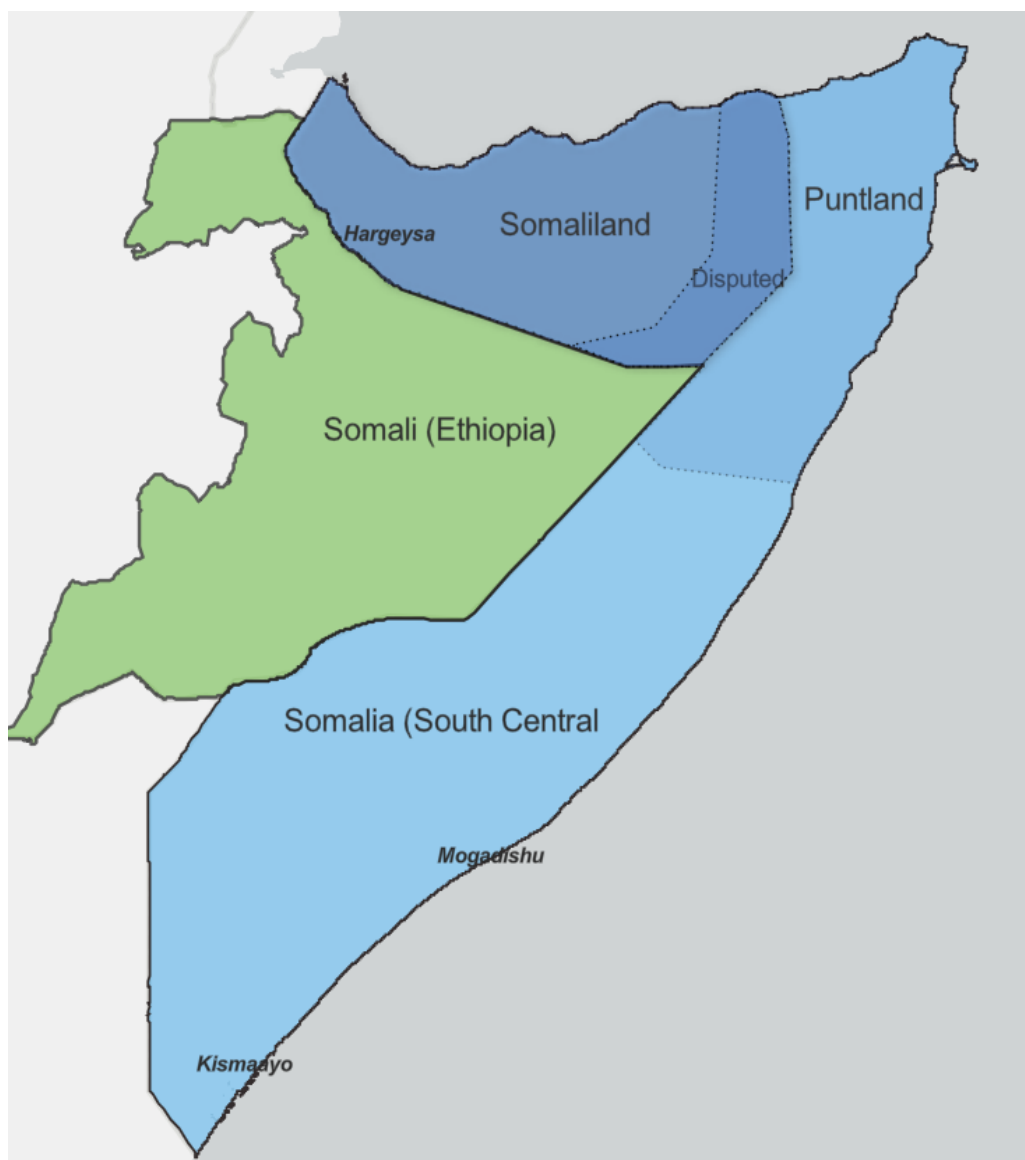


Table 6: Somali Armed Groups¹⁴

Group	Islamist	Religious Origins	Clan Profile
Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)	No	No	Darood (Majerteen)
al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI)	Yes	Yes (Jam'aa Islamiya)	Darood and Hawiye
Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	No	No	Darood (Ogaden)
Somali National Movement (SNM)	No	No	Isaaq
Islamic Courts Union (ICU).	Yes	Yes (Sharia courts)	Mixed. Primarily Hawiye.
Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS)	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Mixed
ARS-Asmara	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Mixed
Al-Shabaab	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Mixed
Ras Kamboni Brigades	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Darood (Ogaden)
Harakat Ras Kamboni	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Darood (Ogaden)
Hizbul-Islam	Yes	Yes (ICU)	Mixed
United Somali Congress (USC)	No	No	Hawiye
USC/SSA	No	No	Hawiye (Abgaal), Darood (Majerteen)
USC/Somali National Army (SNA)	No	No	Hawiye (Habr-Gidir), Darood (Ogaden)
USC/SNA-OA	No	No	Hawiye
Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)	No	No	Darood (Ogaden)
Allied Somali Forces	No	No	Darood (Ogaden, Marehan)
Juba Valley Alliance (JVA)	No	No	Darood (Ogaden, Marehan)
Al-Qaeda	Yes	Yes	Non-Somali
Somali National Front (SNF)	No	No	Darood

¹⁴ Derived from (De Waal 2015; Elmi 2010; Kapteijns 2013; Solomon 2015)

Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC)	No	No	Primarily Hawiye
Somali Democratic Movement (SDM)	No	No	Digil-Mirifle
Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA)	No	No	Rahanweyn
Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ)	Yes	Yes (Sufi)	Hawiye (Habr Gidr)

5.3 Mogadishu: Stabilisation Through Islamic Courts

5.3.1 The Descent into Disorder 1991-2004:

Somali society has historically revolved around genealogical, customary law, and honour based agreements, ties due to the pervasiveness of pastoral nomadism which served as a constraint on the development of a strong centralised state (Harper 2012: 22; Hesse 2010). Clan-ties had the function of safeguarding life and property in lieu of a central authority, and most Somali are born into one of six major clans, each of which consists of multiple sub-clans (Samatar 1992: 634). The significance of such clan-ties has always been extremely fluid, where cross-clan alliances and intra-clan fighting can be just frequent as the reverse. Their crucial significance, however, is that they represent associational ties which traditionally have governed social relations, and these continue to influence Somali political dynamics.

The trajectory of post-independence Somalia was strongly shaped by a coup in 1969 which ended a short-lived experiment with democracy and which brought general Siyad Barre to power. Barre set about on an agenda of reforming Somali society through socialism and by promoting a pan-Somali agenda which ostensibly was supposed to unite the Somali across clan-divides. Its irredentist agenda led to a war with Ethiopia in 1977-1978 over the Ogaden-region, which ended in a Somali loss. Fearing that this would lead to challenges to

his authority, Barre opted to drop the veil of clan-neutrality in favour of coup-proofing through an alliance with three sub-clans of the Darood (Lewis 2002: 220). The opposition to his regime also organised along clan-lines, and a coalition of clan-militias chased Barre out of the capital in 1991, before turning on each other over the spoils of war.

No single-faction managed to become hegemonic in Mogadishu after 1991 because Mogadishu was a patchwork of clans and sub-clans due to resettlement, urbanization, and internal migration under Barre's rule (Lewis 2002: 299). The militias were initially associated with different sub-clan interests, but became increasingly associated with various strongmen who operated outside of the control of traditional authority such as that of elder councils. Conflict-dynamics shifted from clashes among clan-based militias, to infighting among sub-clan militias, and increasingly militias which were more beholden to individual warlords rather than clan-institutions (Omaar 1992).

The violence in Mogadishu peaked between January 1991 and December 1992, and a devastating famine only worsened the situation for the civilian population (Marchal 2004: 121). The UN-sanctioned 'Operation Restore Hope' led by the U.S. in 1993 alleviated the famine but not the war. The warring-factions saw the UN-mission as a potential source of revenue, and disputes over aid-contracts was a central issue which led to an all-out war between the UN and Aydiid's forces (Lewis 2002: 273). These hostilities, and the infamous 'Black Hawk Down' incident led the UN to seek a power-sharing deal among the country's warlords. This effort failed, and the UN-mission withdrew in March 1995, leaving no functioning government behind (Menkhaus 2014: 157). The lucrative aid contracts were the backbone of Mogadishu's business elite, and they suffered greatly when the last UN peacekeepers withdrew. One consequence of this was that large-scale military organizations became unsustainable, the clan-factions splintered, and the number of armed sub-clan groups proliferated as a result (Ahmad 2017: 107).

The prime example of this was a faction of the United Somali Congress' (USC) where General Muhamed Aydiid alone commanded 6,000 men in the early 1990s. By the late 1990s, there were at least 14 different factions in Mogadishu with between 1,000 to 50 men by the late 1990s (Hansen 2013: 32).

The USC was one of five major insurgent groups which fought against Siyad Barre's regime along with the Somali National Movement (SNM), the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSLF), and the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) (Shay 2008: 8). While all these groups adopted names and manifestos invoking pan-Somalism, it was a thin veil for their clan profiles as the USC had primarily members from the Hawiye clan, while the SNM was Isaaq, the SSLF was Mayerteen, the SDM was Rahanweyn, and the SPM was Darood.

The USC emerged in 1989 with recruits from the Hawiye sub-clans, as well as defecting soldiers from the Somali national army. While the group united the Hawiye-clan against the regime, it was internally divided by two factions. One was a group of businessmen and intellectuals called the 'Manifesto Group' under the leadership of Ali Mahdi Muhammad of the Abgal sub-clan. The other was led by General Mohamed Farah Aydiid of the Habr-Gidir sub-clan (Ahmad 2017: 97; Kapteijns 2013: 98). Aydiid's USC-faction was the first group to seize Mogadishu in January 1991, but control over the capital did not imply authority over the rest of the country as the clan-factions turned on each other. Sub-clan fissures also developed, as the USC factions of Mahdi and Aydiid and their sub-clans began fighting each other after Mahdi unilaterally declared himself president. There were no discernible ideological differences between them, and there was no history of conflict within the Hawiye-clan (Clapham 2017: 144; Omaar 1992: 233).

The dynamic of the war shifted from clashes between clan-based militias, to conflict between sub-clans as both Aydiid and Mahdi allied with Darood-militias to fight each other. Mahdi allied with General Morgan's Darood-Majerteen militia, and Colonel Omar Jess' Darood-Ogaden group joined with Aydiid (Lewis 2002: 265). This exemplifies the fluid significance of clans. Only a few months after the fall of Barre's Darood-based regime, two Hawiye warlords of two different sub-clans began fighting each other and allied with two rival warlords associated with different Darood sub-clans. This was also shortly after Aydiid had conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Darood in Mogadishu (Kapteijns 2019: 64).

The USC's trajectory epitomizes the transition away from large, secular, clan-faction in the early stage of the war, towards sub-clan factions which turned on each other. In fact, almost all of the large clan-based political organizations such as the USC, the SNF, and SNA had fallen apart by the end of the 1990s as the necessary clan-basis and resources for these organizations were no longer present (Menkhaus 2003: 411-415).

While the level of violence never again reached that of 1991/1992, the warfare in Mogadishu became increasingly disconnected from political goals, and more loot oriented as militia-members known as *mooryan* turned to banditry, preying on civilians, including individuals belonging to their own clans, and businesses with little reverence for customary law. The pre-war *social landscape* of Mogadishu was already fractionalized in 1991, but continued to become more fragmented as the warlord-militias carved the capital into fiefs with devastating consequences for civilians who suffered the consequences of turf-wars, roadblocks, and banditry (Clapham 2017; Kapteijns 2013: 64; Menkhaus 2004). The rival militias of these warlord fiefs continued to recruit among the sub-clans, but simultaneously undermined the authority of clan-elders and the traditional consensus-based system of clan-institutions. Violence became disconnected from explicitly political goals and more loot-

oriented. In the absence of functioning institutions to uphold customary law, there were no authorities to which ordinary people could appeal for protection, and it was in this context that the Islamic courts of Mogadishu appeared.

5.3.2 An Islamist Response at the Margins

The Somali are traditionally Sufi, and Sufi institutions have historically served important social functions as Islamic law regulated moral and family matters. Sufi Brotherhoods also played important social functions in terms of facilitating both intra- and inter-tribal relations. However, Sufi mullahs have almost always been subordinate to clan-leaders on political matters. Islamic law and courts instead regulated moral and family matters (Clapham 2017: 149). This would gradually change with the growth of Islamist study groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Groups such as *Wahdat Shabab al-Islami* and *Jam'at Ahlal Islami* were inspired by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and rejected Sufi clerics in favour of more popular interpretations of Islam (Holzer 2008). These groups received funds from Gulf-Based expats who supported the introduction of Salafism among the Somali, providing them with the financial backbone to engage in charitable work and proselytization. These groups were severely repressed in 1975 and would only be of marginal importance to the opposition against Barre.

Only one Islamist group took up arms when the regime fell in 1991. This group, AIAI, grew out of two Salafist in 1981, initially as a peaceful organisation which relied on proselytization (Ahmad 2015: 98; International Crisis Group 2010). Its eventual militarisation was according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) a consequence of the USC brutalising members of the Darood-clan in the capital. Several of AIAI's most powerful supporters were

Darood ex-members of Barre's regime (International Crisis Group 2005: 3; Menkhaus 2004: 56; Marchal and Sheikh 2015:145).

Yet, AIAI never had a sizeable militia compared to its rivals, and was routed quickly in the port-town of Kismayoo. After this it relocated its 300-odd fighters further north where it clashed with the Puntland-based SSDF in the port-town of Bosaso and suffered yet another defeat. Its focus then shifted towards areas where the other groups were absent, settling in Luuq in the Jubba River Valley of the Gedo-region in 1992 (Elmi 2010: 60; Marchal 2004: 125; De Waal 2015: 121). Despite initial successes, its position in Luuq was yet again undermined by clan-tensions, especially with the locals. Its final undoing was an intervention by Ethiopian forces in 1996 which destroyed its base in Luuq (Harper 2012: 78; Holzer 2008: 23). A central reason for Ethiopia's intervention was that AIAI had appropriated the pan-Somali idea of establishing a Greater-Somalia through the incorporation of Ethiopia's Ogaden-region.

AIAI was now a spent force, and it split into three groups in 1997. One group was *al-Itisam Kitab Wal Sunna* which consisted of Hawiye. A second group was comprised mostly of Darood-clan members in the Gedo-Region. A third faction, which was the most militant and ideologically extreme, continued its activities among the Ogaden in Ethiopia but it had little success and ceased to function by 1998 (Hansen 2013: 22; Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 149).

Al-Qaeda did take an interest in Somalia, especially after the Black Hawk Down incident in 1993, which occurred when the group's leadership was based in Sudan. It even attempted to establish a presence there by cooperating with sub-elements of AIAI. This expedition failed miserably as it bumped up against local clan-politics (De Waal 2015: 123; Vinci 2009: 84). Documents seized by U.S. forces and later published through the Combating

Terrorism Center's *Harmony Program* gives some insight into the internal deliberations of al-Qaeda's mission. The group saw Somalia as a favourable place for expansion because its brand of Islam could be presented as the solution to clan-violence (CTC 2002: 36). Later reports were far more pessimistic. One member of al-Qaeda's operation in the Ogaden, Sayf al Islam, expressed frustration with AIAI's rejection of global jihad, as well as the scepticism of the locals towards Salafism. There would be sporadic instances of Islamist violence in the Ogaden after this, mostly in the form of one-off attacks rather than outright competition for control over territory (CTC 2002a; Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 162). Al-Qaeda's influence on Somali politics was minimal overall as it failed to find reliable allies beyond marginal Ogaden-based elements within AIAI, and its presence was non-existent by 1997 (CTC 2007: 34).

AIAI never achieved much influence beyond the town of Luuq. It proved unable to compete directly with the clan-militias, having 700 fighters at its peak. The conclusion drawn by AIAI commanders was that the Somali-people were not ready for AIAI's ideology. They opted to change this through peaceful activism and proselytization and began to integrate into local communities by joining religious schools and charities, and some AIAI-members would reappear within the Islamic courts-system (Menkhaus 2002: 116; Marchal 2009: 384; Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 149; Maruf and Joseph 2018: 25; Mantzikos 2011: 252). Islamist mobilisation in the early 1990s was premature, as the social-institutional infrastructure which was needed to sustain an armed Islamist group was simply not present. This would change by the early 2000s.

5.3.3 Order From Disorder: The Islamic Courts

While Islamist organisations did not play a military role at this point, a growing numbers of Somali began to see Islam as a solution to the endemic insecurity, and the consequences of clannism and the predatory warlords. This was partly fuelled by a significant influx of petro-dollars to Islamic charities and educational institutions from private donors in the Arab Gulf states. Many of these donors were Somali expats and businessmen who resided in the Gulf States, and these became a major force for the introduction of Salafi-Islam into the Horn of Africa (Holzer 2008: 25; International Crisis Group 2010). Jam'at Alahl al-Islamii, for example, started as an ideologically fluid group but became Salafist through the influence of Saudi-educated students. Salafism was largely viewed with suspicion by the broader population. Nevertheless, the introduction of a new articulation of Islamic thought, along with the charitable work of Islamist organizations, inspired a new-generation of Somalis to see religion as an answer to clan-divisions and endemic warfare (Hansen 2013: 16; Marchal 2004: 120).

The social foundations for Islamist mobilization instead developed through a series of decentralized neighbourhood-level experiments in security and welfare provision. Aisha Ahmad (2015; 2017) has shown that the local business elite was a driving force behind these due to their frustrations with mafia-style protection rackets and checkpoints controlled by the warlords.

Islamist organizations opted for spreading their ideology through proselytization and charitable work. There was a sore need for this in South-Central Somalia as Islamic charities became the primary providers of medical care, education, welfare, and eventually, security (Ahmad 2015: 98). Local Islamic community centres were established in Mogadishu beginning in 1991 on the initiative of clan-elders and religious figures with funding from local business people. These centres evolved into acquiring court-like functions as they took

on dispute-settlement as a primary task and relied on Sharia for this task (Ibrahim 2019: 149). This was largely in response to the demand by businesspeople from the Hawiye-clan to reduce the transaction costs of doing business in the context of endemic warfare by creating predictable arbitration-mechanisms. Members of the Mogadishu business community were still forced to pay taxes to the warlords who used their military power to run mafia-style protection rackets (Ahmad 2015: 98). Many of these businesspeople had connections to the Somali diaspora in the Arab Gulf states and were instrumental in introducing Salafism, and with it the belief that Islam was the solution to Mogadishu's problems.

The early Islamic courts did not represent a challenge to the warlords, but appeared with their blessing throughout Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia in the 1990s. Several Islamic civil society organizations were receiving funds from Sudan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, giving Islamic charities the financial capacity to provide services which the warlords could not (Marchal 2009; Mckinley 1996). Most of Mogadishu was initially divided between two warlords of the USC. Ali Mahdi controlled the north, while General Mohamed Farrah Aydiid had southern Mogadishu. The first Sharia courts appeared in northern Mogadishu with Ali Mahdi's permission as he saw it as a way of satisfying the demands of his subjects who blamed him for the deterioration of security in north Mogadishu. This alliance strained after Aydiid died in 1996, as Ali Mahdi began fearing the popularity of the courts. The last court in northern Mogadishu was consequently disbanded in February 1998 (Lewis 2002: 298; Marchal 2004: 133).

A second wave of courts developed in southern Mogadishu after the death of the staunchly anti-Islamist General Mohamed Farrah Aydiid in 1996. The situation was different from the north in that southern Mogadishu was more heterogeneous in terms of its clan-composition, and many of its inhabitants were newcomers from rural areas. The courts therefore became less associated with one particular sub-clan. There were 11 courts in this

are by the year 2000. These employed judges and militias with police-like functions which patrolled local neighbourhoods. Notably, the authority of each court was largely confided to different sub-clans (Mwangi 2010: 90; 2012). They were also strongly centred around important commercial areas such as the local markets.

Mogadishu became awash with Islamic institutions which were ‘...providers of basic health, education, and commercial services...’ where state or clan-institutions could not serve this function (U.S. Embassy Nairobi 2006). Some of the courts also set up their own militias which developed a reputation for good discipline in contrast to the warlord militias, and they became favoured by local businessmen for protection against banditry and the taxes of the warlords (International Crisis Group 2005: 20; 2006; Webersik 2014). According to one Mogadishu-based businessman: ‘We supported them because we thought they could bring peace...The warlords were making life and business very complicated for everyone’ (Rice 2006). These courts were highly localized phenomena as they were not co-ordinated and their jurisdiction did not extend beyond the sub-clan fiefs they operated in. The interpretation of Sharia was therefore left up to each court and the courts were therefore ideologically heterogeneous from the beginning.

Hassan Sheik Mohamed Abdi, who would serve as president between 2012 and 2017, described this as a process where ‘The wise men and religious men, the intellectuals and the elders came together and thought of how they could save themselves and their property while the funding came from...the businessmen...’ (The New Humanitarian 2000). According to Abdol-Rahman Malam Abdalla, the vice-chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia: ‘The Islamic Courts were established in response to southern Somali tribal security demands ...its success was due to providing security’ (Ikhwanweb 2006). Funding also came from abroad. In a 2006 Congress-hearing, Jendayi Frazer, the then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at the State Department said that:

I don't want to say the Saudi Government is supporting any particular court, but I do know that there is money coming in from Saudi Arabia. There is money coming in from Yemen...they are businessmen, even Somalis who live in Saudi Arabia (U.S. Senate 2013: 15).

The business community also became increasingly involved in the development of Sharia courts by, not just funding them, but also taking the initiative for their expansion after 1997. This was not necessarily about ideological affinity, though many Somali businesspeople had turned to Salafism to gain favourable access to markets in the Gulf (Ahmad 2017: 115; Marchal 2009: 385). Salafism consequently became an important idea-system among the business community, both in Mogadishu, but also in Somalia's northern regions. It also became influential within the courts through the influence of Mogadishu's businessmen, as well as Islamist charities such as al-Islah.

Yet, the courts were not a Salafi-phenomenon. They were less a product of a coherent ideology, than an eclectic mix of clan-institutions and customary law, traditional Islamic faith, along with pragmatic political bargaining among community leaders (Holzer 2008: 30; Lewis 2002: 299). The courts therefore supplemented rather than contradicted existing clan-structures. In fact, the courts which appeared in the early-2000s were widely seen as associated with the Ayr-Habr Gedir sub-clan of the Hawiye (Barnes and Hassan 2007: 153).

The courts had proven themselves to be the best bet for bringing about stability to Mogadishu through their ability of policing the neighbourhoods they controlled. The courts became the primary source of social cohesion in an otherwise fragmented society, and the demand for their services only grew as the violence in South-Central Somalia dragged on (Clapham 2017: 153; Lewis 2002: 299). They functioned, according to later president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, as: '...kind of a mini-state, seeking to ensure peace and stability, and achieve

reconciliation between litigants...’ (Al Jazeera English 2007). The courts therefore emerged through the efforts of local stakeholders in response to demands for security and public goods provision. This local response to endemic instability in Mogadishu amounted to a shift in social capital whereby institutions and networks organised around religious ideas became widespread in the capital, and this would enable later Islamist mobilisation.

5.3.4 Islamist Insurgency: Intra-Group Outbidding and Militarisation

The attempts at state-building and creating a functioning Mogadishu-based government did not end after the UN peace-keeping force withdrew in 1995. Fourteen failed internationally-sponsored reconciliation conferences were hosted over sixteen years which gives Somalia ‘...the dubious distinction of being the world’s foremost graveyard of externally sponsored state-building initiatives’ (Menkhaus 2006: 74). International support for this effort was at least partly motivated by the paradigm that collapsed states could become havens for terrorist networks and international crime-syndicates

These efforts led to the creation of what became known as the Transitional National Government (TNG) in 2000. The TNG was propelled out of the ‘Somali National Peace Conference’ held in Djibouti in 2000. This conference was an attempt at establishing national unity by involving a broad range of civil society-figures, clan-authorities, and religious leaders, while also side-lining the warlords which essentially controlled most of Mogadishu. A major source of contention was the question of power-sharing among Somalia’s clans who have tended to see control over the state in zero-sum terms. The solution became an agreement based on the ‘4.5-system’ which divided power equally among the four dominant Somali clans, while giving a one-half share to the remaining minority-clans (Ahmad 2017: 116).

The TNG-process was strongly supported by leading businessmen who were frustrated with the years of political stalemate in South-Central Somalia. In fact, most of the Somali business-community shifted their support away from the Islamic courts in favour of this process of formalized state-building, a clear sign that they were less concerned with ideology than lowering the transaction costs of the war. The speaker of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), Abdallah Derow Isaak pointed out how crucial the support of the business community was in this regard: ‘...we have been getting a lot of calls from Mogadishu supporting the process, especially from the business community - which has the most weapons - and from the Islamic courts’ (The New Humanitarian 2000). Most military hardware in Somalia, beyond small arms, was owned by various businessmen, which made their support crucial.

Just as important was the fact that moderate Islamic-charity *al-Islah* was heavily involved in the government-negotiations and TNG-president, Abd al-Qasim Salaad Hasan, was close to the group. Al-Islah’s involvement boosted the government’s religious credentials, and all the Islamic courts joined the TNG in late 2000 with several court-leaders becoming members of parliament, marking a major windfall in the expansion of the courts (Ahmad 2017: 116; Marchal 2009: 386).

This was devastating to the hardline-elements within the courts-movement. One example of this is that Hassan Aweys, a former AIAI commander, established the ‘Sharia Implementation Council’ in 2000 to coordinate the courts into pressuring the TNG to implement Sharia. Yet, these efforts unravelled completely and so did the council as he failed to convince other segments of the courts on this issue (International Crisis Group 2006: 10). It is no wonder, then, that Abu Mansoor al-Amriki, a foreign fighter with al-Shabaab, later wrote in his autobiography that non-violent Islamists such as al-Islah were: ‘...a few of the most destructive groups in our times, standing in the way of our obtainment of success...’ (al-

Amriki 2012: 109). The integration of the courts into the TNG and the official state-building process therefore shifted the balance of power within the courts-movement in favour of Islamist moderates.

The exclusion of Mogadishu's warlords from the TNG proved to be its undoing. The government could never control more than half of the capital, and only small enclaves beyond, making it unable to protect its citizens or even its own members. It also failed to provide order as militias which ostensibly were under the government's authority in reality continued to be controlled by clan-leaders (Le Sage 2010: 136; Møller 2013: 182). It quickly lost popularity by following the pattern of previous governments by focusing most of its efforts on the division of spoils among the clan and soliciting foreign aid (K. Menkhaus 2003: 418). Somali factions treat the efforts to create a central government as a zero-sum game where having no government at all might be a more attractive option than having a rival-group seize power, and the TNG proved to be no different in this regard (Le Sage 2010: 5).

Another reason for the TNG's eventual failure was that Ethiopia was deeply suspicious of the TNG because of its embrace of Islamists involved with the courts. Ethiopia consequently hosted a meeting in 2001 of oppositional warlords, leading to an anti-Islamist coalition called the Somali Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Council (SRRC) (Anonymous 2002: 260; Menkhaus 2007: 374). The SRRC consistently challenged the TNG as its leaders tried to portray it as an abode of Islamic extremism. Its leader Hussein Aydiid said about the TNG that:

...their platform is Islamism because they are not from the tribes, they are imported from outside and funded from outside... It is a platform for fundamentalism. They are backed financially by the Arabs and fundamentalist states (The New Humanitarian 2002b).

A similar message was given by Hassan Mohamed Nur 'Shatigadud' who was leader of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) and a member of SRRC. He called for international support for the SRRC because '...we are not terrorists like the fundamentalists. The TNG are mixing politics and religion' (The New Humanitarian 2002a).

Most of the commanders and sub-commanders involved in the SRRC such as Aydiid, General Morgan, Shatigadud, and Osman Atto, were long-running warlords who had been in control of their own clan-militias since the beginning of the war but had seen their power decline since the mid-1990s (BBC 2001; 2006; Webersik 2014: 283). Their common hostility towards Islamism and the courts Their common hostility towards Islamism was to a great extent driven by the fact that Mogadishu's business community had begun resisting the warlords' taxes by the late 1990s. They did this by overtly supporting the courts by buying militiamen out from beneath the warlords, assigning them under the command of court-affiliated militias (Menkhaus 2006: 89).

The TNG collapsed under the pressure of the SRRC and Ethiopia, and was replaced by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004 (Samatar 2013: 170). The TFG's ascension to power essentially marked an end to attempts at creating a government based on a broad coalition of social actors. It was completely dominated by the SRRC, while excluding the court-affiliated Islamists. Members of parliament were also appointed rather than elected, and this favoured some clans over others (Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 139; Møller 2013: 183). Another contentious issue was the role of the TFG-president, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmad, who was the previous president of Puntland, and leader of the Puntland-based SSDF. He relied heavily on recruiting among the Majerteen-Darood clan of Puntland to fill the rank-and-file of the TFG's forces. The army was consequently seen as yet another clan-faction in the eyes of Mogadishu's population, the majority of whom belonged to Hawiye sub-clans (Marchal 2009: 393).

In fact, some Hawiye warlords abandoned the TFG in May 2005 in response to Ahmad's ascension to power. This left the TFG too weak to govern, even in Mogadishu, and most of its members resided in hotels in Nairobi as the capital was too unsafe. In fact, the TNG was largely dominated by the Haber Gedir/Ayr sub-clan of the Hawiye (Harper 2012: 65; Menkhaus 2007: 359). One U.S. diplomatic cable also draws links between the disempowerment of this clan and later violence, seeing extremist Islamism as having: '...found some support within some of the Hawiye sub-clans particularly the Haber Gedir/Ayr because these sub-clans feel alienated and threatened by the Transitional Federal Government' (U.S. Embassy Nairobi 2007).

The TNG and the official process of government building therefore failed to bring stability to Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia, despite being supported by a range of societal leaders, Islamic organizations, and businesspeople. It was replaced by a government beholden to strongmen who sought to tap foreign donor funds by securing official titles within the government (Ahmad 2015: 99).

The collapse of the TNG and the exclusion of Islamists from the TFG by anti-Islamist warlords alienated Mogadishu's Islamists from the official state-building process, leading to their recommitment to the Islamic courts-system as an alternative, and a third and final wave of Islamic courts consequently appeared throughout Mogadishu in 2003. The most prominent figurehead of this effort was Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, a school teacher who was frustrated by the lack of security for his students who endured the overhanging threat of being kidnapped for ransom. He saw the Islamic courts as the best response to insecurity, not least since the TNG had failed while the TFG was beholden to warlords unwilling to govern. Sheikh Sharif subsequently spearheaded efforts for the courts to have a united front against their rivals, and he was elected chairman of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2004 (Barnes and Hassan 2007: 153). This marked the culmination of an effort which had proceed slowly

since at least 2000, when some of the courts began coordinating their approach to the warlords (International Crisis Group 2005). The courts emerged better organized and coordinated than in the 1990s, not least by uniting courts in both north and south Mogadishu which also meant that they had become better at transcending clan-divides.

The courts were very effective in establishing order which made them immensely popular with Mogadishu's residents, despite the harsh enforcement of the Sharia by some of the courts. Another reason for their popularity was that the courts were sustained financially through the support of the business community. The warlords, by contrast, relied on predatory taxation by dividing the city into a much-hated patchwork of roadblocks and protection rackets to extort its population. This also meant that it was only the courts which had the financial capacity, and the will, to provide public services such as access to water, education, and health care. Most of the courts also acquired their own militia forces. These did not have the capacity for war, but functioned as police forces which enforced the decisions of the courts and dealt with bandits (Ahmad 2015: 100; Clapham 2017: 153; Elmi 2010: 62; Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 150). These militias, usually paid for by businessmen from the same sub-clan, tended to have a good reputation for discipline compared to the clan-forces, many of whom did not receive regular pay (International Crisis Group 2005: 20). The U.S. embassy in Nairobi assessed that:

'...Mogadishu residents appreciate the degree of order the courts have brought and will support the courts over the warlords, in spite of any misgivings they may have about the accompanying ideology' (U.S. Embassy Nairobi 2006).

Yet, the ICU was a strictly decentralised organisation, and the bottom-up process by which it was created meant that it was ideologically heterogeneous, and therefore ambiguous

from the beginning. The two most prominent figures in the group, Sheikh Sharif and Sheikh Aweys, embodied this diversity. Sheik Sharif became the face of moderation as he tried to reassure both Somalis and outsiders that the courts-movement was not extremist (Devlin-Foltz and Ozkececi-Taner 2010: 98). He would frequently make public statements such as: ‘The people have to govern themselves...so they don’t need to be bullied by whichever government is in power. That way the dictatorship of the past won’t be repeated...’ (The New Humanitarian 2006). He also denied the presence of foreign elements such as al-Qaeda within the courts, portraying this as a smear by the warlords (Robinson 2006).

Such statements of moderation would be contradicted by militant messages from other sub-factions (The New Humanitarian 2006). Sheikh Aweys, a former AIAI commander, called for the implementation of Sharia in ‘Not only Africa but across the world’ (Africa Analysis 2005). This was while Sheik Sharif would make statements such as: ‘We never intended to declare an Islamic republic... Even if a few of our comrades favoured a strict interpretation of Islamic law...’ (Spiegel Online 2007). Aweys did distance the ICU from al-Qaeda, both in public and seemingly also internally, as his primary goal was to unify the Somali under an Islamic state (BBC 2006; Nordland 2006). In a leaked letter, purportedly circulated among the ICU-leadership, Aweys argued that the TFG had ‘...influenced the International Community to believe that the Somali Religious leaders are Al-Qaeda’ (Aweys 2005). The purpose of this, he argued, was to bring about an Ethiopian invasion to prop up the government. However, Aweys did advocate military action against Ethiopia to free the Ogaden-region.

This was seized upon by hostile warlords who saw the U.S. War on Terror as an opportunity to tip the balance of power in their favour (Marchal 2009: 385). There is no proof that the U.S. supported outright military actions against the courts, but there is evidence that warlords received funds under the auspices of capturing al-Qaeda members there as the CIA

made contact with eleven warlords for this purpose already in 2003. According to the International Crisis Group, these warlords received payments of between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per month (Lacey 2006; Maruf and Joseph 2018: 33; Wax and DeYoung 2006). Several of the same warlords would in February 2006 form the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) (Hansen 2013: 34; Samatar 2013: 170). The increasing political assertiveness of the courts-movement was perceived by the warlords as a challenge, and a wave of assassinations and disappearances against both sides followed in 2005 (Marchal 2009: 388). Clashes between the courts and the ARPCT would eventually escalate into a war for control over Mogadishu.

Clashes between the militias of the warlords and the courts had become a common feature of life in Mogadishu by 2005. While the courts had their own militias, these were equipped to deal with local bandits, and not to fight an outright war (Maruf 2018 and Joseph: 35). However, a tiny faction within the ICU proved particularly adept at fighting. This faction, known as al-Shabaab, initially consisted of a few dozen people, some of which were former members of AIAI, and some of which had received training in Afghanistan (Hansen 2013: 34). A training camp for this group had been set up some time in the early 2000s, likely with support from Sheikh Aweys. Recruits were taught to dispel notions of clan-allegiance, and it was arranged for the group to have its own military hardware to avoid the reliance on businessmen which plagued other militias. Its first widely-publicized act was to take over the Italian cemetery in Mogadishu in January 2005 where Aden Hashi Farah Ayro set up a training camp funded by payments from Italy to recover unearthened bones (International Crisis Group 2005; 2010: 5; Marchal 2009: 389).

Before mid-2005, most of the ICU's leadership had been eager to distance themselves from Ayro's militia, but attempts at breaking up Ayro's group foundered because it had the protection of both Aweys and leading members of the Habar Gidir-Ayro sub-clan of the

Hawiye. By the summer of 2005, however, the ICU was under pressure by the warlords which used their new-found resources from abroad to wage war against all interests associated with the courts (International Crisis Group 2005: 11; 2006: 12). Clashes between the warlord militias and the courts became common by 2005, and this tension allowed militants within the courts-movement to outbid moderate Islamists to achieve leadership positions (Maruf and Joseph 2018: 35-40). These clashes therefore allowed al-Shabaab members to outcompete moderate factions within the ICU, sidelining figures such as Sheik Sharif to steer the group towards militancy (International Crisis Group 2010; Hansen 2013: 36).

This notion of the ICU being ‘hijacked’ and moderate Islamists being outcompeted by militants is paralleled in the autobiography of Abu Mansoor al-Amriki (2012: 94). Al-Amriki was an American- describes how one militant leader, Hassan Turkey, had said that:

...he had always intended to derail Shaykh Sharif's plans by taking on his name and then announcing radical opinions. He would take a harder line than Shariif was ready for and then announce it in the media, leaving Shariif caught between denying his links to Hassan Turkey and between accepting the hardline.

Al-Shabaab exploited the decentralized nature of the ICU by going public in February 2006 with blunt demands and an aggressive stance towards the warlords which allowed it to gain a central role in organizing the ICU’s efforts against the ARPCT (Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 156). As stated by Jendajiy Frazer in a U.S. Senate hearing:

...extremist elements within the CIC, particularly the radical al-Shabaab organization, hijacked the broader Court’s movement, driving

the CIC toward an agenda of military expansion and aggression (U.S. Senate 2007: 8).

She also stated that:

The Islamic Courts Union are certainly a heterogeneous group and I understand that they were developed very much by various clans and subclans, often supported by the business leaders trying to establish some degree of law and order in basically a failed state... (U.S. Senate 2007: 12)

The event which triggered an outright war in February 2006 between the ICU and the ARPCT was a dispute between two businessmen of the Abgal sub-clan of the Hawiye over Mogadishu's only seaport at El Ma'an. One of them, Bashir Rage, was involved with the ARPCT. His rival, Abubak Omar Adane, was close to the courts. The ICU destroyed the ARPCT-forces and achieved total control over Mogadishu by June 2006 (Barnes and Hassan 2007: 154; Menkhaus 2007: 374; Maruf 2018: 112). This was the first time in fifteen years that any faction had controlled the capital, and the Islamists succeeded to an unprecedented extent in delivering stability and the rule of law, and immediately dismantled the hated roadblocks.

Islamism in Somalia can be viewed as '...a reaction to the challenges the Somali society faces under conditions of state collapse' (Mwangi 2012: 518). There is little evidence that the Islamist courts were set up for the purposes of rebellion. They were experiments in providing basic public goods locally within the context of war, and their influence grew because their services were in demand by businesspeople and civilians which no other actors, such as the warlords, could fulfil. Though the Islamic courts gradually acquired an in-house capacity for violence, these court-militias were not set up for the purpose of conquering

territory. It rather reflects the efforts of the courts to create spheres of order by establishing functioning local judicial systems.

The ICU became very popular because it was able to bring about a sense of normality, despite the draconian measures used by some sub-factions such as al-Shabaab (De Waal 2015: 124; Lindley 2010: 9). In the end, however, the failure to restrain hardliners within the ICU pushed it into a disastrous confrontation with Ethiopia. The presence of figures like Sheikh Aweys, who sought the annexation of the Ogaden, made Ethiopia deeply suspicious of the group (Barnes and Hassan 2007: 156). Public statements by spokesmen for ICU sub-factions issuing ultimatums to the TFG and calls for seizing the Ogaden proved too much (M. Ibrahim 2010: 284). Ethiopia launched an invasion and entered Mogadishu on December 28, 2006, and the ICU's forces broke and scattered.

The Ethiopian invasion was framed as a religious struggle by 70 Islamist scholars who called for taking up arms against the invaders. Al-Shabaab did not have a significant military capacity at this point as it had relied on cooperation with clan-militias, but blunders committed by the ICU-commanders provided more room for al-Shabaab to recruit (Elmi 2010: 62; Marchal 2009: 394). Al-Shabaab was not necessarily widely popular, but it was the only group able to mount a resistance effort against Ethiopia as no nationalist groups emerged. Furthermore, the ICU had issues with appealing beyond Mogadishu as it had a preponderance of members from the Habr Gedir sub-clan of the Hawiye. Al-Shabaab was far more effective at recruiting beyond the Hawiye after it was expelled from Mogadishu. In fact, as many as 70 % of its membership may have come from the oft-discriminated against Digil-Mirifle clans (Clapham 2017: 153-157). Al-Shabaab was ideologically coherent, unlike many other groups within the ICU, and it was better at transcending clan-divides. It was also pragmatic in its relationship towards the clans. While seeing the clan-system as un-Islamic, it was careful to recruit commanders with strong clan-network connections. In fact, much of its

membership comes from the most marginalized groups (Marchal 2019b; 2019a; Solomon 2015: 46). One example of this is that Muktar Robow, a member of the marginalized Rahanweyn-clan, became second in command of the security forces. Al-Shabaab also proved one of the most effective forces within the ICU in terms of battlefield successes, and this ensured that al-Shabaab would get a high quota of members on the Council of the courts (Hansen 2013): 36.

Al-Shabaab declared itself an independent organization from the ICU in December 2006 but maintained an alliance with the ICU which broke down in September 2007. The split was a reaction to a conference held in Eritrea's capital Asmara which included members of the ICU, the Somali diaspora, and secular warlords. This conference led to the formation of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). In a startling display of the fluidity of alliances in Somalia, the ARS was led by the ICU's former leader Sheikh Sharif Hassan, as well as the anti-Islamist and formerly pro-Ethiopian warlord Hussein Aydiid. The involvement of Eritrea and the decision to negotiate with the warlords was unacceptable to al-Shabaab, causing it to break with the ICU (Hansen 2013: 57; Maruf 2018: 67). The ARS split into two a year later due to Sheikh Sharif's support for negotiations with the TFG and Ethiopia, and Sheikh Aweys' staunch opposition to this.

The moderate faction, called ARS-Djibouti, under Sheikh Sharif entered UN-sponsored peace negotiations which led to the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, and it signed a peace agreement with the TFG in Djibouti in October 2008. Sheikh Sharif, the Islamist who had been the leader of the ICU during its insurgency, was elected president in January 2009 with the support of the international community, a stark recognition of the new salience of Islamism in Somalia. Aweys' faction, meanwhile, continued its armed resistance and joined with several other Islamist-groups which had split off from the ICU to establish Hizbul Islam

in 2009 in reaction to the Djibouti Process (Berhanu 2013: 83; Ibrahim 2010: 287; Marchal and Sheikh 2015: 159).

There were large ideological differences between Hizbul Islam and al-Shabaab, though they developed an alliance of convenience. Hizbul Islam's two primary leaders, Hasan Aweys and Hasan Turkey, were not just Islamists, but also Somali-nationalists who pursued the irredentist agenda of creating a Greater Somalia (International Crisis Group 2010: 10). Al-Shabaab's ideology evolved towards having global jihadist goals, especially after Ahmed Abdi Godane became its new leader in April of 2007. Godane was an Isaaq from Somaliland who had travelled to Pakistan in 1989 to study and reportedly became involved with al-Qaeda at one point (Maruf and Joseph 2018: 67). It was only after Godane became al-Shabaab's leaders that the group began making explicit overtures towards al-Qaeda, and Godane also allowed foreign fighters to achieve prominent roles within the group.

A report by the Associated Press based on documents retrieved from Osama Bin Laden's safe house in Pakistan, it was only in 2009 that al-Shabaab actively began courting al-Qaeda and it was in March 2009 that Bin Laden first focused on Somalia alone in an audiotaped-speech (Maruf and Joseph 2018: 109). Bin Laden apparently rebuffed these attempts because of the group's excessive methods, and it is was only in 2012, one year after Bin Laden's death, that al-Shabaab formally joined al-Qaeda (Callimachi 2013; D. Smith 2015). There is, therefore, no evidence that al-Shabaab was the product of contagion or spill-over from other Islamist conflicts. It was instead, an indigenous movement which exploited the success of the Islamic courts, and later contacted transnational extremist-groups such as al-Qaeda.

Al-Shabaab was wildly effective militarily, and it controlled 80 % of Somalia south of Puntland by mid-2009, possibly controlling a force of 5000 men and incorporating at least 3

million Somalis under its rule (Maruf and Joseph 2018: 136). Its peak came in 2010 when it forcibly absorbed Hisbul Islam and its troops under its own command. A rift started appearing, however, between those who saw themselves as part of a Somali struggle and those who believed themselves to be part of a global jihad (Clapham 2017: 158; Samatar 2013: 173). These tensions were exacerbated by Godane using his own 'secret police' within the group to rid himself of any opposition within the organization stemming from his association with al-Qaeda and elevation of foreign fighters into top-positions (Anderson and McKnight 2015: 537). The expansion of al-Shabaab's membership also opened clan-divides. Especially after a failed offensive launched by Godane in September 2010 against African Union forces in Mogadishu where Godane was accused of using Rahanweyn as cannon-fodder (Solomon 2015: 46).

It is also the case that much of the group's rank-and-file had less loyalty to the group's overall cause than to their sub-clan militias. Such recruits were in many instances sent by clans as a political hedge. Other clans joined to gain the upper hand in long-running local struggles with other clans (Le Sage 2010). It was also undermined by the establishment of the African Union's mission to Somalia, AMISOM, in January 2007 which was led by Uganda (Clapham 2017: 155). This allowed Ethiopia to withdraw completely by 2009, and al-Shabaab was driven out of Mogadishu in August of 2011.

Al-Shabaab managed to expand to other parts of South-Central Somalia, notably the Lower Jubba in 2008, where clan institutions had been too weak to establish a lasting political order. When the jihadis established a new administration in Kismayo, they excluded traditional elders from the process, and members of the Shura was staffed by loyalists. This was a source of tension between al-Shabaab and Mu'askar Ras Kamboni in Kismayo as al-Shabaab saw many of the elders as supporters of Ras Kamboni, leading to the assassination of especially elders of the Ogaden clan.

Al-Shabaab also inspired opposition organized along religious lines. The primary example of this is Aluh Sunna Wah Jamaa (ASWJ) which was created in 1991 as a loose alliance among traditional Sufi-leaders and brotherhoods. It was only in mid-2008 that it began actively participating in the war because al-Shabaab portrayed Sufism as heretical and idolatrous and destroyed Sufi shrines wherever they encountered them, leading to a growing religious backlash.¹⁵ The ASWJ was the largest pro-government force in South-Central Somalia by late-2009 and it scored several significant victories against al-Shabaab (Le Sage 2010: 2; International Crisis Group 2010: 10; Shay 2008: 38).

Several conclusions can be drawn from this. First, it was the fragmented social landscape of Mogadishu, along with collapsing state and clan-institutions, led to the politicization of Islamic institutions for the purposes of security and welfare provision. It does not reflect a drive towards creating an Islamist insurrection, but rather a bottom-up response to local demands. Elmi points out that US-policy towards Somalia is built on the assumption that collapsed Muslim states can become a haven for terrorist organizations, as happened in Afghanistan (Elmi 2010: 7). However, there are no indications that any of the courts were established on the initiative of any foreign networks or groups (Ibrahim 2019: 151). Second, no Islamist actors were able to establish a lasting presence in Somalia until the social-institutional shift towards Islamic courts which provided the institutional foundation which made Islamism viable as a participation identity.

Third, the rise of Islamic institutions in this context was not a pre-determined outcome. It was rather a matter of contingent positionality, where only religious networks remained as the last viable options as providers of security and welfare, and were favoured by local businessmen to take on these roles. Fourth, Somali factions were remarkably consistent

¹⁵ Le Sage 2010: 4

in their ideological profiles. There is therefore no evidence that Islamisation was a tactic for Somali groups to outbid each other as is expected by some scholars (Walter 2017b; 2017a). Fifth, transnational groups such as Al-Qaeda failed to establish a significant presence in Mogadishu. It was only in 2012, 21 years after the Somali state collapsed that it gained a lasting presence due to Al-Shabaab's overtures, but this was long after al-Shabaab's ideological profile had been established. Al-Shabaab's ideological profile was therefore not an attempt at attracting foreign support as could be expected based on established theories of outbidding (Toft 2007; Walter 2017a). When al-Qaeda eventually did manage to establish a presence, it was only through invitation. Sixth, the various Islamist factions which grew out of the ICU did not compete to be as extreme as possible, but rather differentiated themselves on different issues. Islamists under Sheik Sharif opted to accept elections and the internationally supported process of government-building. Hizbul Islam sought an essentially Islamist and Pan-Somali agenda, whereas al-Shabaab shifted towards an increasingly globally focused rhetoric.

Finally, while Islamisation was a consequence of the demand for security in Mogadishu, it was not inevitable that this would amount to an insurgency. The ICU consisted of both moderate and militant factions, and it only fully turned towards militancy as hostility from Mogadishu's warlords allowed militant sub-factions of the Islamic courts to outbid moderate Islamists to seize leadership positions. This is all the more evident in that the momentum of the Islamic courts was slowed by their integration into the TNG in 2000 which effectively side-lined militant sub-factions. It was only after the Islamists were excluded from government-negotiations through the rise of the TFG that the militants became fully empowered.

5.4 Somaliland and Puntland: Institutional Continuity

The Islamist insurgency in Mogadishu was caused by a societal collapse whereby religious institutions remained as providers of security and welfare, which entailed a shift in social capital towards institutions to which Islamism was sensible as a participation identity. This experiment in governance-provision led to militancy as militant sub-factions managed to outbid moderate sub-factions to seize control over these institutions. To increase confidence in this explanation for Islamist insurgency, I apply the same historical approach to three negative cases to see whether it plausibly explains the absence of Islamist insurrection there.

The territories of Somaliland and Puntland are similar to Mogadishu South-Central Somalia in terms of history, the pervasiveness of tribal institutions, and ethnicity though they differ in terms of clan-composition. They also faced similar challenges to South-Central Somalia in 1991, being in a similar *archipelagic* situation as state collapse meant power was fractionalised among private militias, while public goods provision was a matter for traditional institutions. Furthermore, Somaliland had suffered immense costs from the war against Barre's regime as Barre's troops committed multiple large-scale atrocities in the region, whereas Puntland was largely unaffected by violence.

Given this tenuous state of affairs, one might have expected Somaliland and Puntland to have gone the way of Mogadishu in terms of Islamist militancy, not least because these regions are traditionally considered to be more religiously conservative than Mogadishu (Marchal 2004: 123). Yet, nothing comparable to the ICU or al-Shabaab developed in either region, and Islamist violence was largely limited clashes in remote border-areas. In fact, as Mogadishu plunged into a *disorderly* system, Somaliland and Puntland evolved into more *cohesive* governance systems.

The critical factor which explains this divergence, is that despite all three areas being archipelagic in 1991, the fractionalisation in Somaliland and Puntland was still lesser than in Mogadishu, and traditional institutions remained stronger. In Puntland, the Majerteen sub-clan of the Darood and the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) were near-hegemonic by 1991, and the same was true for the Somali National Movement (SNM) and Isaaq-clan in Somaliland (Clapham 2017: 141). Clan-institutions were also comparatively strong, partly as a legacy of British colonial authorities in Somaliland ruling indirectly through clan-elders, while Italian authorities in South-Central Somalia opted to rule more directly (Bradbury 2008: 182). Other reasons for the high resilience of traditional institutions was the prevalence of inter-clan marriage and the clear definition of territories between sub-clans, compared to the hodgepodge of clan-fiefs in Mogadishu (Bradbury 2008: 91). The continued strength of traditional institutions such as elder councils proved to be a critical factor in containing violence after 1991 by facilitating negotiations among various disputing sub-clans and other groups. These institutions also proved important to the process of state-building by complementing the legal-rational state institutions which were being developed by the SSDF and SNM (Cornwell 2004: 5; Hoehne 2016).

Stabilisation was by no means an effortless and frictionless process. However, the higher degree of institutional continuity meant state-building could build on pre-existing institutional frameworks for security and welfare, leading to the eventual integration and codification of clan-institutions into the constitutions of both territories. This was in stark contrast to Mogadishu where the collapse of clan-institutions led to the creation of something entirely new in the form of the Islamic courts.

5.4.1 Somaliland

In Somaliland, the SNM seized upon its dominant position to declare independence from Somalia on 18 May 1991, motivated by widespread distrust of the south due to atrocities committed by Barre's regime in 1988 (Lewis 2008: 75). While the region was dominated by the Isaaq clan, there was still significant heterogeneity and tensions both among sub-clans of the Isaaq, but also with smaller clans who did not necessarily share a common vision for post-independence Somaliland. The initial years of independence were marred by bouts of violence between different these different groups who competed for control over grazing areas and other sources of income such as the national airport.

This violence was not enough to undermine state-building efforts, not least because the SNM could capitalise on the strength of pre-existing institutions to prevent cycles of retribution. It relied heavily on clan-elder councils to organise reconciliation conferences to restore relationships and address grievances among clans, sub-clans, and other groups, to support the formation of a functioning state. This eventually led to a hybrid-government which formalized the authority of clan-elders in the upper house of the legislature, and at the local level in administrative institutions a called *Guurtis* (Bradbury 2008: 86). By 1996/1997, the government was powerful enough to play a central mediating role in a grand constitutional conference, establishing itself as the primary upholder of order in Somaliland (Hoehne 2016: 46). The Somaliland-government thus achieved many of the attributes of a sovereign state including a near-monopoly on power, a constitution, and a functioning electoral system (De Waal 2015: 131). This transition was possible by building on the strength of Somaliland's non-state institutions, which by comparison had become dysfunctional in Mogadishu.

The state-building process was also paralleled by the rise of new variants of political Islam. Peaceful Islamist organizations were present in the region already before

independence and became more numerous in the 1980s. The war against Siyad Barre's regime, and especially atrocities committed by Barre's troops in the region in 1988 pushed groups such as *Wahdatu Shabaab* to become more politically assertive by explicitly supporting the SNM. Upon independence, Islamist actors did seek to influence the process of state-building, but this occurred largely through the mediation of religious men and elders within the traditional clan-system. Islamist elements were essentially co-opted by allowing Islamist demands to be channelled through the traditional Islamic system associated with the clans (Jhazbhay 2008: 197). The near-absence of Islamist violence in Somaliland is also notable given that a high number of al-Shabaab recruits came from the region, and 'Almost all major Somaliland politicians have lost a son who died while fighting for Al-Shabaab...' (Marchal 2019b). This includes Ahmed Godane who was the leader of al-Shabaab between 2007 and 2014, and who had tried and failed in setting up a jihadist organization in Somaliland in the late 1990s (Maruf and Joseph 2018).

Thus, the strength of pre-war institutions and the cohesiveness of the social landscape in Somaliland meant that the disruptive effect of violence after 1991 was diminished as the SNM could involve clan-elders to settle scores, integrating traditional institutions into state-building efforts. Islamist organizations did emerge during this period, but they were integrated into the political mainstream as they could negotiate with state authorities through pre-existing tribal and religious institutions.

5.4.2 Puntland

It is also striking that militant Islamists failed to gain a foothold in Puntland given its similarly tenuous situation in 1991. In fact, militant Islamists associated with AIAI invaded the region after being pushed out of Mogadishu in 1991. It received little support from the locals who were neither convinced by their ideology, nor AIAI's ostensible rejection of clan-

politics, and AIAI was eventually defeated militarily by the SSDF which received Ethiopian support. The social landscape in Puntland was similarly cohesive to Somaliland in that Puntland was dominated by one clan, the Majerteen sub-clan of the Darood, and one faction, the SSDF (Lewis 2002: 504).

Yet, Puntland's stability was at risk in 1991 as the region was controlled by two rival sub-factions of the SSDF associated with different Majerteen sub-clans (Lewis 2008: 100). This rivalry halted state-development, but did not lead to a descent into chaos as clan-institutions remained strong enough to maintain a semblance of order (Schwoebel 2018). War was avoided between the two SSDF-factions as they agree to a power-sharing agreement in 1996, thereby avoiding the type of intra-clan hostility and fragmentation of power to sub-clans which developed in Mogadishu after 1991. This was followed by a clan conference in 1998 which was similar to the conferences held in Somaliland due to their inclusion of clan-elders (Lewis 2002: 287; Menkhaus 2007: 84). The same year, Puntland declared itself a self-administered territory, though within Somalia.

The process of state-building in Puntland was by no means frictionless as sub-clan tensions persisted. However, social order was maintained in Puntland through the continued strength of clan-institutions similarly to in Somaliland, and in contrast to Mogadishu (Lewis 2004: 505). Furthermore, the business community in Puntland were strongly supportive of the state-building process, which has also ensured that most Islamic organizations have supported the regional nationalism of the SSDF. Most violence in the region has been confined to the disputed border-area with Somaliland where al-Shabaab has had a minor presence, though this has not posed a significant threat to the centre (Marchal 2009; Hoehne 2018).

Therefore, social cohesion in Puntland was relatively high, though intra-Majerteen rivalries posed a threat, as strong clan-institutions ensured continued stability. This prevented

major disruptions such as large-scale warfare, and while there has been a growth in Islamist organizations similar to in Somaliland, these developed largely in support of, rather than opposition to the state.

5.4.3 Somali State in Ethiopia

Finally, ‘Somali,’ more commonly known as the Ogaden, presents another interesting contrast to Mogadishu. It is the odd one out of the four cases discussed here because it is subject to Ethiopia’s territorial sovereignty, and because it continued to be subject to a state with a considerable coercive capability despite the political turmoil associated with the fall of the Derg in 1991. It is, however, comparable to the other territories as it is predominantly Somali and defined by similar traditional institutions. Furthermore, the case is interesting because a low-level insurgency which developed in the 2000s was led by the nationalist Ogaden Liberation Front (ONLF), and the rise of Islamist actors in Somalia seems to have had little direct effect on anti-regime activism in the region.

The majority of the region’s population is associated with the Ogaden sub-clan of the Darood, and there is a long history of struggle against the various regimes which have controlled Addis Abeba (Lewis 1989). After the 1980s, the ONLF became the pre-eminent oppositional organisation in the region, initially by participating in electoral politics. It became the largest party in the regional parliament in 1992, but its secessionist-profile put it on a collision course with the central government, and it was chased out by Ethiopian security forces in 1994 (Abdullahi 2007). Importantly, the Islamist group AIAI also established a presence in the region the same year, having been chased around different towns in Somalia by rival groups. Yet, it failed to control any territory, largely because it lacked support from local clan leaders and the security forces proved capable in disrupting its activities (Bryden

1995). AIAI was therefore only a marginal military threat which relied on sporadic attacks, while the ONLF continued to be the primary vehicle for Somali grievances against the state.

The ONLF's activities remained largely low-intensity until it attacked a Chinese oil exploration camp in 2007. Despite the military successes scored by the Islamists in Mogadishu at this time, there is no evidence of coordination between the ONLF and the ICU or al-Shabaab.

One reason for this could be that militant Islamism did not have the same social embeddedness among the Somali in Ethiopia as it did in South-Central Somalia, because no equivalent to the Islamic courts-movement inculcated this ideology into Ogadeni-society. The regional government had a close working-relationship with local religious authorities through the establishment of 'The Supreme Islamic Council.' This was a state-recognized council of Muslim clerics, often Sufis, which gave religious actors a formal channel through which to air their grievances to the state, while simultaneously working with the government to combat extremism. The U.S. embassy in Ethiopia points to this institution as a reason why:

The radical Islamic message has little appeal for most Ethiopian Muslims. Only in peripheral areas where the fledgling regional government have yet to make an impact on the often desperate population are the extremists making limited headway (U. S. Embassy Addis Ababa 1997).

The expectation according to Walter's model would be that the demonstrated effectiveness of Islamist groups in South-Central Somalia should have inspired rebels in the Ogaden to favour Islamism, but no such thing occurred. One US diplomatic cable states that after the Islamist insurgency in Somalia: '...there is increasing evidence of other extremist groups and individuals...seeking to expand their presence and planning activities within

Ethiopia's Somali region...' (U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa 2007). However, no notable Islamist insurgent groups have appeared in the region, nor is there any evidence of the ONLF attempting to emulate the Somali Islamist groups. The opposite seems to be the case as another diplomatic cable states that: '...we have received increasing anecdotal reporting of ONLF's opposition to al-Shabaab' (U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa 2009). There is no evidence of direct connections or coordination between the ONLF and the Islamist insurgents in Somalia.

The group is generally opposed to Islamist groups, and have fought against them. The spokesman for a minor militant Islamist group called 'The Islamic Union of the Mujahedeen of Ogaden' described their relationship with the ONLF as simply keeping '...out of each others way...' (FAS 1997). It did have a temporary alliance of convenience with the Ogaden-branch of AIAI in the 1990s, and sometimes focuses on the Islamic-Christian divide in its rhetoric against Addis Ababa. Nevertheless, its overall ideological profile is closer to that of the Third-Worldist movements of the 1960s as it portrays itself as an anti-colonial movement fighting for the right to self-determination in the face of Ethiopian oppression (Vaughan 2018: 111).

Rather than adopting militant Islamism and following in the path of al-Shabaab, the ONLF eventually re-integrated into the government as it suffered numerous defeats. This followed from a shift in the Ethiopian counter-insurgency strategy were the state had previously relied on non-Somali military personnel to maintain order. This responsibility was in 2007 transferred to a federal force composed primarily of Ogadeni Somali (Hagmann 2014: 26). Abdi Mohamed Omar, who became the regional president in 2010, also built up his own paramilitary force of Somali recruits which included former ONLF fighters. Such institutional continuity also allowed the regional government to counter Islamist militancy by establishing a cooperative relationship with Muslim clerics through a regional organ called

‘the Supreme Islamic Council’ (U. S. Embassy Addis Ababa 1997). Ethiopia’s approach to countering ONLF was to decentralize power to the federal level, which included the establishment of pro-state Somali militias (Hagmann 2014: 26).

These counter-insurgency efforts were largely effective, and a peace agreement was signed in 2018. Contrary to what might be expected from an outbidding-type explanation, the ONLF did not look to Islamism to gain an edge against the state. The outcome of this was an expansion of the autonomy of the regional government which simultaneously asserted the authority of the Ethiopian state in the region while undermining the ONLF (Clapham 2017: 169). This succeeded, not least, because Abdi Mohamed, as an Ogadeni, could successfully portray himself as a protector and enforcer of Ogadeni hegemony in the region in a more effective manner than the ONLF. He had a close relationship with the chief Ethiopian commander in the region, avoiding a previous pattern of the central and the regional government subjecting the Ogaden to their competing forces. The regional government could therefore claim to maintain the interests of the Ogadeni Somali in the face of the Ethiopian state without having to resort to violence, and thus competed directly with the ONLF in terms of gaining support from the largest Somali clan in the region (Hagmann 2014: 48). strategy succeeded in inculcating a stronger sense of loyalty to the centre among the Ethiopian Somali. It also undermined the ONLF’s anti-Ethiopian narrative by pitting Somali against Somali (Vaughan 2018: 112). This proved too much for the ONLF as its de-centralized structure allowed sub-factions to initiate peace negotiations with the government. The first peace talks between the ONLF and the Ethiopian government began in 2012 and were finalized in 2018 as Ethiopia removed the organization from its list of terror groups allowing it to become a normal political party (Mohamed 2018; Shhabait 2018).

The violence in the region continued to be defined by ethno-nationalist aspirations, rather than Islamism, because the militant Islamism did not gain the same social

embeddedness as in Mogadishu. The lack of a disruptive shock to either traditional tribal or religious institutions or the regional government prevented the development of oppositional religious institutions to the same extent as in Mogadishu.

To conclude, militant Islamism never had much of a foothold in the Somali-region, despite the salience of a the struggle against the non-Somali and primarily non-Muslim regimes in Addis Abeba. While AIAI had a presence, it largely operated clandestinely, rather than as an insurgent group, and the major rebel group was instead the ethno-nationalist ONLF. A key reason for this is that the institutional foundation for mobilising around Islamist-lines was simply absent due to the lack of a disruptive shock as happened in Somali. The ability of the central government to assert a permanent presence prevented the rise of anything like the Islamic Courts. The creation of a council of Muslim clerics also empowered traditional Sufism and prevented extremist Islam from making inroads in the region. Militant Islamism therefore never reached the same level of social embeddedness as it did in South-Central Somalia, and radical groups with roots in religious networks never reached the same level of prominence as in Somalia. The government's counter-insurgency strategy was also effective in pressuring a secular group such as the ONLF. Walter's instrumentalist theory predicts that rebel groups will turn to Islamism when their strategic environment becomes more difficult. However, the ONLF did no such thing. Rather than emulate the ICU or al-Shabaab, it suffered a series of defeats which led to peace-negotiations and an end to its armed struggle.

5.5 Conclusion: Islamic Experiments in Governance

While Somalia would have been a prime candidate for Islamist insurgency according to existing theories, there was significant spatial and temporal variance in its appearance. An Islamist insurgency only developed 15 years after the state collapsed in 1991, and when it did it was largely confined to Mogadishu and parts of South-Central Somalia, with little impact on Somaliland, Puntland, or the Somali state of Ethiopia.

The critical factor which explains this variance is institutional continuity and discontinuity. Mogadishu moved from an archipelagic system in 1991, defined by fractionalised power but functioning non-state institutions, to a disorderly system by the 2000s which as these institutions collapsed under the pressure of endemic warfare. This institutional discontinuity paved the way for experiments in security provision along new lines, where religious institutions were the only institutions able to answer the population's social demands. This amounted to a shift in social capital towards religious institutions, which made mobilisation around religion viable as a participation identity. An insurgency developed after the courts and its members were excluded from the official state-building process and pressured by rival warlords, which allowed militant sub-factions to hijack the courts-movement to repurpose it for militant mobilisation.

Somaliland and Puntland were in a similarly precarious situation after 1991, but did not experience an Islamist insurgency, despite traditionally being considered to be more conservative than Mogadishu. The core reason for this is that neither region experienced an institutional collapse as in Mogadishu, allowing the dominant factions to rely on traditional institutions in their stabilisation efforts. While Islamist actors did emerge, they were not in a position to challenge this process, nor did they make much effort to do so, instead being integrated into the political mainstream. Somali state in Ethiopia did also not experience an

Islamist insurgency, despite having spawned many nationalist independence movements in the past. This was due to a combination of Islamism being rejected by traditional institutions, the continued strength of the nationalist ONLF, and Ethiopian decentralisation of counterinsurgency efforts to the state-level.

A key lesson from the Somali case is that we should not expect Islamism to inevitably gain traction in contexts of state-collapse, and Islamist institutions which emerge under such contexts may be part of the solution to disorder. Many Muslims have come to believe that the solution to the failures of governance by states lies in Islam, and state responses to Islamist political movements must be attuned to and recognise the social grievances that underpin them. A failure to do so risks empowering militant sub-factions who direct these grievances towards the state itself.

Chapter 6 The Pakistani Taliban

In the name of God who is Present and evident, I am a Khudai Khidmatgar.

I will serve the nation without any self-interest.

I will not take revenge and my actions will not be a burden for anyone.

My actions will be non-violent.

I will make every sacrifice required of me to stay on this path.

I will serve people without regard to their religion or faith.

I shall use nation-made goods.

I shall not be tempted by any office.¹⁶

6.1 Pathways to Islamist Rebellion in the Pashtun Territories

Years of resistance against the Soviet invasion and a subsequent civil war led to the rise of a powerful Islamist organisation in the form of the Afghan Taliban, and a flow of volunteer mujahedin who returned to Pakistan. However, the eventual emergence of a Pakistani Taliban which was hostile to Islamabad in the 2000s had profoundly local causes. In Swat, the emergent middle- and working-class turned to Islamist movements in protest against the semi-feudal privileges of the landholding class which dominated electoral politics. In the Pashtun tribal territories, the state imposed a clientelist system which delegitimised tribal elders and Sufi clerics in the eyes of many tribesmen. This, along with agnatic tribal rivalries, fuelled an emergent Islamist militant movement which used violence to dismantle

¹⁶ Banerjee 2000: 74

tribal hierarchies. Networks centred on religious seminaries, beginning in the 1980s, meant that mobilisation around Islamism, outside the control of tribal elders became possible. In both Swat and the tribal areas, the rise of Islamism embodied a form of social revolution in a system where an unresponsive state had led to institutional decay. This stands in contrast to the several armed revolts by ethno-nationalist Balochi groups. Despite the influence of Islamist networks in the region, armed opposition groups among the Baloch continued to mobilise around ethno-nationalist ideology, in large part because of significant institutional continuity where traditional tribal elders continued to be the primary leaders of the movement.

6.2. The Pashtun and the Baloch: Divergent Ideological Trajectories

The Pashtun and the Baloch are ethnic groups without a homeland. The Pashtun are divided between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while the Baloch are spread across Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The Pashtun are far more numerous with Pashto-speakers constituting almost half of Afghanistan's population, and 15 % of Pakistan, whereas for the Baloch the numbers are between 2 and 4 %. Pakistan itself is a nation-in-the-making, created in 1947 around the idea of Muslim identity being a distinct identifier from India's other populations, with this identity understood as being functionally equivalent to that of a national identity, and the state itself established as a secular nation-state. This point was emphasized by its founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah who declared in 1947 that 'you may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State' (Jalal 1985: 279)

A common Muslim identity was not enough to unite the many ethnic groups around the idea of Pakistan. A constant worry for Pakistan's security establishment has been the threat of ethno-nationalist separatism, and the ability of outside powers to exploit such

cleavages. This fear was confirmed in 1971 when East Pakistan broke away as the state of Bangladesh. After this, the security establishment became determined to prevent separatism among the Pashtun and Baloch which it believed was encouraged by Afghanistan and India.

Successive Pakistani governments promoted specific interpretations of Islam as a way to counter ethnic separatism and limiting the influence of outside powers (Johnson and Mason 2008: 71). Nation-building shifted from revolving around Muslim identity as a nationality, to nation building around Islamic values and Islam as a system of governance. This was especially the case after the 1970s under president Zia ul-Haq who co-operated with groups which promoted the Deobandi sect of Sufi Islam (Devji 2013). Separatist threats also paved the way for the military to turn Pakistan into a praetorian state in which the military remains the most powerful player, shaping democratic and political institutions, along with the development of civil society (Yousaf 2019: 177).

The threat of Pashtun-nationalism was amplified by Afghanistan's origins as a Pashtun-dominated state which gave it a form of historical legitimacy which the Punjab-based and dominated Pakistani state did not have. Upon Pakistan's independence, Afghanistan immediately laid claim to Pakistan's north-Western provinces, including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) which today are part of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province (KPK), and also claimed Pakistani Balochistan. Different Afghan governments put considerable pressure on Pakistan by having direct contacts with Pashtun tribal leaders and promoting the idea of an independent *Pashtunistan* (Leake 2017: 94). Afghan irredentism, and Pashtun separatism and nationalism were perceived as existential threats by Islamabad's security establishment which often sought to counter nationalism by promoting Islamism.

The Pashtun constitute absolute majorities in the NWFP and FATA. They also have a large presence in northern Balochistan, especially around the city of Quetta, while ethnic Baloch remain predominant in the rest of the province. These regions are also among the poorest and least developed in Pakistan, and all three have seen multiple insurgencies after Pakistan's independence, especially in the 2000s. Yet, the Pashtun insurgencies in NWFP and FATA are qualitatively different from the Balochi insurgency having been dominated by various instances of the Pakistani Taliban, whereas the Balochi insurgency is explicitly ethno-nationalist.

There is an important legacy of ethno-nationalist resistance, first against the British colonial administration, and then against Islamabad, among the Pashtun as well. This was spearheaded by the pacifist group Khudai Khidmatgar (KK) which would influence later political parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP). However, Pashtun nationalism as a coherent ideological force against Punjabi political dominance lost its strength by the 1980s as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan decisively shifted momentum towards Islamist groups (Zain 2009). Islamabad's security establishment actively supported this shift, as radical sentiment among the Pashtun shifted away from nationalism towards aiding the Afghan mujahideen, not least as six out of the seven Mujahedeen groups which fought the Soviet invaders were predominantly Pashtun (Saikal 2010). This policy continued after the Soviet withdrawal through the emergence of the Afghan Taliban in the mid-1990s, until it backfired in the early 2000s as the Pakistani Taliban emerged and turned against the Pakistani state itself.

This shift is captured by figures 10 and 11 which shows how parts of Pakistan devolved into civil war in the early 2000s. This violence was by far most intense in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and in FATA, and most incidents involved Islamist groups which commonly are referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, though this in reality covers a multitude of separate organisations (Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022; Gleditsch et al. 2002). Most of the non-Islamist violence in this data refers to clashes between groups identified according to their tribal-allegiances. These clashes were in many cases strongly intertwined with competition among Taliban-factions, or tribes resisting the influence of the Pakistani-Taliban. The timing of this violence followed from events set in motion after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. However, this was not simply a case of spillover, as the social-institutional foundations for this insurgency, along with the grievances which fuelled it, were already present. Furthermore, Balochistan was spared from similar levels of violence, despite sharing a border with Afghanistan.

Figure 10: Pakistan Battle-Deaths 1989-2017

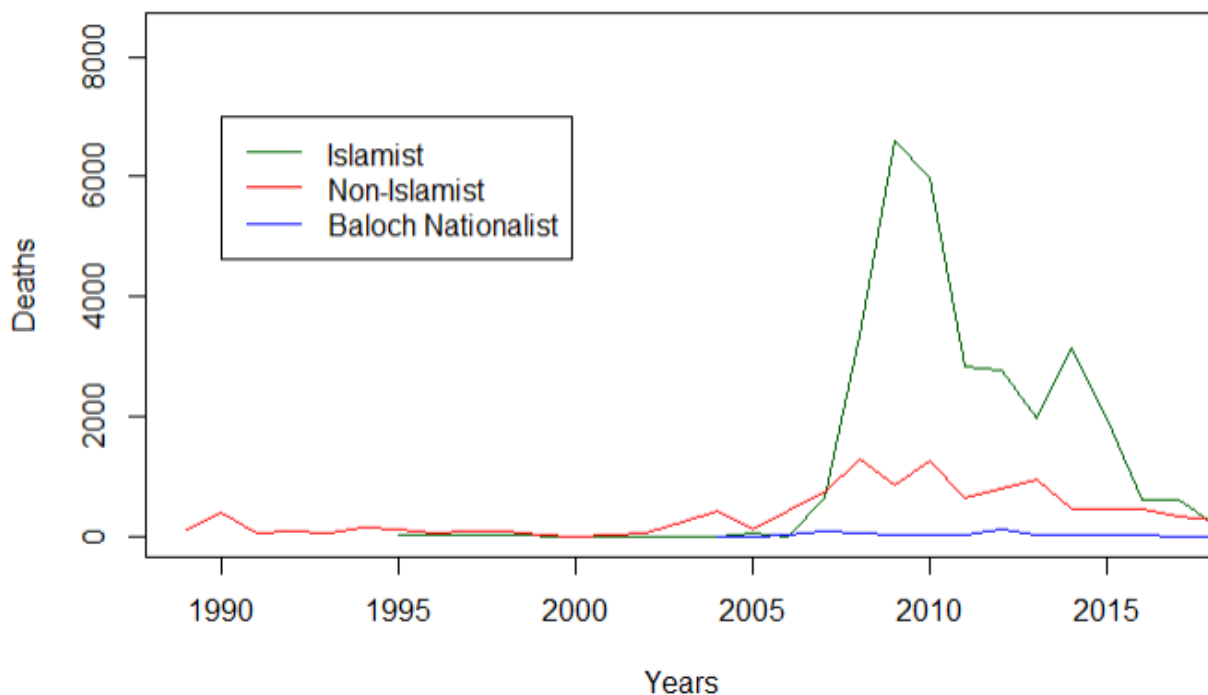
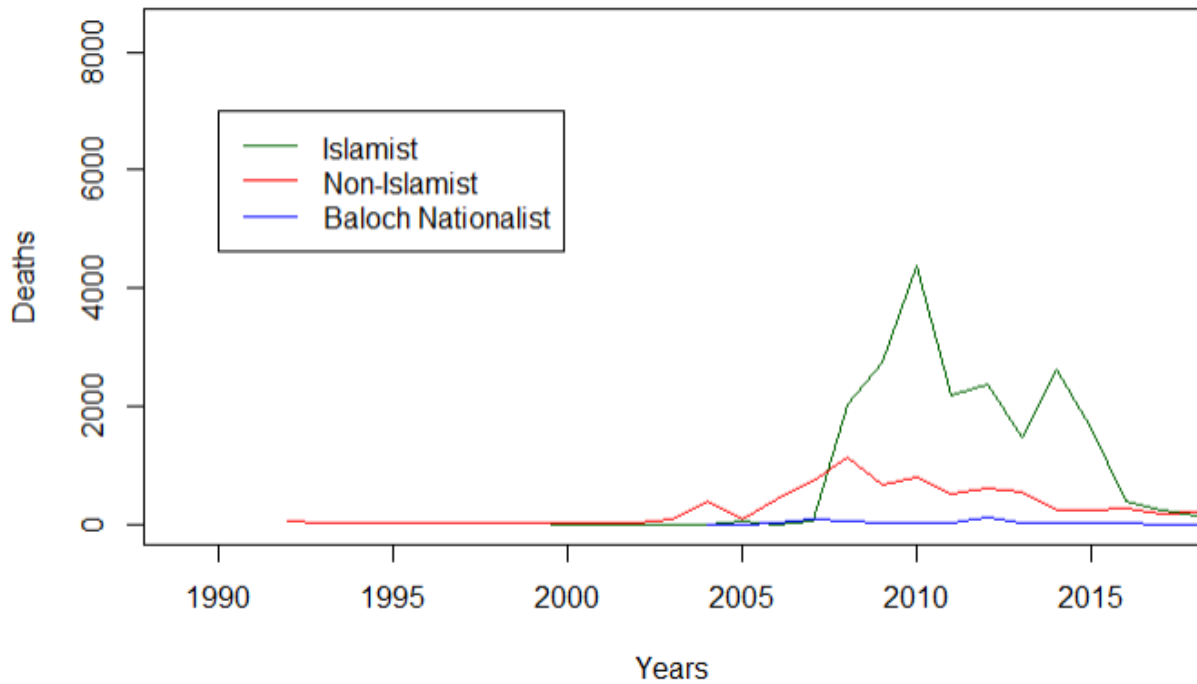


Figure 11: KP and Balochistan Battle-Deaths 1989-2017



This is further illustrated by maps 12 and 13 which show that non-Islamist violence was far more intense in Pakistan's northern regions of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and far less intense on Balochistan's border to Afghanistan in the West, despite bordering important strongholds of the Afghan Taliban such as Kandahar and Helmand. This difference is further exemplified by maps 14 and 15 which shows the strong concentration of violence in FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, whereas there were far fewer incidents in Balochistan with the violence also being geographically more dispersed. The core explanation for this is that violence in Balochistan continued to take the form of an ethno-nationalist low-intensity insurgency which relied on hit-and-run tactics, whereas the violence in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and FATA escalated into outright civil war where insurgents and the government competed for control over territory.

Figure 12: Violent Incidents Involving Non-Islamist Actors

1991-2003



2004-2011



Figure 13: Violent Incidents Involving Islamist Actors

1991-2003



2004-2011

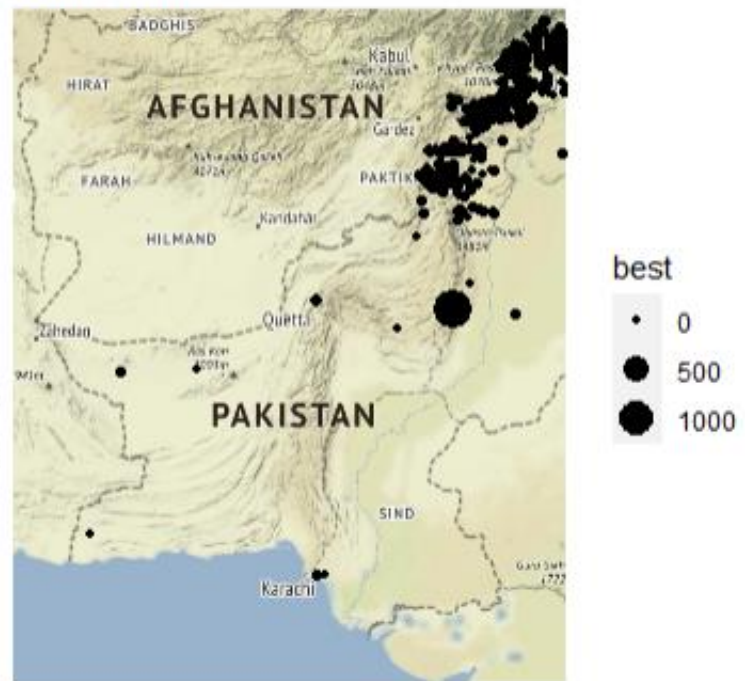


Figure 14: The Pashtun Territories

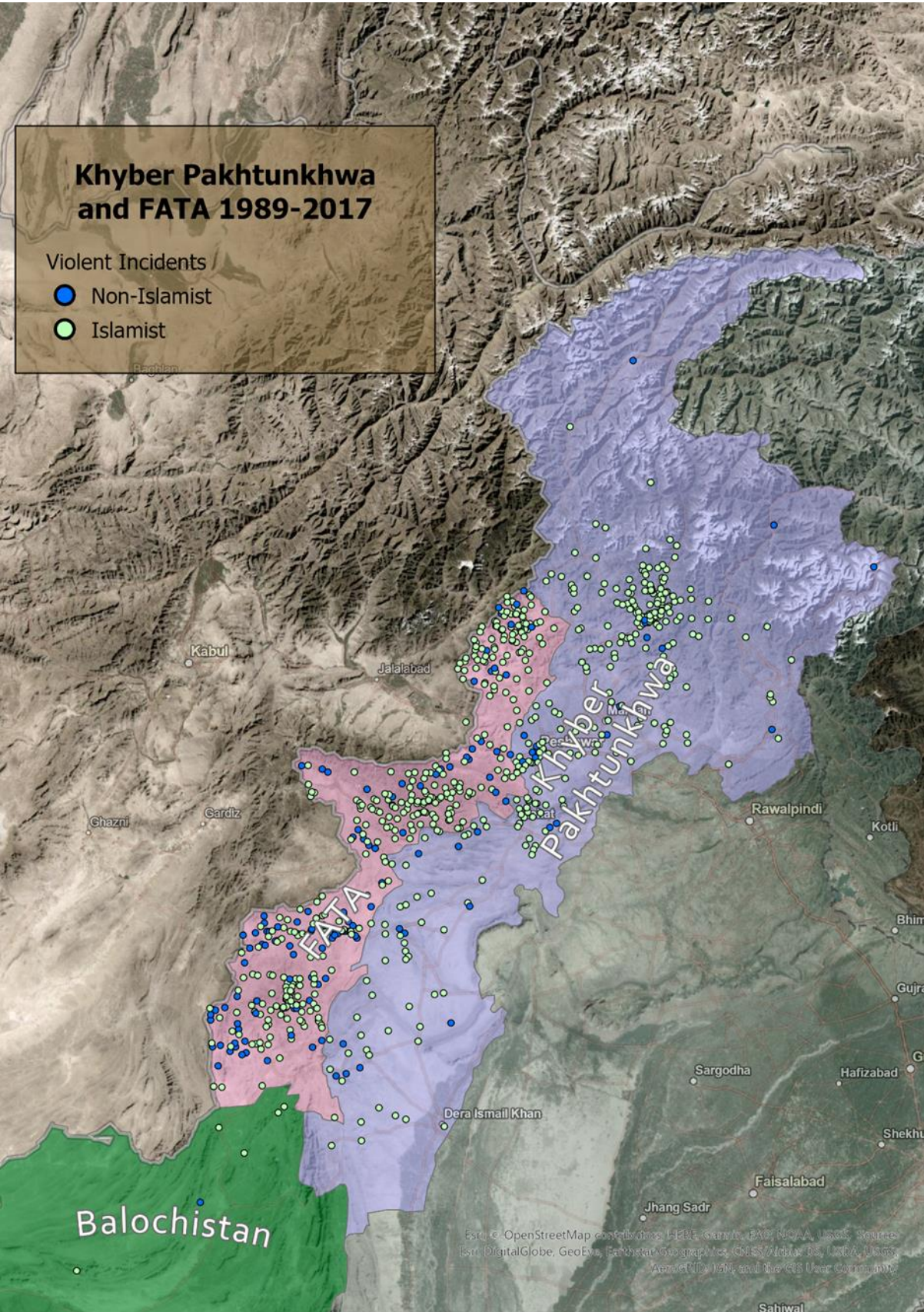
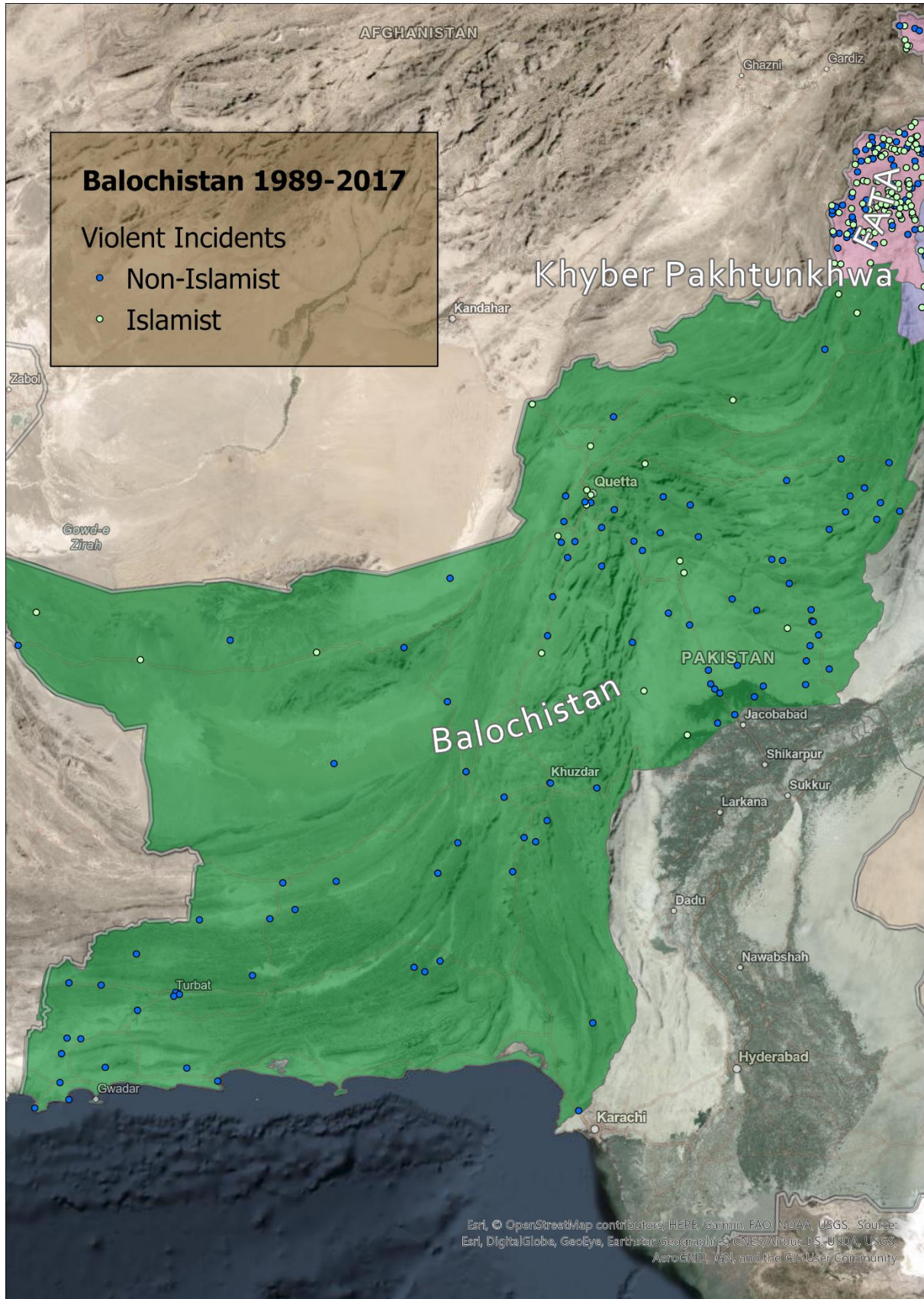


Figure 15: Balochistan



The Afghan Taliban established a significant presence in Balochistan in after 2001 in areas with a strong Pashtun-presence such as Quetta. Militancy among ethnic Baloch in the province by contrast retained its ethno-nationalist ideology, despite the proximity to the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Explanations of ideology as a product of outbidding would lead us to expect that there were significant incentives for Balochi rebel entrepreneurs to seek ideological affinity with the Pakistani Taliban after its rebellion against Islamabad, but no such thing happened (Devasher 2019). In fact, the intensified repression of Balochi nationalism in the 2000s under President Pervez Musharraf only solidified ethno-nationalism as the predominant oppositional ideology (Siddiqi 2012: 159).

The social-institutional basis for the Pakistani Taliban and the Baloch rebel groups may explain their ideological differences. Balochi political groups continue to be dominated by tribal leaders called *sardars* (Titus 1998: 667). Balochi tribes are traditionally considered to be quite hierarchical and centralised compared to their Pashtun counterparts, the *maliks*, which function more as “first among equals” as all propertied males have access to tribal councils (Cole 2009). Crucially, the *sardars* seem to have maintained their positions of power, despite the rise of a small middle class which have sought to organise outside of the tribal system. This stands in contrast to the trend among the Pashtun where the rise of the Taliban embodied a form of social radicalism in which people from lower lineages, the landless, and members of the middle class who objected to the semi-feudal privileges of certain families, saw an Islamic state as a way of rectifying their social grievances.

The Pashtun are often described as being divided between *Nang* Pashtuns who reside in the mountainous areas with low-government presence in what later became the FATA-province, and the *Qaland* who live in settled areas in what was known as the North-Western

Frontier Province (NWFP) and later as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (Abbas 2014: 24). The policy of both the British Colonial Administration, and of the Pakistani state towards the tribal areas was to seal it off politically from the rest of Pakistan, leaving its populace to the personalistic rule of state-favoured maliks, as opposed to building the legal-rationalistic institutions through which the state governed elsewhere (Naseemullah 2014: 502; Naseemullah and Staniland 2016). The eventual rise of the Pakistani Taliban in the region would be fuelled by discontent with an inherently inflexible political system which guaranteed political rights only for the maliks, who were widely perceived as corrupt. Younger generations of tribesmen from lower lineages challenged this system through religious ideology as many had established network-ties to religious seminaries outside of the tribal-system, and fought together in the Afghan jihad. The Taliban-model therefore emerged as a form of social revolution against state-imposed clientelism which enforced rigid tribal hierarchies, and were intensified due to rivalries between tribes, especially the Mehsud and the Wazirs. This gained a second dimension as the rise of Islamist militancy led Islamabad to increasingly encroach upon tribal areas which was resisted by different Taliban-groupings, culminating in the 2007 insurgency of the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) in 2007 which declared war against the Pakistani state.

The militant Islamist groups which emerged in the settled areas, such as the Swat-valley, also represented a form of social revolution, but in this case as a form of class-warfare. The Swat-region in particular, was defined by a semi-feudal system which had persisted after the absorption and dissolution of the Yusufzai princely state of Swat by Pakistan between 1947 and 1969. This system had historically rested on a social agreement whereby privileged landowning families would ensure the welfare of tenant farmers, but this system lost its purpose with the introduction of a cash-based economy. Islamism gained traction among both the emerging middle class, as well as the landless poor who resented the

privileges of the landholding families (Barfield 2014: 111-113). Militancy was further fuelled by the lack of formal channels to express these grievances as the political parties, including the secular Pashtun-nationalist parties, were dominated by these privileged families. The Islamist-character of this militancy was, as in FATA, due to social capital having shifted to religious institutions, primarily seminaries, in the years after the Afghan jihad.

Importantly, there was significant temporal variance among the Pashtun as well as political radicalism had historically taken the form of non-Islamist ethno-nationalism, most notably in the form of the Khudai Khidmatgar. While Islamist in FATA took the form of an intra-tribal social revolution, and a class-conflict in Swat, no ideological equivalents emerged among the Baloch. This was due to the significant institutional continuity in Balochi tribal society where the middle class remained weak, while sardars continued to dominate both electoral and insurgent parties (Lieven 2017: 135; Titus 1998: 679). While we would have expected greater levels of religious outbidding among the sardars in Walter's (2017a) theory, to outcompete each other, and to gain access to resources from the Taliban, no such thing occurred. Table 10 rather illustrates in a similar pattern to Somalia, that religious groups emerged from religious institutions.

As illustrated by table 7, FATA was defined by an archipelagic system where power was fractionalised among multiple tribal actors with rigid, though unpopular, tribal institutions. Swat was less fractionalised due to having greater state-presence, but a delegitimised social-institutional system pushed it towards disorder. Balochistan was similarly a system with a significant state presence, but more legitimate institutions and was therefore somewhere between a cohesive and a nightwatchman system.

Table 9: Approximate situation 1991

Archipelago FATA	Disorder
Cohesive Governance	Nightwatchman Settled Areas (Swat), Balochistan

Table 10: Approximate situation 2007

Archipelago	Disorder FATA, Swat
Cohesive Governance	Nightwatchman Balochistan

Table 11: Militant Groups in Khyber-Pakhtunkwa and Balochistan

Group	Area	Tribes	Islamist	Religious Origins
Harkat-ul Jihadi Islami (HUJI)	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Jaish-e-Islami (JEM)	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Jaish-e-Islami (JEM)	North Waziristan		Yes	Yes
Karwan-e-Naimatullah	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Qari Zia Group	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Jamatud Da'awah ilal-Quran wal-Sunnah	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Jamatul Mujahidin Takfir wal Hijra	Bajaur		Yes	Yes
Al-Hezb	Darra Adamkhel		Yes	Yes
Islami Taliban	Darra Adamkhel		Yes	Yes
Tekrik-i-Islami	Darra Adamkhel		Yes	Yes
Ahle Hadith	Mohmand		Yes	Yes

Muqami Taliban	Mohmand		Yes	Yes
TTP (Hakimullah Mehsud)	Orakzai		Yes	Yes
Ansar-ul-Islam	Khyber		Yes	Yes
			(Deobandi, Barelvi)	
Amar bil Maroof wa Nehl Anil Munkir	Khyber		Yes	Yes
Lashkar-e-Islamy	Khyber		Yes	Yes
			(Deobandi)	
Islamic Jihad Union	South Waziristan		Yes	Yes
Muqami Taliban (Local Taliban)	South Waziristan		Yes	Yes
Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban (Local Movement of the Taliban)	South Waziristan		Yes	Yes
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)	Multiple		Yes	Yes
Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban (Waziri Alliance)	North Waziristan		Yes	Yes
Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e- Mohammadi (TNSM) 1992-	Swat District		Yes	Yes
Shura Ittihad-ul Mujahideen (Mullah Nazir)	South Waziristan	Wazir	Yes	Yes (TTP)
Shura Ittihad-ul Mujahideen (Hafiz Bahadur)	North Waziristan	Wazir and Daur	Yes	Yes (TTP)
Ansar al Aseer (2013)			Yes	Yes (TTP and IMU)
Jundullah			Yes	
Ahrar-ul-Hind (2014)			Yes	Yes (TTP)
TTP-South Waziristan/TTP Sanja Faction			Yes	Yes (TTP)
Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JA)			Yes	Yes (TTP)
LeJ 1996-	Balochistan		Yes	Yes (Sipah-e- Sahaba)

Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)	Balochistan		No	No
Baloch Liberation Front (BLF)	Balochistan		No	No
Turkistan Bhattani Group		Bhattani	Yes	Yes
TTP (Kurram)	Kurram		Yes	Yes
TTP (Khyber)	Khyber/Orakzai			
TTP (Omar Khalid Group)		Safi	Yes	Yes
Maulvi Faqir Muhammad			Yes	Yes (TNSM)

6.3 Class-Competition and Islamism in Swat

6.3.1 Pacifist Pashtun Nationalism: The Khudai Khidmatgars

Most of the Pashtun in Pakistan live in areas close to the Afghan border, historically known as “the frontier” considered to be ungovernable by the British colonial administration. The British instead sought to establish the Pashtun-areas as a buffer-zone between British India and Russia and delineated the Durand Line in 1893 which formalised a border with Afghanistan (Banerjee 2000: 24). The border did not match realities on the ground as Pashtuns belonging to the same tribes were split between Afghanistan and the British Raj. The Pashtuns were also administratively divided within the British Raj. What is known as the “settled areas” was separated from the tribal areas and integrated into the NWFP in 1901, while the tribal agencies of Dir, Swat, Chitral, Khyber, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan became FATA (Qureshi 1966).

FATA was politically separated from Pashtun territories as the British established a clientelist system in which a political agent (PA) who represented the state negotiated with tribal councils known as *jirgas*. Furthermore, the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901 banned political activism and political parties within the FATA. It also granted the PA the right to collectively punish entire villages and tribes. This, along with the PA’s authority to

dole out subsidies to tribal leaders he favoured essentially empowered the PA to create a class of subservient tribal leaders while also reinforcing rigid tribal institutions and preventing the emergence of modern political parties, essentially denying ordinary tribesmen any right to political participation except through the jirgas.

In the NWFP, by contrast, the colonial administration governed more directly and the opportunity for political participation expanded to ordinary Pashtuns (Leake 2017: 8). The prime example of a modern political mass-movement in the NWFP was the the Khudai Khidmatgar (KK) led by Abdul Ghaffar “Badshah” Khan. Badshah Khan was born in 1890 in the Peshawar district to a well-off landlord. The title *khan* refers to individuals of influence locally, primarily landholders (Shah 2000). He began his activist career by setting up a network of schools to improve literacy and numeracy among the Pashtun peasants as a way of instilling national-solidarity and empowering them against the landowning khans (Banerjee 2000: 55). He established the KK in 1929 as a pacifist group organized as a paramilitary group. Its members were drilled in fitness and discipline, wore red uniforms, and had a visible presence in local communities through educational and political acts such as boycotting courts and refusing to pay tax. Members were taught to reject tribal feuds and the need for revenge, instead seeking to settle disputes calmly, if necessary by inviting third-parties to mediate in local village disputes, and intermarriage across clans and villages was encouraged (Johansen 1997). The group grew from having 1000 members in 1930 to reaching well over 100 000 at their peak (Banerjee 2000: 66). This despite a brutal crackdown on the KK in 1931 which included the arrest of Ghaffar Khan and many of his followers, and soldiers firing on peaceful protesters (Johansen 1997: 65). Despite such acts, he continued to preach non-violence, patience, and self-restraint based on the example of the Prophet’s years in Medina. This entailed that one might die a martyr in the face of oppression, but a death practicing non-violence would still be preferable. Furthermore,

women were often involved in the KK's activism, despite the taboo on this in the tribal areas (Banerjee 2000: 151).

The KK was therefore an attempt at social reform by challenging the semi-feudal structures that kept the majority of Pashtuns in poverty, posing a threat to the landed aristocracy along with the tribal clerics who defended them, as well as the British authorities. It was a modern popular political movement which pursued political change through agitational, but peaceful mass mobilisation. It was an attempt at bringing about a modern political consciousness of the Pashtun which emphasized the freedom of the individual, but simultaneously emphasized egalitarianism and self-sacrifice through non-violence and symbolic activism (Ghufran 2009: 1097; Sumbal 2021: 81; Lindholm 1996: 187-205). While religion played an important role in the rhetorical make-up of the organization, it was also an anti-clerical movement as many clerics received stipends from the government and defended the feudal system.

The KK's undoing proved to be its alignment with the Indian National Congress, and opposition to partition from India. While it initially defeated the Muslim League in elections in 1945, it lost all formal political influence by boycotting the 1947 independence referendum because the referendum did not include a suggestion for Pashtun autonomy (Leake 2017: 77; Sumbal 2021). The KK continued its work after Pakistan's creation to resist Punjabi domination. However, it was only influential in the settled areas, repeated attempts at gaining influence in the neighbouring tribal areas largely failed. The British authorities actively sought to prevent the spread of nationalist agitation in the tribal areas by preventing communication between the two regions. The lack of support in the tribal zone, along with the result of the referendum were major blows to the KK, forcing Ghaffar Khan to declare loyalty to Pakistan. His movement was suppressed, and he would spend decades in jail. The KK's legacy was instead maintained through political parties such as the National Awami

Party (NAP) and the Awami National Party (ANP) which sought to protect the rights of ethnic minorities, and prevent the seizure of the state by religious factions (Ghufran 2009; Leake 2017: 116).

Ultimately, the KK was a progressive ethnonationalist movement which sought to bring about political autonomy for the Pashtun, while also reforming Pashtun society through education, economic change, and reframing gender relations. Its failures was a failure of bringing about social change through peaceful mass-mobilization which valued the political rights of the individual as essential to modern politics, as opposed to the serfdom of feudalism. Individualism is a cornerstone of political modernity and the KK made significant headway in introducing it into the NWFP, but faltered in the face of tribal and clerical opposition in the FATA (Ghufran 2009; Haroon 2007; 2016: 154). The appearance of the Taliban on the political scene in the 1990s and 2000ss does not simply represent a turn to religious fanaticism, but rather a reconning with the rigid and outdated social structures which continued to pervade in the FATA and the NWFP. As the KK failed to reform Pashtun-society, this social project instead took the form of Islamist militancy which sought to reorder Pashtun society through violence.

6.3.2 Swat Annexed

Pashtun society was historically regulated by the tribal code of Pukhtunwali which established rules for allocating and reapportioning land among the Pashtun tribes (Edwards 1986: 75). Pashtun society was underpinned by a tribal ideology centred around egalitarianism as well as honour-based agreements, which would ensure both material and non-material self-sufficiency to different sub-tribes. The foundations for Pukhtunwali shifted gradually from the 18th century and onwards as the Pashtun areas came under the influence of the Mughal and Afghan kingdoms, and then by the British Empire, which co-opted Pashtun

leaders through tribute. This had the notable effect of creating more permanent forms of wealth among sections of Pashtun society, challenging the redistributive idea which had previously prevailed. Rules for land ownership were established by the British in the Frontier area between 1868 and 1880, codifying the stratification of Pashtun society, along with the distribution of rents and tax collection, where the new landed aristocracy had a vested interest in the colonial system (Banerjee 2000: 31; Huldt and Jansson 1988; Bezhan 2014).

As in Somalia, there was a tradition for the disparate tribes to be unified by charismatic tribal leaders or clerics against outsiders such as the Sikh empire, and the British. The Wahhabi movement of Sayyid Ahmed in the 19th century against the Sikhs in the Pashtun Valley was one example. Another example was Saidu Baba who led the anti-British resistance against British encroachments into Swat in 1863. A major uprising happened in 1897 in response to the demarcation of the Durand Line in 1893. This was led by local clerical figures rather than Indian Wahhabis, especially Sadullah of Malakand who became known among the British as the “Mad Mullah” (Siddique 2014: 33). This form of religious authority remained exceptional, however, as clerical figures were subservient to tribal leaders on political matters. Yet, this image of the mad mullah would influence state policies towards the tribal area, fuelled by notions that the tribes were pre-modern societies which could not be civilised (Hopkins 2009; Malik 2016: 24). It strengthened the notion that there is a fundamental distinction among the Pashtun between the settled areas in which the government exerts control, and the ungovernable tribal areas.

The North-West frontier, known as the settled areas, consisted of multiple princely states founded in in the 19th century. These princely states, which were Amb, Chitral, Dir, Phulra, and Swat, were all Pashtun-dominated and functioned as client states of the British Raj after being de facto annexed after the Second Sikh War (1848-1849). Swat was formed in 1849 and was recognised as a princely state by the British Raj from 1926 until it acceded to

Pakistan in 1947. It retained a semi-autonomous status within Pakistan until 1969 when it was incorporated into the NWFP (Abbas 2014: 38).

The integration of the princely states into the NWFP meant that their pre-existing codes of law and judicial systems were dissolved in favour of one imposed by Pakistan. Justine Fleischner argues that this transition marked a shift towards an inefficient judicial and welfare system where land disputes could take a decade to resolve (Fleischner 2011). Many Swatis would consequently look back upon the princely state with a degree of nostalgia, not least by associating Sharia with judicial efficiency. Judicial authority was instead transferred to tribal jirgas, with regulations which allowed for the arrest of individuals without any reason. This changed in 1994 as the Pakistani state sought to impose its own judicial system on the NWFP, but the imposition of judicial institutions and laws which were poor fits for local traditions and institutions meant that public resentment towards the judicial system prevailed (Haroon 2007: 11). In fact, Public demands for judicial efficiency paved the way for Sharia to become a rallying cry among segments of the populace, eventually leading to the rise of the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) in the Malakand District. The group's name translates to "Movement for the Implementation of the Law of Mohammad." It appeared first as a militant protest movement in the 1990s, and then in 2007 as a rebel organisation which seized the Swat Valley on the promise of implementing a better system of governance through sharia (Markey 2008; Weiss 2015: 133).

Religious authority had played an important role in these settled areas, for example during the 1908 invasion of Swat by Dir when Swat's mullah's turned out to be the most effective defenders against the invaders. The mullahs also functioned as important counterweights to state power, preventing the accumulation of power by rulers, preserving smaller tribes which would maintain the patronage of mullah (Haroon 2007: 149). Their influence was especially important in rural areas (Hassan 1987: 558). The British

administration opted to co-opt clerics, patronizing shrines and hereditary pirs, paying significant tributes in return for these clerics to preach in favour of British rule. Furthermore, a social alliance developed between the khans, the landholding-class, and Sufi associations where the *pir-khan* alliance would become a dominant political force for maintaining the status quo after Pakistan's creation.

This had the consequence of traditional Sufism and the pirs being associated with excessive materialism and superstitious practices. In fact, such clerics had played a key role in undermining the KK by preaching against Abdul Ghaffar Khan among landless peasants and the tribes. While the rivalry between the KK and traditional clerics were fuelled by perceptions of socio-economic injustice, these clerics also became the target of revivalist religious traditions. These theological critiques would maybe most prominently come from the Deobandis who represented a form of Sufism which emerged in the 19th century with the goal of protecting Islamic traditions against colonial influence. The pirs therefore became associated with particular class interests, and became rhetorical targets of both groups such as the KK and Islamist reformists. The state would eventually shift its support away from traditional Sufi institutions towards these reformists, as presidents Ayub Khan and Zulfiaqir Bhutto sought to use Sufism to reinforce their Islamic authority. The expansion of political participation meant that religious authority shifted from the pirs to religious seminaries and Islamist parties such as Maulana Abul Ala Maududi's Jamat-i-Islami (Hassan 1987).

Genealogical ties were, as in FATA, important signifiers of trust and political interest, but the princely states were comparatively centralised having the monarch or Wali as the ultimate source of authority. In Swat, Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb (Wali Sahib) became the new monarch in 1949, and he made significant investments into modernizing education, health and communication infrastructure, along with organising an effective judiciary. However, modernization also upended social relations. The class system in Swat was a

legacy of the Yusufzai-clan conquering the region, distributing land among itself, while its subjects became a subordinate class of tenant farmers and workers. Only landowners were members of the jirga, and political participation was therefore reserved only for the landowning class. This quasi-feudal system hinged on the khans providing security and distributing crop dividends in return for the labour of the tenant farmers. The rise in alternative modes of employment through the introduction of a cash-based economy, along with a drastic population rise, undermined the foundations of this system.

A significant middle class emerged by the 1970s as many Pashtun settled in cities such as Karachi or travelled abroad for work, gaining access to wage labour which was sent back to their home villages (Akhtar 2010). Wage labourers would find, however, that economic advancement did not lead to greater social status or political rights. The special privileges of the khans served no clear purpose in a society which had moved from subsistence farming to a market-based economy. Opposition to the khan's was no longer restricted to the landless protesting the unfair distribution of land, and expanded to include traders and wage labourers. Religious radicalism became a way to challenge existing hierarchies (Asad 1972). The introduction of a cash-based economy also ended a system in which job-security was part of the social contract. Lifelong personal ties between landlords and tenant farmers transformed into a relationship between employer and worker where workers could easily be fired and replaced, especially with the introduction of migrant labour. Swat state had previously required outside settlers to sign surety bonds before settling, and were banned from purchasing land without explicit permission by the Wali. The dismantlement of the Swati code of law led to an influx of outsiders associated with trade, industry, and other forms of wage labour with no ties to the tenant-system (Sultan-I-Rome 2014: 195). Increased migration to Swat therefore implied the influx of impoverished

Pashtuns with no loyalty or personal connections to the Yusufzai-elite, who also had no social safety nets.

The anthropologist Lindholm (2013: 23) argues that these influences were contributing to disorder in the Swat already before his visit there in 1977. He describes a society which was overpopulated with limited resources, especially with regards to arable land (Behuria 2007). The region relied heavily on its timber-industry, and tourism, but overexploitation of forests became a severe problem, not least as middle class businessmen sought to end the exclusive right of specific families in profiting from this industry.

According to Lindholm, at the time he left Swat in 1977, the state police did not dare to intervene in local affairs which were governed by Pukhtunwali. Pukhtunwali rested on honour-based agreements among key families that blood feuds were to be avoided, not least due to their economic costs, through negotiations and marriages. Lindholm argues that these factors kept disputes among khans from going too far because outbreaks of violence would lead to the convening of a jirga of elders and religious figures who would mediate for the dispute to be settled. However, this system was only effective in settling disputes among the landholding-clans, not between khans and their tenants or wage labourers (Lindholm 2013).

Integration into Pakistan and the Pakistani electoral system did not provide an effective outlet for social grievances because political life in Swat became defined by a two-block system which consisted of landowners and their dependants (Paine 1982). Landowning-families also dominated socialist parties, such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) essentially rendering disgruntled commoners without few viable options to vote for social change. That is, until religious parties such as the JUI emerged, not by promising land-redistribution, but by advocating a system of Islamic charity and Sharia for swift judicial

decisions (Ahmed 2013: 58; Orakzai 2011: 31). Islamist political parties would remain fairly marginal until the 2000s, however.

The khans no longer served a clear social purpose, as wage-based labour became more widespread and Pashtuns without ancestral ties to the dominant families settled in Swat. Land inequality and discontent due to the privileges of the khans continued to be a significant source of social tension, which would fuel the eventual emergence of the Taliban in Swat. In fact, when the Taliban seized Swat in 2007, it would often target the landed aristocracy and redistribute land (Aziz and Lurås 2010). In essence, the rise of the Taliban in Swat was fuelled by processes of modernisation which undermined a traditional social contract, but where the state and the electoral system had not offered viable alternatives.

6.3.3 Early Islamist Mobilisation in the Swat

Sufi traditions associated with the Barelvi-order has played an important part in Pashtun tribal societies. As in other tribal systems such as that of the Somali, Sufi clerics among the Pashtun acted as intermediaries between clans where shrines served as meeting-spaces for representatives of different tribal groups in times of peace and conflict (Lieven 2012: 129). In addition to being important for inter-tribal mediation, they also contributed to intra-clan cohesion, though in a ritualistic and ceremonial rather than overtly political role.

British authorities would in some cases bankroll Sufi elders and shrines in return for support for the colonial regime (Gilmartin 1979: 493). Thus, in exchange for support for local power, authority, and land, some Sufi shaykhs would preach against challenging the British government.

This association between the state and some Sufi shaykhs contributed to the rise of revivalist religious traditions during the colonial era, particularly the Deobandi-movement

established in the town of Deoband in 1866 (Sumbal 2021: 77). Deobandism became highly influential in Pashtun areas despite being fiercely opposed British rule due to its criticism of the heretical traditions upheld by mullahs who preached in support of the colonial regime. The growth of Deobandi madrassas and networks gave the lower gentry gained access to education and organizational resources to challenge the entrenched large landowners on which the Colonial administration relied for administrating the NWFP (Abbas 2014: 66; Caron 2016).

Deobandism has generally been more tolerant towards other Sufist-branches compared to Salafist organizations which consider Sufism to be heretical and idolatrous. However, the influence of Salafism from the Gulf states became more pronounced in the 1970s as 1980s with the rise Ahl-e-Hadith groups emphasize that only the Quran and the Hadith are supreme sources of Islamic law and reject personal experience and mysticism. The flow of labour migrants to and from the Gulf-states has been an important channel for this influence (Lieven 2012: 128; Sheikh 2016: 45). While Deobandism had been rather quietist, the Afghan war in 1978 elevated it to hold a key role in Pashtun society.

At least 3 million refugees Pashtun refugees fled across the border, and many were taken in by Deobandi seminaries. A large portion of the funding for this would come from the Arab Gulf states and would significantly alleviate pressure on the Pakistani educational and welfare system (Cole 2009). The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) controlled many of these madrassas from which the Taliban eventually emerged. Madrassas in FATA, NWFP, and Balochistan also became important centres for logistical support to the Afghan Mujahideen who fought against the Soviet invaders in Afghanistan after 1979. The madrassas formed the organisational backbone of this effort by providing recruits and dispersing funds (Lindholm 2013: 23).

Added to this was the Islamization of national politics through a coup in 1977 which brought to power General Zia. The balance of power among Pakistani political forces had already shifted towards Islamist parties following the breakaway of East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971 (Cohen 2004: 78). After this, the Pakistani security establishment increasingly relied on Islamist groups to maintain national coherence and to project power abroad, and would continue to do so as millions of Afghan refugees poured into Pakistan in the 1980s and after (Cohen 2004: 185). In a context of social-institutional flux in the Swat where the quasi-feudal system was faltering, the Islamic madrassas emerged as a core institution for social cohesion throughout the Pashtun territories. The madrassas became providers of social services for lower-class Pakistani Pashtuns and Pashtun refugees from Afghanistan, establishing these religious institutions as vehicles for political activism outside of traditional feudal and tribal constraints.

Pashtun political figures played a major role in pro-democracy and socialist movements in Pakistan, but these political forces were increasingly marginalised through the security establishment's embrace of Islamism. The National Awami Party (NAP) formed in 1957 was a major coalition of leftist and ethno-nationalist factions which sought to protect the rights of non-Punjabi communities. However, it was severely weakened due to being split in 1967 between a pro-China faction based in East Pakistan, and a pro-Soviet faction in the NWFP which was led by Abdul Wali Khan, son of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the old leader of the KK. The NAP also suffered major setbacks in the mid-1970s as repression in Balochistan and NWFP through the sacking of the provincial government in Balochistan, and the NAP was outright banned in 1975 (Siddique 2014: 113).

The effective repression of the KK and its successor the NAP meant there was no institutional foundation for Pashtun nationalism to assert Pashtun rights versus Islamabad. The fortunes of the NWFP's middle class in particular were strongly intertwined with the

Pakistani state, especially through employment in the military and government contracts. Additionally, support the greatest external supporter for an independent Pashtunistan had been Afghanistan, but this effectively ended by the time of the Soviet occupation (Cohen 2004: 218). Islamisation was not caused by the Afghan war, but had its roots in social issues which preceded it. The inability of socialist parties such as NAP in capitalising on the grievances of the landless farmers and artisans without special privileges meant that Islamist organisations became the most capable at challenging the social status quo. The Swat and the rest of the NWFP was therefore facing a crisis of social fragmentation, whereby the transition to a market economy had eroded traditional institutions and hierarchies, while expanding the opportunity of political participation beyond the landed elite. This, along with the rise of religious institutions such as madrassas meant that religious organisations were best positioned to respond to the social grievances which followed from these processes of modernisation, especially as non-Islamist alternatives had been repressed in the preceding decades. This was further spurred by the policies of various governments in Islamabad.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) rode to political power in the 1970s on a platform which called for Islamic socialism and riding the wave of antagonism to large-scale landholders. However, the Bhutto government of 1973 to 1977 had supported the use of Islamism to counter the attempt by Afghanistan at gaining influence in the Pashtun areas. It therefore supported the training of an Islamist vanguard of Afghan revolutionaries in the NWFP to challenge the communist Afghan government. It enlisted the JUI for this purpose.

The JUI was Pakistan's leading Deobandi party, and it developed ties to the Afghan refugee population in the NWFP and Balochistan through chains of madrassas which later underpinned the Afghan Taliban. Through these madrassas, organised to defeat the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, a generation of ulama with more militant understandings of Islam

made their careers, while also gaining pan-Pashtun ties, crossing clan and village divides, which could be used for militant mobilization (Nadiri 2014: 159-163; Orakzai 2011: 38). In the Swat this manifested itself through religious opposition to the PPP as JUI-affiliated clerics issued a fatwa that abolishing private property was against shariah.

Such opposition eventually paved the way for a coup against Bhutto in 1977 by general Zia ul-Haq. Zia ul-Haq's coup shifted the military's role from guarantor of territorial integrity, to ideological vanguard. Zia argued that Islam was essential to Pakistan's internal and external security and set about Islamising the Pakistani state through alliances with the religious parties such as the JUI and filling the judiciary, civil service, and educational sector with its members. Islamisation was also promoted through the establishment of Sharia courts, and through media and education (Hussain 2007: 19). This also entailed a change in the officer corps which previously had been elitist and tied to the upper class and rural aristocracy. The new generation was increasingly from lower and middle classes without the education of elite English-language schools.

Zia ul-Haq died in a plane crash in August 1988, and was succeeded by Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the PPP, leading the security establishment to push for an oppositional coalition called the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) to contain her. This alliance relied on traditional power brokers and religious actors who had been co-opted during Zia's regime, including the Jamaat-i-Islami. The military also used its network ties from the Afghan jihad to support a new jihad in Kashmir after 1988 against Indian forces, at which point the Kashmiri struggle shifted from a nationalist one to seeing the involvement of Pakistani-based Islamist groups such as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed (Hussain 2007: 22-25). Therefore, through the support of the Pakistani security establishment, previously nationalist conflicts were reframed as religious ones.

In Afghanistan, similar frustrations were increasingly expressed through the Afghan Taliban which emerged in 1993. Its initial support came from the poorest segments of Afghanistan's Pashtun population under Mullah Mohammed Omar, as a force opposed to the Mujahideen who had turned to banditry after the Soviet withdrawal. After it captured Kandahar and then Kabul in 1996, Pakistani intelligence increasingly repurposed the infrastructure used to support the mujahideen against the Soviets to support the Taliban. This included support from Pakistani Islamist parties and recruits from madrasas. In doing so, Pakistani security officials sought to prevent irredentist regimes from controlling Kabul. The Afghan Taliban embodied the aspirations of a poor rural underclass, the destroyed hopes of people displaced by the Soviet war and raised in refugee camps, and provided a voice for ambitious youth who had no other outlet (Hussain 2007; Malik 2016: 34).

The Pakistani Taliban should be seen in similar terms. This represented the outcome of a broader social transformation following the Soviet jihad whereby the image of the mullah shifted into that of a warlord-like figure due to the influx of money and weapons. After the Iranian revolution, fearful of growing Iranian influence among Shiites, Sunni countries poured money into hardline Sunni organisations in Pakistan, supporting the network of madrasas, especially in Balochistan which borders Iran. This Islamization process was also encouraged by general Zia, and his regime was the first to provide financial support for the expansion of religious education. Many of the students at these seminaries came from the poorest segments of society and were provided free education, housing, and food. These seminaries were primarily Deobandi, but also Bareilvi and Wahhabi, and 1000 madrasas were opened in Pakistan primarily along the border with Afghanistan and Balochistan. These were mostly associated with hardline Sunni religious political parties, especially Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) (Hussain 2007: 80).

The rise of the madrasas gave Pashtuns interested in social change an institutional foundation for mobilisation, both on issues of land distribution and on the question of establishing a functioning judicial system (Muzamil et al. 2021). The major expression of Islamist militancy in the NWFP came in the form of the Tehrik-e Nifaz-e Shariat-e Muhammadi (TNSM) formed in the mid-1980s. The TNSM was a response to the ambiguous legal status of the Malakand-division between 1969 and 1993 during which the legal and administrative vacuum led to public discontent with the state (Fleischner 2011; Haroon 2012: 55; Siddique 2014: 59). The judicial system of the princely state before its incorporation into Pakistan in 1969 was often viewed with nostalgia due to its efficiency and speediness (Sultan-i-Rome 2016). The TNSM revolt was triggered by a supreme court decision which declared the existing judicial system in Swat to be unconstitutional because it revolved around different codes than Pakistan's judicial system. This effectively left the region without functioning courts.

The leader of the TNSM, Sufi Muhammad, was the first of multiple "political mullahs" who gained influence in the Malakand, following the Afghan war. Sufi Muhammad was originally from the Lower Dir district and began his career as a local leader of the Jama'at-e-Islami (JI). He was a veteran of the Afghan jihad and formed the TNSM upon his return to advocate the implementation of Sharia in the region. He challenged the idea of religion simply being a question of personal morality, actively advocating political change through protests, and sometimes violence.

Following the Supreme Court decision, the TNSM's political discourse revolved around the need for the legal regime based on civil law to be completely replaced by sharia. It initially sought to bring about this change through non-violent methods, but became increasingly confrontational, adopting the slogan "sharia or martyrdom" in 1994. At this point, the TNSM pushed for an open revolt against the state. This attempted revolt never

gained much traction and was repressed violently by the state (Abbas 2014). Furthermore, the TNSM was forced out of Swat because many locals thought it needlessly had brought about violence and disorder. Nevertheless, it gained a symbolic victory through the Bhutto government implementing a series of regulations for Islamic law in the region, though the actual implementation of these regulations was lacking (Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013; Orakzai 2011: 40).

In 1998, the TNSM held a “long march” from Dir to Swat to draw attention to the unfair distribution of royalties from the exploitation of the forest by the timber industry. Many joined as a form of protest against the special privileges of elites involved with the industry, , and many trusted Sufi Muhammad’s claim that Islamic courts would deliver socioeconomic justice. Sufi Muhammad struck a nerve by mobilizing poor people who were fed up with the excesses of the political elite, and who hoped Islam could bring about social change, especially on the part of migrants who returned from the Gulf countries and were inspired by other strands of Islam (Akhtar 2010).

The attempted insurrection was curious due to it occurring in the Swat district which historically was considered better developed and intellectually and politically vibrant due to its higher literacy and education rate compared to neighbouring districts. Yet it was these same social dynamics which were pushing the NWFP and Swat which expanded the opportunity for political participation to broader segments of the population. The ability to air grievances against the special rights of the landholding families and the ineffective judicial system did not translate into political change, however. The NWFP’s political structure was inherently inflexible, both due to restrictions on political mobilisation and speech imposed by Islamabad, but also due to electoral politics being dominated by the landholding families (Weiss 2015). The NWFP branches of the Muslim League and the PPP dominated electoral politics, at least until 2002 when a coalition of Islamist parties called the United Action

Council (MMA) became the dominant electoral bloc (Cole 2009: 329). Its electoral success was spurred on both by the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, but also support from Musharraf's regime (Nadiri 2014).

In this context where the secular electoral alternatives such as the NAP had essentially been outcompeted, radical outsiders such as the TNSM was increasingly able to credibly espouse an alternative political system based on Islam which would be more just. The TNSM became the embodiment, not just of religious sentiments, but of class rage against the privileges of large-landowners in an economy in which monetarization and access to foreign markets meant that fewer people were dependent on these landholders for their livelihoods. This was magnified by broader trends in the region related to the Afghan jihad and the drastic rise of religious seminaries in the 1980s and 1990s. These both produced preachers who attacked the existing tribal and feudal structures, but also allowed students to develop networks and relationships which transcended their home villages and genealogical ties.

The Pakistani security establishment's obsession with its northern border had significant repercussions for the growth of Islamism in the border regions, including the NWFP where support networks and madrassas associated with the Afghan mujahedin operated. Not least, Peshawar became the place where Al-Qaeda's emerged as a concept in the late 1980s. While this provided an opportunity to weaken Pashtun Nationalism, the growth of these movements backfired (Siddique 2014: 42). The influx of 3 million refugees from Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 further proved to be a windfall for Islamist activism as the support networks for these refugees would be Islamic charities and seminaries associated with the JUI party (Abbas 2014). Islamist parties such as the JI and JUI were favoured by Zia-ul-Haq and the security establishment, with the JUI being in charge of 80 % of madrassas in Pakistan by the 1990s (Behuria 2007: 532). The JUI would overtake the JI as the most important group favoured by the state after the Afghan jihad, and the Afghan

Taliban would mostly emerge from JUI-controlled seminaries. While this approach helped the Pakistani security establishment to achieve many of its strategic goals in Afghanistan, it also spurred on a political force which would spiral out of control in the NWFP (Khan and Khurshaid 2014: 289).

Another consequence of this was that clerical authority gained new significance. The mullahs had historically been low on the social hierarchy within the Pashtun tribes, having little or no influence over political decision making in the jirgas (Lindholm 2013). Yet, the Afghan jihad, along with the contacts this gave to Arab foreign fighters, along with networks among Pashtun clerics shifted political power, in favour of Deobandi clerics in particular, also marking a blow to the traditional Sufi clergy which was embedded in the tribal system.

6.3.4 The Swat Taliban

The decisive turn towards an Islamist insurrection came in the 2000s, following multiple crises which allowed the TNSM to re-emerge in the Swat. Unrest began brewing in 2001 when Sufi Muhammad rallied supporters in the NWFP in the name of fighting the American forces and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. His troops suffered an immediate defeat near Kabul, forcing him to flee back to the Swat with his supporters. Yet, upon his arrival in Swat he was captured and imprisoned by the security forces which were under pressure by the U.S. to clamp down on militants which had escaped across the border.

To Pakistani security officials, figures such as Sufi Muhammad who mobilized to fight in Afghanistan were seen as the “good Taliban” because they were maintained Pakistani interests there, not least by counteracting Indian influence. The 2000s would see the rise of multiple groups of “bad Taliban” which turned against the Pakistani state itself (Sultan-I-Rome 2014: 194). While Pakistani intelligence maintained contacts with Taliban-factions which fled Afghanistan, in 2002, the regime of Musharraf banned five Islamist militant

groups, initiating an incoherent policy where the Pakistani state would alternate between attacking and negotiating with Taliban-affiliated groups. Furthermore, in 2002, the the the Muttahida Majlis-e-amal (MMA), an alliance of six Islamist parties, came to power in the NWFP ostensibly in reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan, though the fairness of the election was in doubt (Hussain 2007: 51). Musharraf's government relied on an alliance with the MMA to offset the opposition, and allowed it to pursue its Islamisation agenda in the NWFP until the assembly declared the imposition of Sharia in 2004 (Fair et al. 2018: 170). The MMA's rise to power further undermined Islamabad's ability to crack down on unwanted Islamist militants in the region, for fear of antagonising the MMA and jeopardising the political alliance. Musharraf's government therefore faced the contradicting pressures of the US demanding it crack down on Islamist militancy in the border regions, and Islamist parties and parts of the security establishment which saw these militants as key allies in exercising influence in Afghanistan and against the political opposition in Pakistan's Pashtun territories.

While the government expected the TNSM to fizzle out after Sufi Muhammad's arrest, he was succeeded by his son in law Maulana Fazlullah who proved to be an effective front-figure. Fazlullah was a chairlift operator at a ski-resort before he became a preacher, having no formal religious training. Nevertheless, he made his career preaching through an illegal FM radio station he opened in 2004. His broadcasts proved popular, earning him the moniker "Mullah Radio," and he managed to attract substantial donations to build a madrassa, while some of the money came from voluntary donations, some of the money also seems to have served as a form of protection money, similar to a mafia-style protection scheme (Weiss 2015: 134).

His early followers hailed from among the landless and small landholders who had both an ideological and material interest in overthrowing the political order in Swat. Fazlullah

himself was not from a landed family, and was part of a generation of youth which saw the Sharia-agenda as a way of rectifying social ills against those who did inherit privileges. The Peochar Valley where Fazlullah was born was part of a broader area within Swat called Kabal and Matta which had been the heartland for political movements by small landholders and landless peasants, and the Pakistani Taliban would draw significant support in the region (Akhtar 2010: 608; Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013: 373).

The Swat Valley had long been considered an idyllic and scenic tourist-destination, a Pakistani equivalent to the Swiss Alps, which hosted 855 hotels and 40 000 employees in the tourism industry. Yet, the security situation deteriorated considerably by the mid-2000s, not least in the wake of an earthquake in 2005 which devastated large parts of the Malakand district (Hopkins 2009; Benjamin D. Hopkins 2015: 1467). Possibly encouraged by the failures of a Pakistani army operation in the FATA in 2004, Fazlullah gradually imposed a reign of terror in Swat (International Crisis Group 2006b: 6). This atmosphere of fear was maintained through FM broadcasts in which Fazlullah announced the names of people who were to be killed, with their corpses usually being found in public the following day. Law enforcement did not attempt to shut down the FM-station due to fear of retaliation by Fazlullah's militants (Abbas 2014: 149; Hopkins 2009; Orakzai 2011: 3). Malakand was also flooded by weapons, ammunition, and recruits in the wake of years of war in Afghanistan, and the security forces were well aware that a confrontation with the TNSM would quickly become costly. By 2008, Swat became the only district in which Taliban had complete administrative control in Pakistan (Ahmed 2013: 75; Khan 2010: 142).

These tensions escalated into outright rebellion in 2007, triggered by the storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad after a standoff between state security forces and militants with ties to Fazlullah. The event led to the creation of the Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in December 2007 with Fazlullah joining the alliance as the emir of Swat. This formalised the

creation of the Swat Taliban's parallel administration as it seized control over timber businesses, emerald mines, and taxed smuggling routes (Siddique 2014: 120; Smith 2015: 35). Many in the rank-and-file of the TNSM viewed this as a form of class revenge against feudal lords and as an opportunity to seize the belongings of the privileged families.

In 2008, the MMA was swept away in elections by the Awami National Party (ANP) which opted to negotiate with the TNSM due to the failures of the army, leading to a peace agreement in February 2009 in which the ANP-led government agreed to implement Sharia on the Malakand region. This deal the release of Sufi Mohammad who did an about-face and condemned the Pakistani political system as un-Islamic. Yet, the peace deal was short-lived and Swat was almost completely under the TNSM's control (Siddique 2014: 118). It was only in April 2009 at this point that Pakistani security forces took firm action against the Swat Taliban, clearing most of the region by August at a massive human cost as nearly 2 million people were displaced, allowing some Islamist parties to increase their influence among the refugees through charity. By February 2009, 182 schools, most of them girls' schools, had been destroyed (Elahi 2019; Gul 2010a; Khattak 2011; Rieck 2016; Sanaullah 2021). Terrorist attacks by the Taliban continued during this period, including the targeting of state-schools and dissenters, including an attempt at killing Malala Yousafzai in October 2012. Nevertheless, Fazlullah escaped the security forces and shifted his base of operations to Afghanistan, returning to Pakistan in December 2013 after being appointed the chief of the TTP (Abbas 2014: 149).

The TNSM was an insurgent movement which to a large extent was driven by upwardly mobile commercial classes to counter the feudal-holdover classes by establishing an alternative judicial order which served the middle class. It also tapped into the grievances of the rural poor who saw Islamist actors such as the TNSM as embodying a form of social radicalism which could dismantle the privileges of the landholders while also redistributing

land. While large segments of Swat's population was horrified by the violence, other marginalized segments saw the TNSM as a way of upending a social order which they saw as unfair, and which could not be changed through the electoral system (Akhtar 2010: 608). The fact that socialist-leaning parties in the region were dominated by these same aristocratic families undermined the credibility of the electoral arena.

The Swat Taliban's radical agenda for reshaping Swati society was evident in that it set about decimating the traditional tribal system, targeting local leaders and destroying the jirga system, attacking the institutions through which civil society could challenge them. It embodied a specific vision for political modernity in which the quasi-feudal system of the past was of no use, and which had to be replaced with a system where social status is defined by performance in the market, rather than heritage.

The example of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the KK should remind us that there was nothing inevitable about these grievances being expressed in the form of Islamism. The KK responded to many of these same grievances, but its emergence in the 1930s was somewhat premature. Its repression, and the delegitimization of its successor parties meant that leftist-ideologies had little legitimacy, and in particular communism lost all legitimacy due to the behaviour of different Afghan regimes. The growth of religious madrassas and Islamic charities, fuelled by state support and funds from the Arab Gulf, especially after the 1970s, along with volunteers fighting in Afghanistan, led to new institutional and network-ties which allowed for organisation around religious identity, outside of traditional tribal and feudal hierarchies. These same ties were used to challenge the NWFP's social hierarchies from within. In an alternative reality, had the KK succeeded in its goals between the 1930s and 1950s, there might never have been anything like the Swati Taliban, regardless of events in Afghanistan.

6.4 The Tribal Revolution in South Waziristan

6.4.1 A State-Designed Tribal System

The tribal areas of the Pakistan's Pashtun-dominated territories, often known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) was, until May 2018, a semi-autonomous region regulated by the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which meant that the Pakistani state governed the region indirectly. This created a persistent governance deficit which preserved old socio-economic structures and prevented the development of infrastructure, employment opportunities, or education in the region, instead allowing criminal gangs to operate freely (Yousaf and Furrukhzad 2020).

The tribal areas, have been in a state of conflict at least since 2004 as the Pakistani Taliban emerged, especially in North and South Waziristan (Shakirullah et al. 2020). The tribal areas have traditionally been defined by Pukhtunwali which resembles Ibn Khaldun's conception of *asabiyyah*. The Pashtun tribes have traditionally been organised in a highly egalitarian manner where decisions are made in a *Jirga*, or tribal council which includes both tribal leaders, but also broader segments of the tribes. They have a history of asserting their independence from outside state influence, having thick forests and mountainous terrain that have allowed the tribes to fiercely punish attempts by outside actors to gain control in the area. It was particularly the Wazir and Mehsud tribes which earned a reputation for being strongly independent and warlike. Other tribes include Daurs, Jajis, Turis, Bangash, Orakzais, Afridi, Shinwaris, Safi, and Mohmands (Hussain 2012: 18; Siddique 2014: 24). Yet, despite the colonial notions of the Pashtun tribes essentially being in a state of chaos, it was one in which the tribal code of *Pashtunwali* was a source of order as tribes developed traditions and institutions for conflict-mediation through *jirgas* of elders and religious figures (Lieven 2021: 18).

The tribal areas were considered by the British Raj to be among the most problematic on the Indian subcontinent. The British colonial administration organised six expeditions into Waziristan between 1850 and 1880, but none of these led to the tribes being permanently subdued (Hussain 2012: 20). Multiple revolts such as that of 1897 which required 40 000 colonial troops to suppress, the Third Afghan War, the Khilafat movement, an uprising in 1919-1920 by the Mahsud tribe, and the 1936 revolt of the Faqir of Ipi which drew in 60000 troops, led to a widespread trope of the “mad mullah.” In essence, this revolved around the notion of tribal Pashtuns being wild and unruly, and under the sway of fanatical mullahs who resisted British “civilising” missions (Cole 2009; Leake 2017: 20).

The 1936 insurrection became particularly infamous. It was triggered by British interference in the abduction of a Hindu Woman, allowing a local cleric, the Faqir of Ipi to, to play up existing fears that Islam was in danger under colonial rule. While the Faqir’s call to arms was only heeded by some tribes, the British had to invest large amounts of money and manpower to answer the insurrection, while also expanding the construction of roads into the region to give access to larger and faster responding military forces. They nevertheless never won any significant victories against the Faqir’s forces (Leake 2017: 60). Notably, the KK failed to make inroads in the tribal areas, despite repeated attempts at appealing to the common Pashtun identity of the tribesmen. This was partly a consequence of British and later Pakistani attempts at isolating the tribal areas politically from the NWFP. It was also due to the fundamentally different social structure, where the rigidity of tribal institutions and hostility from tribal leaders meant that many tribesmen remained unaware of the KK and its message.

The Faqir was emblematic of the ability of some mullahs to deploy their religious authority to raise militias from different tribes. Violent insurrections among the tribes tended historically to be led by charismatic outsiders, often men with religious learning, who were

able to form inter-tribal alliances due to their outsider-position, while also drawing upon non-tribal support networks such as religious brotherhoods. Individuals with charismatic and religious authority and with cross-tribal network connections were therefore important in both settling disputes, but also uniting the tribes against outside intruders in this system.

The British authority did little to integrate the tribal areas into the rest of the British Raj. Due to the large costs of maintaining a presence in the tribal areas, the British opted to govern through co-opted tribal clients where selected tribal leaders were paid stipends in return for maintaining order. This system was eventually formalised in the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901 which would persist after Pakistan's independence in 1947, and the FCR would define the relationship between FATA and Pakistan until it was finally repealed in 2018 (Hopkins 2009: 1462). British policy envisioned the tribes as serving a buffer-role between Afghanistan, and therefore Russia, and the heartland of the British Raj. Rather than directly occupying the region, the system relied on a mixture of pressure and persuasion. This entailed the occasional use of military expeditions to punish tribes which refused to bend to British political goals, but also granted co-operative tribes semi-autonomous status and financial allowances in return for their submission to British rule (Hopkins 2015; International Crisis Group 2006b).

British influence and the FCR had a major influence on tribal institutions and hierarchies, including the council or *jirga*-system. The Pashtun tribes were traditionally considered to be egalitarian and non-hierarchical, as participation in jirgas were open to all members of the tribes. However, the British clientelist-system made jirga-participation more exclusive as the state's representative, called the Principal Agent (PA), hand-picked representatives among the tribes who were allowed to participate in state-tribe jirgas. The PA decided who would gain subsidies, scholarships, food rations, timber permits, or where development projects would be built. He also granted malik-status to tribal elders, and could

also withdraw this malik-status if they are seen as disloyal to the state. The PA also had the power to appoint jirgas and preside over trials without any institutional checks and balances (International Crisis Group 2006b; Gul 2010). The jirgas were tribal councils which traditionally included all males in the community, with elders enjoying more respect than younger members, with total unanimity being essential for decision-making (Haroon 2007: 6). However, as the jirga came under the purview of the PA as he elected members of the council, undermining its credibility as a form of local conflict-resolution mechanism. The jirgas have received significant criticism under the FCR due to the rent-seeking behaviour of the maliks who receive government stipends in return for their loyalty to the PA, contributing to an image of them being corrupt in favour of the state, undermining their legitimacy among the tribal Pashtuns (Yousaf and Furrukhzad 2020: 1207).

This both ensured that the maliks would not press local grievances too hard against the Pakistani state, but also reinforced a clientelist system where funds and economic rights, including land, were beholden to the maliks who distributed these to their families and allies (Caron 2016). Furthermore, the implementation of the FCR effectively denied the tribesmen individual rights as applied under British law, instead establishing a system which rested on the threat of collective punishment. The PA could confiscate anyone's property, impose fines on whole villages and tribes, or order the razing of buildings or entire villages without compensation. Such decisions could be challenged in civil or criminal court. There were therefore no checks on the authority of the PA, nor any real form of accountability for decisions made (Abbas 2014: 44; Sheikh 2016). He also controlled a paramilitary force which would enforce his decisions.

The legal framework of the FCR therefore affirmed that the population of FATA was separate, and politically unequal to other Pakistani citizens as a form of modern colony governed through local proxies of the state in the form of tribal maliks. It left the FATA's

residents in a legal limbo where the civil and political rights extended to other Pakistani citizens were withheld, but where state interference undermining the traditionally egalitarian aspect of the jirgas by narrowing down membership and overriding the notion that decisions could only be made through unanimity. Enormous power was given to the PA who served as both the executive, and the judicial branch of government in the province, and he was accountable to the government in Islamabad, and no one else. Nor did regular tribesmen have any channels for raising their grievances, except for through the maliks. However, these same tribal leaders were free to punish any of their subjects without state interference (Banerjee 2000: 33). Furthermore, Pakistan's laws did not apply to the area, the state did not collect revenues, and political parties were not allowed to operate in the region (Ahmed 1991: 35; Muedini 2015). Each of the seven tribal agencies have their own PA, only answerable to the provincial governor and the central state, without any judicial oversight (Yousaf 2019: 185; Yousufzai and Gohar 2012: 84). This system simultaneously undermined and strengthened the tribal system. It undermined it by making tribal leaders beholden to the political agent (PA), but it furthered the system by empowering tribal leaders and thereby denying political rights to their subjects.

The British approach therefore had the curious effect that state-encroachment solidified certain tribal institutions, rather than replaced them. It empowered an elite of hand-picked tribal leaders, while denying political and other rights to individual tribesmen who had no formalised ways of seeking recourse against unfair treatment by these tribal leaders (Banerjee 2000: 34). The FCR-system relegated the tribal areas to a political system where pre-modern institutions were underpinned by the modern state.

This colonial administrative setup towards the tribal areas was carried on after Pakistan's independence in 1947 as Islamabad treated FATA and its inhabitants as being relevant strictly from a security policy perspective rather than part of the nation-building

effort. The clientelist system was maintained as Islamabad only governed indirectly through the PA who only interacted with FATA's tribal elites, making no efforts to interfere in social or judicial matters in the region, and minimal effort in developing the region economically beyond symbolic project .

Another colonial institution inherited by Pakistan in 1947 was its border, notably the Durand Line with Afghanistan which became one of its most tangible security threats. Various Afghan regimes would use their historical connection to the Pashtun tribes to promote the idea of an independent Pashtunistan and laying claim to all of the NWFP, FATA, and Balochistan. Afghanistan was, in fact, the only country to challenge Pakistan's ascension to the United Nations in 1947 for this reason. The Pakistani state initially countered Afghan irredentism by co-opting the tribes to prevent Afghan influence, but also stopping the spread of Pashtun nationalism internally (Hopkins 2009: 1460). This included undermining figure such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the KK, who demanded that the NWFP be merged with the FATA, as the administrative division divided Pakistan's Pashtun and banned all political parties from operating in the FATA. Yet, the Pakistani state's successful co-optation of tribal elites in FATA prevented the KK from ever gaining any significant influence in the province (Abbas 2014: 40). Not all tribal actors pledged their allegiance to Pakistan, however. The Faqir of Ipi in particular would continue his struggle against the state after Pakistan's independence with at least symbolic support from Afghanistan, advocating for an independent Pashtunistan (Qureshi 1966; Siddique 2014: 37).

Instability at the border intensified after the Afghan government called a jirga in July 1949 at which it declared its support for Pashtunistan and laying claim to the FATA and NWFP, declaring the Durand Line to be void. In 1954 the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul was burned by a mob following state-incitement, and Pakistani state officials announced the One Unit plan for integration of the tribal areas. Both Afghan and Pakistani officials poured

money to the maliks to gather support for their side (Leake 2017: 174-184). Afghanistan and Pakistan broke diplomatic ties in 1961, and the overthrowing of the Afghan monarchy and rise to power of the communist regime of Muhammad Daud in 1973 reignited tensions as Pakistan began promoting Islamist actors against Kabul (Abbas 2008; 2014: 81). Other countries also significantly escalated their involvement in the region after this as the the Afghan-Pakistan border became another frontier in the Cold War.

Pakistani fears of Pashtun separatism were amplified by its loss in a civil war which led to East Pakistan declaring independence as Bangladesh in 1971. The administration of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of 1972-77 subsequently cracked down on nationalist movements and intensified its involvement in FATA through development projects. However, the central pillar in counteracting Pashtun nationalism was promoting the idea of Islam being under threat by Afghanistan's communist regime. This policy only intensified under Zia-ul Haq, the general who overthrew and executed Bhutto in 1977 (Korson and Maskiell 1985; Siddique 2014; Hussain 1994).

The eventual rise of militant Islamism was not simply a product of regional developments and state-interference, however. It was also strongly intertwined with tribal rivalries, both between different generations of tribesmen within tribes, but also between different tribes. Two of the most prominent tribes in the FATA are the Wazir and Mehsud, where the Wazir are spread across the sub-regions of North and South Waziristan, as well as Afghanistan. The Mehsud are concentrated in parts of South Waziristan in what is considered to be an infertile and crowded area, especially compared to that of the Wazir. The Wazir control more fertile land and the trade routes into Afghanistan (Zahab 2020). This distribution of land stems from old treaties which has not followed demographic developments. The population of FATA doubled between 1951 and 1972, and the Mehsud population increased by three and a half times. Yet, this did not lead to Access to more land despite outnumbering

the other tribes by far, and having 4 times the population density of the Wazir-areas in South Waziristan (Ahmed 1991: 14). The Mahsud territories are also in a precarious location being encircled by Wazir territory and do not have free access to the Durand line (Ahmed 1991: 27). One result of this is that many Mehsud migrated into towns in other provinces such as Karachi and Lahore where they became involved in local trades.

There is a long history of rivalry between the Mehsud and Wazir tribes, traditionally over access to resources, which has become intertwined with Islamist politics in recent years due to the creation of the Pakistani Taliban. Traditionally, the relationship among the tribes was managed by *Nikkat*, a system where profits and losses are distributed through negotiations over what is due to each tribe (Ahmed 1991: 23). This system was integrated into the British Raj and Pakistani administration, as the PA agreed that land and resources would be distributed on the basis of population which at the time favoured the Mehsud who constituted $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population. A drastic increase in the number of Wazirs has made this system unstable. *Tarboorwali* or cousin rivalry, is an important cultural signifier of the Wazir-Mahsud rivalry. The Mehsuds and the Wazir have been in a state of agnatic rivalry for decades, and the balance of power between them is a continuous source of political turmoil, which has been aggravated, not least due to the encroachment of the Pakistani state.

One interesting manifestation of the rivalry was the emergence of mullah Noor Muhammad in the late 1950s, who mobilized the Wazir against both traditional authorities, and the privileges of the Mehsud, building his power base around local markets and religious schools. As the mullah's economic position solidified, he began making political demands on behalf of the Wazir, while attacking both the state and the Mehsud in religious terms. This led security forces to destroy markets on which the Mullah relied for financial means in 1967, and he was jailed for 10 years after which he became involved in the Jamiat-e Ulama-e Islam (JUI) and the Afghan jihad (Zahab 2020: 123).

Noor Muhammad's movement was emblematic of a new form of political activism. The mullas had in traditional Pashtun society largely been beholden to the tribal leaders, having no independent sources of income, therefore needing the patronage of others (Haroon 2007: 41). Noor Muhammad, however, represented a new form of charismatic outsider who benefited from the monetarization of the local economy, and remittances from abroad, to build his own political movement outside of traditional tribal authority (Ahmed 1991: 98). His movement embodied an early form of mass populism in a tribal context, serving as an early indicator of how religious authority would reshape politics in the region as charismatic outsiders could bypass traditional institutions to address Wazirs and Mehsuds directly.

Akbar Ahmed who served as the PA in South-Waziristan, noted that "Within my lifetime, I have observed the old structures of society in Waziristan beginning to crumble... Pukhtunwali, the code that defined these tribes and was the core of tribal identity, would be shattered" (Ahmed 2013: 48). Pashtun society is changing rapidly as many tribals, especially from the Waziristans, since the late 1960s started migrating to Karachi and the Gulf for jobs, allowing members of less prominent lineages to acquire greater wealth which posed a challenge to the existing social hierarchy through remittances. Additionally, the smuggling economy only intensified, especially with the Afghan war, benefiting disadvantaged segments of society (Zahab 2016: 122). Land was no longer the primary source of economic capital. The jirga has become an elite-institutions due to it being subject to control by the PA and was seen as corrupt. This meant the gradual decline of the social underpinnings of the tribal-PA system, which would only be intensified with the Afghan jihad. Militancy in the FATA would remain low-intensity until the mid-2000s, but many of the issues which would drive the eventual Islamist insurgency had its roots in grievances which could not be remedied by the inherently inflexible political system imposed by the British Raj, and maintained by Pakistan (Shakirullah et al. 2020).

6.4.2 Islamism in a Tribal System

The tribal areas were just as affected by the 1978 Afghan revolution and subsequent Soviet invasion as were the settled areas as thousands of refugees poured across the region, while volunteers tribesmen mobilised in support of the Afghan Mujahideen. This effort drastically redefined ideas of religion and war in the region, through the influx of foreign fighters and religious seminaries funded by Arab Gulf donors (Ahmed 2013: 67). It also upended social relations in Waziristan itself. FATA's tribal institutions already suffered from legitimacy deficit as the maliks were seen as a corrupt and privileged class hand-selected by the PA to do Islamabad's bidding. The Afghan jihad gave young disgruntled tribesmen outlets for their grievances, allowing them to establish networks outside of traditional tribal institutions, and to utilise the access to funds and weapons to challenge FATA's elites. These social changes ultimately broke down the Waziristan model and would pave the way for the Pakistani Taliban in the 2000s (Nawaz 2009).

Given the ban by the British Raj and by Pakistan on political parties and voting in the FATA, there were no modern political factions in the region which could articulate the grievances of FATA's citizens. Many tribesmen found work in labour migration, often going to the Arab Gulf, or to other parts of Pakistan, where they came into contact with brands of Islam which rejected the tribal hierarchies which they resented. Whereas Islamist ideology in the form of primarily Deobandism and to a lesser extent Salafism, embodied the aspirations of the landless and the emerging middle class in the settled areas of the NWFP, they came in the FATA to appeal to members of lesser tribes who sought to rectify their position against the other tribes, and against unfair treatment by the PA. It also appealed to tribesmen who relied on wage labour, especially migrant labourers. The integration of the tribal areas into the global economy has given individuals from lesser families access to new ideas, sources of income, and weapons, to challenge not just the state, but also local hierarchies (Roy 2018).

The Afghan jihad drastically increased the access to religious seminaries which allowed them to become familiar with religious ideologies such as Deobandi Islamism and Salafism, both giving ideological training, but also access to networks of mobilisation outside of traditional hierarchies. There was an exponential growth of madrasas in Pakistan after its independence, with religious schools rising from around 140 upon independence in 1947, to thousands by the 2000s, many built during the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s (Elahi 2019). The expansion of the madrassas was supported by general Zia ul Haq who became president after a coup in 1977 after which he set about Islamizing the Pakistani state (Ahmed 2013: 64; Dorrnsoro 2012: 38).

It also entailed a break of the traditional system where the mullahs were subject to the maliks on political matters. Religious authority instead gained autonomy by having direct access to weapons, money, and network-ties to mobilise on its own (Ahmed 2013: 89). The mullahs saw their power and prestige increase, both through control over the madrassas, but also through political parties such as the JUI which was favoured by the security establishment (Dorrnsoro 2012: 42; Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013; Zahab 2020). The Afghan jihad in the 1980s drastically sped up this shift as large amounts of state and private money, along with armaments, poured into the region, completely bypassing the maliks in favour of the mullahs, ending the historical dependency of the tribal clerics on tribal elders (Nawaz 2009: 14). Encouraging religious mobilisation was a way of uniting the tribes against the invader, but also to undermine the Pashtun nationalist movement.

Importantly, though the spread of Islamist ideology to the Pashtun areas in Pakistan is often portrayed as a product of external factors, the eventual Talibanization of Waziristan was a product of local social processes with roots at least in the 1960s. This relates both to inter-tribal competition, but also between the *kashars*, the young, poor, and individuals from lower lineages, against the *mashars* who enjoy the privileges of the tribal system (Ahmed 2013: 52;

Zahab 2020: 118). Ultimately, the existing system was discredited due to its inability to respond to political change, with the empowerment of a new class of disenfranchised tribesmen who gained access to networks for mobilisation and weapons, the roots were set for a radical social revolution which would be carried out by militant Islamist groups (Lieven 2021; Pardesi 2008; Roy 2018: 9; Zahab 2004: 25; Zahab 2016; International Crisis Group 2009).

6.4.3 The Trigger for Violence: The Red Mosque Siege and Tehrik-i-Taliban

The jihad against the Afghan communist regime and its Soviet ally did not have an immediate spillover effect on the FATA. Islamist militancy in the province would largely take the form of volunteer fighters supporting the mujahideen in the 1980s, and then the Afghan Taliban from the mid-1990s. The 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11 attacks set in motion a series of events which would lead to the emergence of a Pakistani Taliban as well, some sub-factions of which declared war on the Pakistani state itself. Decades of war across the border provided charismatic young men from lesser lineages or without prospects for advancement in the tribal hierarchies, the opportunity to build a name for themselves and to emerge as power players by returning to the FATA with personal retinues and weapons. It allowed these figures to challenge the privileged class of bureaucrats and maliks, harnessing the grievances of locals against the FCR-system as a form of social revolutionary rhetoric in the guise of Islam (Gul 2010: 112).

The Pakistani Taliban, a broad term for multiple Islamist militant groups, was separate from the Afghan Taliban, though interconnected. It emerged gradually over the 2000s, primarily in the NWFP and FATA, where sub-factions often were associated with different tribes, some of which were hostile towards each other. While some instances of the Pakistani Taliban focused on fighting the coalition forces in Afghanistan, other factions

began turning against the Pakistani state, culminating in the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) in 2007 which represented the most potent challenge to Islamabad's authority in the Pashtun territories.

According to the former chief for the Pakistani intelligence service in Peshawar, this change would happen even without the Afghan war (Abbas 2014: 153). The Waziristan model was inherently fragile as it solidified a hierarchy between and within the tribes without giving disgruntled actors any chance of recourse through state-channels. The turmoil in Afghanistan following the U.S. invasion allowed a new generation of tribesmen to rely on religious rhetoric and their status as veterans from Afghanistan to challenge tribal institutions in Waziristan, instigating a wave of killings of tribal elders and the targeting of tribal jirgas to assert their authority within the tribes (Ahmed 2013: 79). Violence in the FATA, though intensified by events in Afghanistan, represented a form for social revolution in a society defined by pre-modern hierarchical institutions, driven by younger generations who had acquired the means to challenge these hierarchies (Fair and Jones 2009; Jones and Fair 2010: 167).

The collapse of the Afghan Taliban regime led initially to a flux of militants, including al-Qaeda affiliated operatives into FATA. Harboring foreign militants turned out to be a very lucrative activity for some villages and sub-tribes, as al-Qaeda members paid extremely inflated prices for shelter and provisions. This posed a dilemma for Islamabad. It was forced to balance between the U.S. which was pressuring it to deal with the fleeing Afghan militants, especially al-Qaeda members, and domestic audiences who generally were fiercely opposed to the war and any attempts by Pakistan in aiding the U.S. and its allies. U.S. pressure eventually led Pakistan to order its troops into FATA in 2002 for the first time since Pakistan's creation (Abbas 2014: 104; Yousaf and Furrukhzad 2020).

The symbolic and actual impact of this cannot be understated. First, it represented a clear break against the long-standing approach of both Pakistan and the British Raj towards

the tribal areas of not intervening in the region directly. Second, it was perceived by the tribes themselves as a form of internal expansion by the state as the state ostensibly denied the autonomy of the tribes and was willing to force its will upon them. Third, the entry of the military gradually meant that the position of the PA lost its meaning. The PA was pushed to the side-lines as the military assumed responsibility for bargaining with local actors and settling conflicts and judicial matters among them (Nawaz 2009: 9). These multi-faceted pressures set the region on the path of full-scale rebellion.

The first local Taliban organization in South Waziristan seems to have been organized by Nek Muhammad after the Pakistani army entered the region. Nek Muhammad belonged to the Wazir-tribe, and the Wazir-dominated area near the city of Wana had been used as a supply base for the Mujahideen since the Afghan war. Nek Muhammad himself had fought alongside the Afghan Taliban during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s. After the fall of the Afghan Taliban's regime, fleeing foreign militants found shelter in this area, maybe most notably the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (Cornell 2014; International Crisis Group 2016: 25).

Nek Muhammad's refusal to hand over such "foreign elements," combined with cross-border raids against NATO-forces in Afghanistan, led to confrontation with the state. A major intervention was launched in South Waziristan in March 2004, targeting the stronghold of Wana. The security forces collectively punished Wazir sub-tribes through economic sanctions, and arresting their elders, severely undermining the legitimacy of the state's operations in the province (Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013: 168). The army ultimately failed to decisively subdue Muhammad's forces, and it was forced to accept a peace agreement. Nek Muhammad was killed in 2004, the peace deal demonstrated to the tribal militias that violence could be an effective way of forcing concessions from the state (Acharya, Bukhari, and Sulaiman 2009: 97; Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013: 169).

In fact, the peace deal set a precedent for multiple later bargains between the army and militants, where the army would sideline tribal elders by negotiating directly with Islamist militants, essentially rendering the tribal jirgas useless. A symbolically important aspect of the negotiations was that they were held in a Deobandi madrassa and included clerics affiliated with the JUI. This was unprecedented in Pashtun society where tribal council were held in public spaces with religious figures sitting on the sidelines, but not playing a central role (Gul 2010). The army's approach therefore undermined the maliks' role as power brokers, and were further threatened by Islamist militants who were eager to deconstruct traditional tribal hierarchies (Abbas 2014: 104). This also took the form of Islamists targeting tribal elders with more than 200 being assassinated in FATA in 2005 and 2006. They also sought to enforce moral statutes, either through direct enforcement, or terror attacks against video stores and girls' schools (Hussain 2007: 152; Johnson and Mason 2008: 24; Sheikh 2016). There was essentially a security vacuum after 2003 as the Pakistani army's deployment of troops to the tribal areas led local commanders to proclaim their affiliation with various branches of the Pakistani Taliban, pursuing the "Talibanisation" of their territories by dismantling traditional institutions and enforcing Sharia. The state's willingness to accept such peace deals was related to its attempts at distinguishing between the "good" Taliban which was focused on Afghanistan, and the "bad" Taliban which was causing disorder within Pakistan. Added to this was Musharraf's reliance on an alliance with Islamist political parties which pushed for peace negotiations (Markey 2008: 18).

While the most severe Islamist violence initially was associated with Nek Muhammad's militants, the onus for militancy shifted from the Wazir towards the Mehsud-dominated areas where Baitullah Mehsud and Abdullah Mehsud emerged as prominent commanders (Zahab 2020: 17). Baitullah began his career as a militant by transporting al-Qaeda members from Afghanistan after 2001. After this, he was able to distinguish himself

from other commanders both by his reliance on suicide bombings, a tactic without historical precedent in the tribal areas, and by his willingness to target the Pakistani army. Baitullah's reputation was solidified after the Pakistani government signed a peace deal with him in February 2005 whereby it agreed to remove its troops from Mehsud territory and compensate them for losses from fighting. After this he set about the Talibanisation of his territory, establishing a morality police and having executions be meted out in public to enforce the Sharia (Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013).

The tribal dynamics of the conflict in the FATA became increasingly clear as Baitullah's faction became more powerful. In late 2007, the Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), was established ostensibly as a response to the government siege of the Red Mosque in Islamabad. The mosque was headed by militant Deobandi preachers with strong ties to the FATA who had become increasingly hostile towards the Pakistani state. The final confrontation in July 2007 left 100 people dead after government forces stormed the mosque (Siddique 2014: 95).

The TTP formed as a heterogeneous cross-tribal alliance of 40 militant leaders from 13 distinct groups. While it included Wazirs and other tribes, it was dominated by the Mehsuds and Baitullah, and it controlled nearly all of the tribal territories within a year (Z. Hussain 2012: 18). It also conquered large parts of the Pashtun settled areas, including the Swat valley where Fazlullah's branch of the TTP declared an Islamic state. However, the cross-tribal alliance was short-lived as the Wazir factions in particular saw the Mehsud dominance of the group as problematic. The Wazir commanders Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur consequently formed Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban in June 2008 to defend Wazir interests (Gul 2010). This split was partly motivated by the long-standing agnatic rivalry between Wazirs and Mehsuds despite their ideological rejection of tribalism (Qazi 2011). Another point central issue of contention was that the Wazir factions were eager to focus on

Afghanistan and wanted to expel the IMU from the province, whereas the TTP was strongly focused on fighting against the Pakistani state (Ahmed 2013: 73). Mullah Nazir also violently expelled the IMU from Wana which led to discontent among Baitullah's faction which was allied with the Uzbeks (Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman 2013; Gunaratna and Nielsen 2008: 787).

Baitullah Mehsud was killed in August 2009 by a U.S. drone, but was replaced by Hakimullah Mehsud who stepped up the group's use of suicide terrorist attacks across the country (Malik 2016: 7). This was another indicator of the significant cultural change in the province as suicide attacks had no local history. Around 80 % of suicide bombers in Pakistan come from South-Waziristan, and most of these were Mehsuds. The Swat-Taliban's leader, Fazlullah, became the TTP's new emir in 2014, causing leading Mehsud members to break away. The Pakistani state also shifted to relying on anti-Taliban militias organised primarily by tribes which were seen as traditionally better off compared to the Mehsuds (Zahab 2016: 130).

The TTPs creation was therefore somewhat of a curious phenomenon, where it was the culmination of years of encroachment of the state into the tribal province which was defined by dysfunctional state-maintained tribal institutions, and continued inter-tribal and inter-generational rivalries. Several Taliban commanders who begun life as poor people of lesser lineages made careers as militants, drawing upon network ties and resources gathered from fighting in Afghanistan to challenge tribal hierarchies in the FATA. The Pakistani Taliban's targeting of tribal elders confirms the goal of upending existing hierarchies. The backgrounds of many of the Pakistani Taliban's leaders supports this socio-economic aspect as an explanation for the outbreak of violence. Baitullah Mehsud was a bus conductor before becoming a career-militant. Hakimullah Mehsud was a madrassa drop out. Maulvi Omar sold

perfumes, and Mangal Bagh was a small-time criminal, while Mullah Fazlullah was a ski lift operator in Swat (Schricker 2017; Shakirullah et al. 2020).

This social revolutionary dynamic seems to have been particularly salient among the Mehsud. Notably, a core issue in the feud between Maulvi Nazir's Wazir faction and Baitullah Mehsud was that the latter had assassinated multiple tribal leaders loyal to the former. Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur's breakaway factions from the TTP were explicitly a protest against Mehsud dominance of the group as a way of securing Waziri interests. The TTP was purportedly an attempt at unifying Pakistani factions of the Taliban by transcending agnatic rivalries, but its Wazir commanders saw it as an attempt at social revisionism by the Mehsud. The Wazir had access to the trade profits from the Afghan border, more fertile soil, and also lived on land with a far lower population density in contrast to the Mehsud areas which were severely overpopulated. Conflict made the situation worse for the Mehsud as almost half a million were displaced, many going to cities like Karachi where the influx of tribals ignited inter-communal violence (Rehman 2017; Zahab 2016: 128).

These differences might also explain the different targets of the different Taliban factions. The TTP factions under Mehsud was dead-set on fighting Islamabad, willing to ally with foreign factions like the Uzbek IMU, utilised suicide bombers in a breach of tribal tradition, and continuously targeted Pashtun tribal leaders with violence, even leading to condemnations from al-Qaeda. The Wazir factions, however, were mostly focused on Afghanistan, especially the factions located in North Waziristan associated with the Haqqani Network (Acharya, Bukhari, and Sulaiman 2009: 120). There was therefore a fundamental ideological difference among the Taliban-factions. The Mehsud-dominated factions were explicitly attempting to reshape the political order they were already living in, not least due to it being dominated by both the Wazir, and also by the Punjabi-led Islamabad (Gopal,

Mahsud, and Fishman 2013; Saigol 2012). Notably, the Afghan Taliban and large parts of the Pakistani Taliban also rejected notions of global jihad, instead focusing on Afghanistan. The Baitullah-led TTP-faction, however, had some parallels to al-Qaeda in Iraq in its willingness to use extreme violence to target traditional institutions which stood in its way (Ahmed 2013: 73; Hegghammer 2020: 472). This is also why the Haqqani network was given free reigns to operate in North Waziristan, whereas Pakistani security forces, with assistance from U.S. operate drones, targeted the TTP (Dressler 2010; Lansford 2017; Giustozzi 2019).

6.5 Balochistan's Nationalist Insurgency

6.5.1 Institutional Continuity, Ideological Continuity

The Baloch have historically been governed by tribal confederacies, but were forcibly absorbed into Persia and the British empire, followed by Iran in 1928, and Pakistan in 1947 (Harrison 1980: 161). The transition from the British Raj to Pakistan was not a peaceful one as the Balochi khan of Khalat, a client-state on par with the princely state of Swat, declared independence. Independent Khalat lasted less than a year as a Baloch-dominated state until its annexation by Pakistan, but the issue of Balochi independence would remain a key political issue in Pakistan's Balochistan province (Siddiqi 2012). Multiple uprisings would follow in 1948, 1958, 1963-1969, 1973-1977, and a low-intensity insurgency after 2006.

Interestingly, these insurgencies were all led by ethno-nationalist groups, and the Taliban model of insurgency has had little influence among the Baloch. This despite the fact that the Afghan Taliban largely originated from madrasas in northern Balochistan and the Afghan Taliban's leadership is said to have been based in the city of Quetta, the administrative capital of Balochistan after the US invasion in 2001 (Abbas 2014: 120).

Nevertheless, the influence of Taliban-style Islamism on Balochi revolutionary groups has been minimal. This despite Balochi rebels having similarly benefited from the open border with Afghanistan in terms of gaining revenue from smuggling and access to weapons (Lieven 2017: 179). There is a definite ethnic component to this difference, given that the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban are dominated by the Pashtun. Nevertheless, it is curious that Balochi revolutionary movements did not attempt to transcend this ethnic divide through an Islamic ideology which denies such differences, especially given the theoretical assumption that rebel groups may adopt ideologies to attract outside support (Toft 2007; Toft 2013; Walter 2017a). It is also curious given that there are examples of small Baloch Sunni-Islamist groups, most notably Jundullah which launched attacks in Iran from sanctuaries in Pakistani Balochistan.¹⁷

Part of the explanation for the difference in political radicalism from the Pashtun may be a consequence of the structure of traditional institutions. Baloch civil society, like that of the Pashtun, is traditionally tribal. However, Balochi tribal chieftains called *sardars* have commonly enjoyed powerful positions due to Balochi tribal institutions being more top-heavy than the more egalitarian Pashtun institutions (Mushtaq and Mirza 2022). Another contrast to Pashtun-society is that the sardars continue to dominate the top leadership positions both in the formal political sphere, but also the within illegal militant movements. In fact, the question of autonomy or separatism became a conflict cleavage between sardars who sought to maintain their position within the Pakistani system, and sardars who were unhappy with the system. Such divisions appeared already under British-rule, where rivalries developed between sardars who were favoured by the British and educated in British institutions and sardars who did not enjoy the same privileges (Noraiee 2020: 73).

¹⁷ While the Jundullah and its insurgency in Iran would have been an interesting case for comparison, the literature on its origins and operations is inadequate for an in-depth analysis.

This cleavage has continued into the current political order as sardars are divided between mainstream parties such as the Muslim League and the PPP on the one hand, and parties which demand greater autonomy on the other. These include the Balochistan National Party, the National Party, the Jamhoori Wattan Party, and an alliance of 8 political parties in the Baloch National Front which seeks complete independence for Balochistan (Harrison 1980: 161). The Baloch Student organization is the best organized nationalist group next to the Baloch Liberation front, and has sympathisers of the BLF and communist factions.

The region's chief ministers are also typically sardaris as part of Islamabad's strategy of co-opting the opposition. This has also had the result that democracy maintains rather than undermines the tribal hierarchy which prevents political reforms and development as these elites control the distribution of state funds. The entrenchment of these elites has also limited political activism outside of the tribal framework as limited economic development has prevented the emergence of a significant middle-class until recently. The region remains underdeveloped, as the Baloch are under-represented in state institutions (Mushtaq and Mirza 2022; Grare 2013; Titus and Swidler 2000; Khetran 2011).

In 1955, the princely state of Kalat was absorbed into Balochistan and Pakistan initiated the One Unit policy whereby West Pakistan's four provinces, including Balochistan, were administered as one province. In reaction to this Pashtun and Balochi ethno-nationalists joined the National Awami Party as a way of counteracting Punjabi political dominance. This, cross-ethnic alliance split after 1970 as the One Unit was abolished.

Furthermore, while a NAP government of Balochi nationalists came to power in Balochistan in 1972, the government was dismissed by president Bhutto in 1973, and the arrest of its leaders triggered an insurrection. 55000 insurgents rose up, while the Iranian air force aided the brutal Pakistani crackdown, which was only intensified due to the Pakistani

military's humiliation by the defeat in Bangladesh in 1971 (Bansal 2008: 184; Wani 2016). The Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF) began operating from the territory of the Marri-tribe and Afghanistan, along with the Balochistan National Army (BLA), while the Baloch Students Organisation (BSO) became an important recruiting ground (Wani 2016). This was two years after Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan, inspiring similar demands for independence among some Balochi nationalists who were frustrated with continuous discrimination against the Baloch with regards to access to education, the armed forces, and economic development. A point of particular contention was that development projects did not favour the Baloch, instead going to projects for military purposes or to ensure the energy supply to the Punjab (Aslam 2011).

The sardars who led the Baloch-nationalist movement developed ties to the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, seeing themselves as progressive despite their power being a product of the tribal system. The BPLF, for example, was inspired by Marxist-Leninism, but was associated with the Marri tribe (Grare 2013: 7). In fact, the leadership of tribes such as Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, and Khair Bakhs Marri oppressed their own tribal members for their interests, brutally repressing peasants in 1972 who protested against excessive taxes to sardars (Noraiee 2020). Furthermore, the guerrillas of the 1973 revolt did not seem to have sought a significantly different order, rather wanting the release of the arrested sardars and seeking greater autonomy rather than independence (Harrison 1980: 153; Bansal 2008: 184). The revolt was crushed and many sardars fled to Afghanistan. One sardar, Akbar Khan Bugti, cooperated with Bhutto against other sardars, for which he was appointed provincial governor, leading to accusations of him being a traitor by Bizenjo, Mengal, and Marri followers. However, Akbar Khan was also the only sardar to welcome General Zia's coup in 1977 (Aslam 2011: 194). Zia ul-Haq released imprisoned sardars after his ascent to power, followed by a widening gap between Mengal, Marri, and Bizenjo, leading to the end of NAP.

In the late 1970s, 100 Baloch students travelled to Russia, but none of the Baloch organizations succeeded, and none of the triangle sardars had an effective organization under Zia ul-Haq's rule (Titus and Swidler 2000).

Zia also initiated a general amnesty which lowered tensions in the 1980s, and in the 1990s Baloch nationalist demands were increasingly expressed through political rather than militant means. Under the government of Benazir Bhutto, several leaders of the 1973-1977 insurgency returned from Afghanistan, and their political legacy was carried on by their sons who participated in parliamentary politics under the patronage of Islamabad (International Crisis Group 2006b). Akhtar Mengal, son of Ataulah Mengal, became the leader of the Balochistan National Party, and provincial chief minister in 1998-1999, while Hyrbair Marri became provincial minister (Noraiee 2020: 78). The nationalist parties dominated elections throughout the 1990s during the democratic interlude between Zia ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf, and the region remained largely peaceful (Grare 2013: 10). However, an influx of Afghan refugees of Pashtun background shifted led to with multiple instances of intercommunal violence in 1991 (Bansal 2008). The 1999 coup of General Musharraf set the stage for a new relationship to Islamabad. Musharraf's heavy-handed approach triggered a new insurgency, led by the former provincial leader Akbar Khan Bugti.

6.5.2 Continued Nationalist Resistance

Nationalist forces among the Baloch are not ideologically coherent. Indirect rule by the British and Pakistani state sustained and reshaped tribal structures, and also fragmented nationalist leadership as the state manipulated intra-tribal rivalries over economic resources and access to government positions (Noraiee 2020: 73). The Baloch insurgencies do not have the same class-dimension against the maliks of FATA and the landowning khans in the

NWFP. In fact, the sardar system has remained comparatively intact and unchallenged compared to FATA, maybe partially due to the Pakistani approach of co-opting tribal elites. The introduction of a monetary economy and market, along with investment in education has promoted a class of younger educated Baloch with a political vision beyond that of kinship, and who see the sardars as collaborators and the embodiment of an outdated order (Titus and Swidler 2000). While the opposition of this class to Pakistan also took the form of rhetorical opposition to the sardars, the sardars have remained in control of most of the nationalist-movement. In fact, the state's policy of co-opting sardars has reified these tribal structures (Noraiee 2020: 73). The emergence of this middle-class has so far not led to the same challenge to tribal structures as happened in the Pashtun areas. The Baloch are underrepresented in the government, and in 2002, less than 50 of 32000 students were Baloch. The provincial government has no real power, not having the ability to levy tax on property inside military cantonments, including private properties, and these cantonment function as parallel systems outside the control of the provincial state (Bansal 2008: 190).

The exploitation of natural resources by Islamabad has been a continuous source of grievance among Baloch nationalists who see the federal government as exploiting these resources while giving very little of the profit to the Baloch themselves. The Sui gas field discovered in 1952 supplies almost 40 % of Pakistan's energy needs while only 6 % of Balochistan's population has access to gas, primarily in Quetta.. The demands by Balochi leaders for a greater share of gas royalties became a major source of tension in the early 2000s, and tensions were exacerbated by the discovery of gold and the awarding of extraction contracts to French, Australian, and Chinese companies, without consultation with Balochi civil society. Mega infrastructure projects such as a naval base at Ormar and the Gwadar port were not accompanied with infrastructure, health, or school projects that would support locals. Furthermore, construction of a highway from Karachi to Gwadar bypassed Baloch-

populated areas, jobs at the port were mostly given to Punjabis, and the port itself disrupted the livelihood of local fishermen (Wani 2016: 812).

Additionally, the Pakistani military sought to construct facilities in Kohlu dominated by the Marri Tribes, and Dera Bugti where there are large gas fields. Opposition to these military cantonments was opposed in a resolution by the Provincial Assembly in September 2003 as these cantonments operated independently of the provincial authorities jurisdiction, emerging as symbols of Islamabad's encroachment on Balochistan. Thus, Balochistan was simmering in the early 2000s from grievances over the distribution of royalties from the exploitation of natural resource exploitation in the region, military encroachment, and the perceived marginalisation of Balochis in favour of Punjabis (Bansal 2008: 187).

After General Pervez Musharraf's coup in 1999, the Baloch national movement became increasingly radicalized. There are over 60 Baloch tribes, but it has primarily been the Bugti, Marri, and Mengal tribes who have opposed Islamabad. This resistance has been strong in the Marri-Bugti area along with the cities of Quetta and Khuzdar, the Lasbela District, Lyari town in Karachi, and on the Makran coast where opposition has been led by the emerging middle class (Samad 2014).

The rigging of national elections in 2002, and the rise of the MMA in Balochistan, sidelined secular Baloch parties. The military support these Islamist parties to counter both Baloch and Pashtun nationalism (Grare 2013: 10). Tensions also intensified due to the construction of military cantonments and development of oil and gas fields without consultations being held with the sardars. In February 2002, Marri tribesmen associated with the BLA began targeting infrastructure, especially gas pipelines because the BLA was especially aggrieved by Islamabad's exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources (Bansal 2005: 256). The insurgency intensified after 2005 as Akbar Bugti of the Bugti took up arms

(Lieven 2017: 180). The trigger event in 2005 was the gang rape of Shaziza Khalid a medical doctor in the small town of Sui, by military personnel. The military tried covering up the incident, refusing to punish the perpetrators, and the lack of repercussions was perceived as slight towards the Bugti tribesmen who saw the doctor as their guest (Wani 2016: 812). In January, Bugti tribesmen fired rockets on gas installation, while the Pakistani army began targeting Marri and Bugti areas (Akbar 2011: 54; Aslam 2011: 196).

Akbar Khan Bugti had a long career in the provincial government having been Balochistan's former interior minister and governor. He had a great deal of personal legitimacy beyond his tribe due to his defiant stance against Islamabad, having campaigned for his tribe to receive a greater share of the gas wealth taken from its territory. Akbar Bugti was killed on 27. August 2006, claimed at first by the government to have resulted from bombing, but then that Pakistani commandos had killed him. This led to claims of his death being an extrajudicial killing (Baloch 2016). This led to an outcry and Baloch nationalist forces subsequently joined in a grand jirga of 380 leaders, including 85 sardars, who condemned the killing of Bugti, contradicting Musharraf's claims that the insurgency was only supported by 3 sardars (Wani 2021; International Crisis Group 2007). Bugti was succeeded by his grandson, Brahamdagh. His influence was limited however, due to Islamabad's efforts of marginalising Akbar by having rival tribesmen excommunicating him and taking over his property in Dera Bugti as well as supporting rival Bugti sub-tribes (International Crisis Group 2007: 12). This had been ongoing even while Bugti was alive as several members of the JWP distanced themselves from him and removing him as head of the Bugti tribe. The Pakistani state attaches sardars to the state by giving government jobs which confers significant grants to the sardars, creating an elite which relies on nationalist rhetoric but is tied to Islamabad.

The conflict has a significantly lower death-toll compared to the insurgencies in the Pashtun areas (Lieven 2017: 182). However, its human costs has still been large with 200000 being displaced due to the army operations in the Marri Bugti areas. Security forces also increasingly relied on “kill-and-dump” operations in the 200s as death squads targeted the opposition. There has, in turn, also been increasing violence against non-Balochi civilians, and 100 000 settlers left the province in 2010 (HRW 2011; Siddiqi 2012: 166). The targeting of Punjabi settlers reflects an intensified ethnic dimension to the violence in the region which was unprecedented in previous insurgencies (Samad 2014).

Nationalist separatist sentiment has intensified due to the emergence of a middle class which has led to anti-Pakistan sentiment spreading from the regions of Marri, Mengal, and Bugti, to other areas and tribes. There is also a growing number of leaders with a middle-class urban background, which has led some such as Wani (2016: 821) to argue that there is a de-tribalization of Baloch nationalism underway. Sardars have been able to absorb some of middle-class elements, but the emergence of a more pluralistic civic nationalism has given room for a more non-compromising form of ethnic nationalism (Noraiee 2020: 74). This also increasingly disjoints Baloch nationalism from narrow tribal interests, towards a pan-Baloch agenda, notably in the BLA and BLF. While the BLA was formed and initially constituted by Marri tribesmen, it increasingly drew from the Mengal and Bugti, and the educated middle class (Wani 2016: 823). This is also associated with an ideological shift, away from protecting the interests of specific tribes or the privileges of Sardars, towards broader grievances related to poverty and underdevelopment (International Crisis Group 2007: 13). On the one hand processes of modernization are viewed with suspicion by sardars who fear that this might undermine their authority over the Baloch due to external sources of income and urbanization. On the other, these projects are attacked by the Baloch middle class for exploiting resources without benefiting the Baloch (Noraiee 2020: 78).

This middle class is too broad to be co-opted as happened with several sardars, and they were also less defined by identifiable cleavages which could be exploited for to weaken Balochi unit. This has also led to a geographical shift in Balochi resistance from the northeast to the southwest, and from rural to urban areas. The nationalist movement receives funding from diaspora Balochis in the Gulf region, especially Oman, notably in the Makran division where an emergent Baloch middle class has become important in nationalist politics (Jamali 2013). There are also significant criminal networks which traffic contraband, including heroin, providing a major source of income to the nationalist opposition after the money is laundered in the Gulf region. Black market weapons from Afghanistan also find their way to Baloch separatists (Samad 2014: 307). Iran and Pakistan have accused each other of supporting different Baloch militant groups against each other, and Jaish al-Adl. Indian security forces have supported the Baloch nationalists, both as a thorn in the side of Islamabad, and to limit Chinese influence in the region (Noraiee 2020: 82).

The 2008 elections were boycotted by the nationalist parties due to the killing of Akbar Bugti, opening for election rigging. However, the PPP won at the national level and initiated reconciliation measures such as apologizing for abuses by the Pakistani state and outlining a roadmap for reconciliation. However, the Baloch nationalist movement was by this time convinced that self-determination was essential and these proposals were rejected by the end of 2009 (Grare 2013: 12). The Baloch National Movement also seeks independence, and its leader Ghulam Mohammed Baloch was killed in 2009.

There are religious militant groups operating in Balochistan, notably Lashkar-e-Jhangvi which is waging a sectarian war. However, another factor is the presence of Jundullah, a Sunni-Islamist Balochi group which has targeted Iran (Wiig 2009; Siddiqi 2012: 163). The state has sought to Islamize Baloch politics since the end of the 1970s as part of Zia-ul-Haq's policies Balochistan also saw the rise of madrassas, revised curriculas, and an

influx of Islamic scholars, and Musharraf continued to push for the penetration of madrassas into Baloch society, at the expense of secular education. However, this trend has largely been rejected because it is perceived as an attempt at centralization by the state, though the Taliban received a significant presence in Balochistan's north under the MMA government. This phenomena was largely restricted to Pashtun-populated areas, but there has been a trend towards religious radicalization, especially through Lashkar-e-Janghvi (Grare 2013: 13). While the reliance on Madrassas for spreading Islamism has continued, its influence on the political opposition remains limited (Marino 2020).

6.6 Conclusion: Incomplete Modernity as a State Policy

The rise of the Pakistani Taliban, in its multiple forms, follows from the ambiguous relationship of the Pakistani state to its peripheries, and illustrates that there can be significant local variance in the causal processes which drive the emergence of Islamist groups. The TNSM and its later instance as a faction of the TTP, emerged in the Swat valley which is part of the Pashtun settled areas. The fundamental social dynamic defining this area was a form of class-competition where the monetarisation of the economy rendered quasi-feudal institutions superfluous as people who previously had depended on the favours of the landholding-class, transitioned to wage-earning labour. Despite this, the special privileges of this class remained. The TNSM developed as a form of social protest against this class-divide

The Taliban-factions which developed in the tribal areas, by contrast, represented a form of intra-tribal coup by young men from lesser families who had become empowered due to their access to weapons, as well as new ideologies and tactics such as suicide bombings. The other dimension to this was inter-tribal rivalries, where the underprivileged Mehsud tribes became the most militant and willing to use non-traditional methods such as suicide

bombings, and also targeted the Pakistani state with greater ferocity than the comparatively more privileged Wazir who primarily focused on the jihad in Afghanistan.

In both cases, the underlying social tensions followed from a form of incomplete modernisation where the Pakistani state simultaneously sought to assert its dominance by gradually imposing institutional control over the Pashtun areas, while also allowing old institutions to persevere. This was most clear in the case of the tribal areas, where Pakistan's policy relied on a clientelist approach of favouring hand-picked tribal leaders, simultaneously preserving tribal institutions while undermining their traditional egalitarian form by creating a privileged class who was free to allocate goods to their political allies and punish their enemies.

In both territories, the inherent rigidity of outdated institutions, and the maintenance of these institutions by the state, rendered militancy the only viable way of producing change. In the FATA, political parties were banned outright and ordinary tribesmen did not have a right to vote. In the settled areas, the dominant political parties, including socialist ones, had either been repressed, or were dominated by the same landholding-elites which many opposed. Notably, while there was a tradition of pacifist and non-Islamist protest through the KK, the repression of this political movement undermined the possibility of having a lasting political organisation and tradition of non-violent opposition. Instead, only religious institutions, primarily in the form of seminaries, remained as the organisational fundament for modern forms of political mobilisation, providing revolutionary-minded individuals with social capital to mobilise outside of traditional genealogical ties. It also gave access to weapons, money, and training for veterans from the Afghan jihad. The religious-nature of these networks also made Islamism viable as the go-to revolutionary ideology in the region.

This stands in contrast to the Baloch who were similarly defined by the strong prominence of traditional hierarchies and institutions. Yet, the Baloch did not experience a similarly strong middle class, and traditional tribal leaders continued to hold a tight grip on political institutions. As such, there was significant organisational continuity as sardars remained in control of militant opposition to Islamabad, defining this as Balochi nationalism rather than Islamism. This runs contrary to the notion that Islamism is the strategically optimal choice, as Balochi revolutionary leaders do not seem to have contemplated embracing Taliban-style politics to gain access to ally with the other Taliban factions.

Chapter 7 North Caucasus

Our defeat was not on the day that Putin declared military victory, nor on the day that Ramzan Kadyrov was “elected” President, nor on the day Maskhadov was killed; although his death certainly hastened it. The end of our struggle came in October 2007 when Doku Umarov’s proclamation of the Caucasus Emirate dissolved the Chechen republic Ichkeria, and ended the Chechen national resistance by submerging it into an abstract transnational jihad.

Ilyas Akhmadov, former Foreign Minister of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.¹⁸

But I, for example, came to this war as a patriot. The switch to war happened in Moscow and when the occupation began, I understood that war was inevitable and I arrived as a patriot. Maybe at that time I didn't know how to pray, I don't remember.

Doku Umarov, leader of the Caucasus Emirate 2007-2013.¹⁹

7.1 Militant Islamism in the Caucasus

The chaos of the Soviet collapse witnessed multiple nationalist movements among the Muslim populations of the Caucasus. In the case of Chechnya, this led to an ethno-nationalist independence struggle. However, the dysfunction of the Chechen state led some to look for other sources of employment and security, and several Islamist communities were

¹⁸ Lansky and Akhmadov 2010: 221

¹⁹ Babitsky 2005

established, often with foreign support. Subsequent developments allowed militant Islamist centred on these communities to challenge the Chechen leadership, pushing it into a catastrophic war with Russia. In the neighbouring republics, Islamist movements also developed in response to state dysfunction and corruption, but these remained peaceful until the early 2000s when they gradually militarised in response to state oppression. The Islamist movements which developed in the Russian Caucasus were all responses to the institutional dysfunction during the transition from communism, and attracted an underclass of individuals which did not have access to the clientelist networks which controlled the state. Islamism became an expression of the desire for social justice in an unjust political system, but repression turned these initially peaceful movements towards militancy.

7.2 The Russian Muslim Republics

The republics of the North Caucasus region in the Russian Federation have a shared history of subjugation by the Russian Empire, and of their religious and ethnic identities being suppressed under Soviet rule. Stories of resistance against Russian expansionism continue to play a significant role in historical and cultural traditions in the region, most vividly captured by the resistance movement of Imam Shamil who in the mid-19th century established an Islamic state centred on Chechnya and Dagestan (Politkovskaia 2003; Sagramoso and Yemelianova 2010). These republics also faced similar challenges upon the collapse of the Soviet order as economic recession brought the prospect of political instability, the erosion of industry, and breakdown of effective governance (Derluguian 2005: 75). In this context, established Soviet functionaries interacted with businessmen, Soviet-educated intellectuals, organized crime, and entrepreneurs of violence to carve out their own spheres of power.

The Caucasus had been a showcase for Soviet modernisation since the 1960s (Derluguian 1999: 8). The Soviet policy was to rid the peoples of the region of their “primitive” tribal and religious traditions by promoting industrialization and urbanization, thereby creating an educated working class which would embrace communism. It instead led to a growing sub-proletariat formed by migrants from rural mountainous areas who formed urban ghettos. In Chechnya, this policy led to an ethnic divide between Russians who enjoyed educational and occupational privileges, and ethnic Chechens who were relegated to work in manual occupations, and often as migrant workers. This also ensured that traditional social networks such as clan ties continued, and these gained new significance as the Soviet system fragmented. These genealogical ties, called *tukhums* in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria and *teips* in Chechnya, became important to the competition over power and financial resources, functioning as networks of patronage during the transition away from communism (Derluguian 2005: 317).

The transition to a freer market therefore did not bring about the liberal ideal of an individualised economy and political arena. In the post-communist system one could only embark on a professional or business career as an “Avar,” “Dargin”, or “Chechen,” or as an associate of various strongmen, not as an independent individual. The rise of organised crime and personal militias defined by kinship-ties who controlled newly established private businesses and the state apparatus itself further undermined the idea that either the post-Soviet state or the market provided equal opportunities to all (Collins 2006: 306). Though the Caucasus republics adopted ostensibly democratic constitutions in the 1990s, the elections were hardly competitive, nor was there ever true separation of powers. Politics came to revolve around client-patronage networks which competed for control over the formal and informal economy (Sagramoso 2007: 687).

The social tensions which followed from the post-Soviet political and economic turmoil took an increasingly religious tinge as liberalisation implied access to previously banned forms of Islam. Traditional Sufi practices had survived in the region, usually underground, but came to be associated by many as intertwined with the corrupt post-Soviet elite. Puritanical expressions of Islam from the Middle East gave the young and alienated hope for a society without corruption and crime. Throughout the region, these “New Muslims” established *jamaats* or self-organized communities which became sources for welfare, community, and ideological training for individuals who saw little promise in the post-Soviet system. These communities were initially non-violent as its core leaders advocated re-Islamization through education (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 56).

It was only in Chechnya that these internal tensions evolved into a drive towards complete independence from Russia. Though other regions were similarly hit by severe industrial and agricultural decline, along with social turmoil and violence, they did not go the path of Chechnya of open revolt against Moscow (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Marshall 2010). Still, structural factors such as the entrenchment of corrupt elites and economic hardship, led many young Muslims to turn against traditional Islam towards more scripturalist interpretations. Some of these took up arms in the 2000s, as the security forces began targeting anyone displaying any form of outwards religiosity with detention, harassment, torture, and sometimes death (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 53).

Studies of the Chechen push for independence have tended to focus on the historical trauma endured by the Chechens by Moscow, both under the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. A flaw to this argument is that other ethnic groups such as the Balkars and Ingush suffered similar hardships, including ethnic cleansing in the form of deportations to Central Asia during Josef Stalin’s reign (Sokirianskaya 2014). More convincing arguments instead treat the divergent paths of the Caucasus republics as a consequence of their different

institutional configurations. For example, Dagestan developed a form of consociationalism during Soviet rule which persisted after the end of communism, and which allowed the Soviet nomenklatura to remain in power.

This is in contrast to Chechnya where Soviet functionaries were completely replaced by a new generation of marginalized urban intellectuals and political outsiders (Derluigian 1999: 1388). Others, notably Georgi Derluigian (2005: 226), also point to differences in class-relations, arguing that the lack of strong working and middle classes meant that impoverished groups lacked the social capital to organize to challenge the oligarchic rulers of their provinces. He notes that Chechnya was unique in having a large pool of young migrant workers migrants who became a recruitment pool for radical politics as the demand for migrant labour faltered during the post-Soviet economic turmoil. Some of these found new employment as militia-members, spawning a warlord system centred on patronage networks of businessmen and criminals who controlled the Chechen economy and smuggling routes (Tishkov 2004; Galeotti 2002; Wittig 2009).

There was a decisive ideological shift in the Chechen resistance movement against Russia in the 1990s and after. The first Chechen war of 1994-1996 took the form of an ethno-nationalist insurgency whereby the Chechen victory ensured de facto independence from Russia. The second Chechen war, though still fundamentally about Chechnya's independence, triggered by an attempted Islamist incursion into Dagestan in 1999. Russia subsequently managed to occupy most of Chechnya, and the Chechen nationalist independence movement was supplanted by Islamist-factions by the mid-2000s as violence shifted from conventional fighting to terrorism by clandestine actors (Campana and Ratelle 2014; International Crisis Group 2015).

This is reflected in figure 16. Violence peaked twice in the early and late 1990s due to the two Chechen wars, being followed by a comparatively small rise in Islamist violence in the late 2000s. It should be noted, however, that the level of Islamist violence in the UCDP-data from which the graph derives is likely very underreported. In particular, multiple Islamist factions operated in the region in the 1990s and early 2000s, but these have been coded as part of the Chechen independence movement, rather than as organisations of their own. The most important takeaway, however, is that there has been a clear shift away from a nationalist independence movement, towards Islamist militancy, a dynamic which began already in the early 1990s.

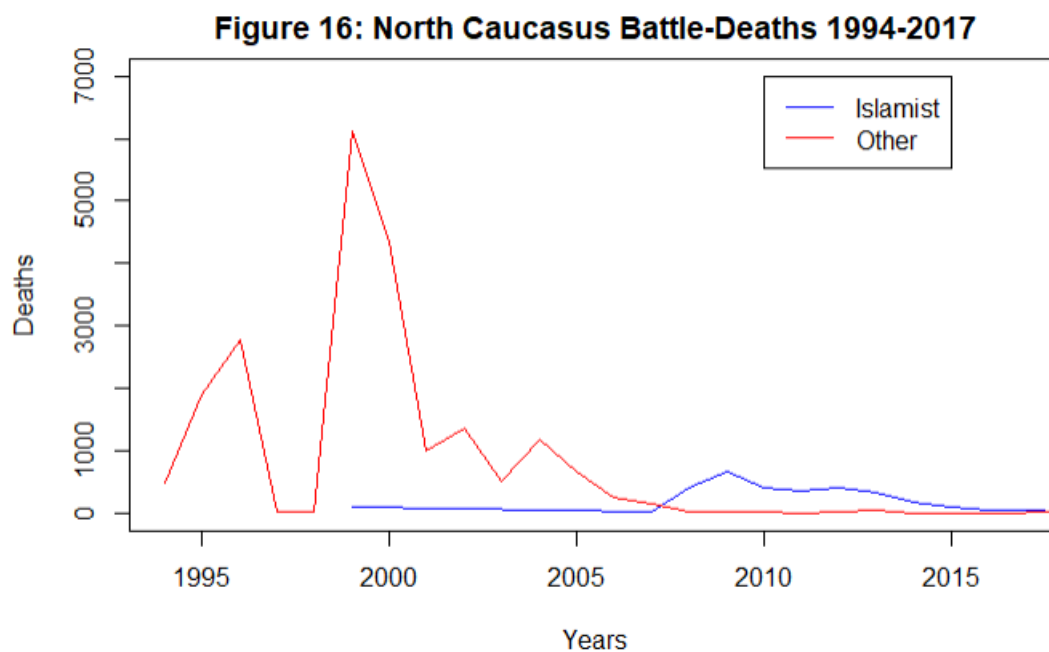


Figure 17: Violent Incidents 1991-2001

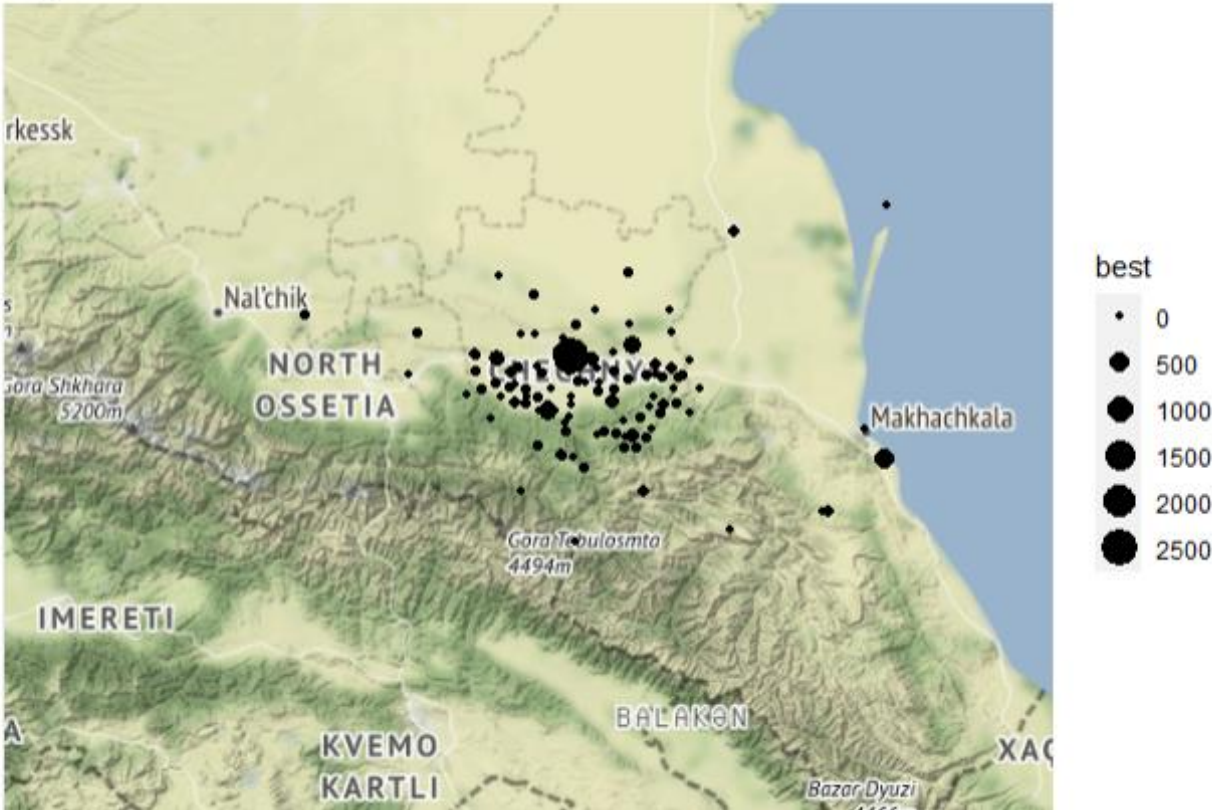
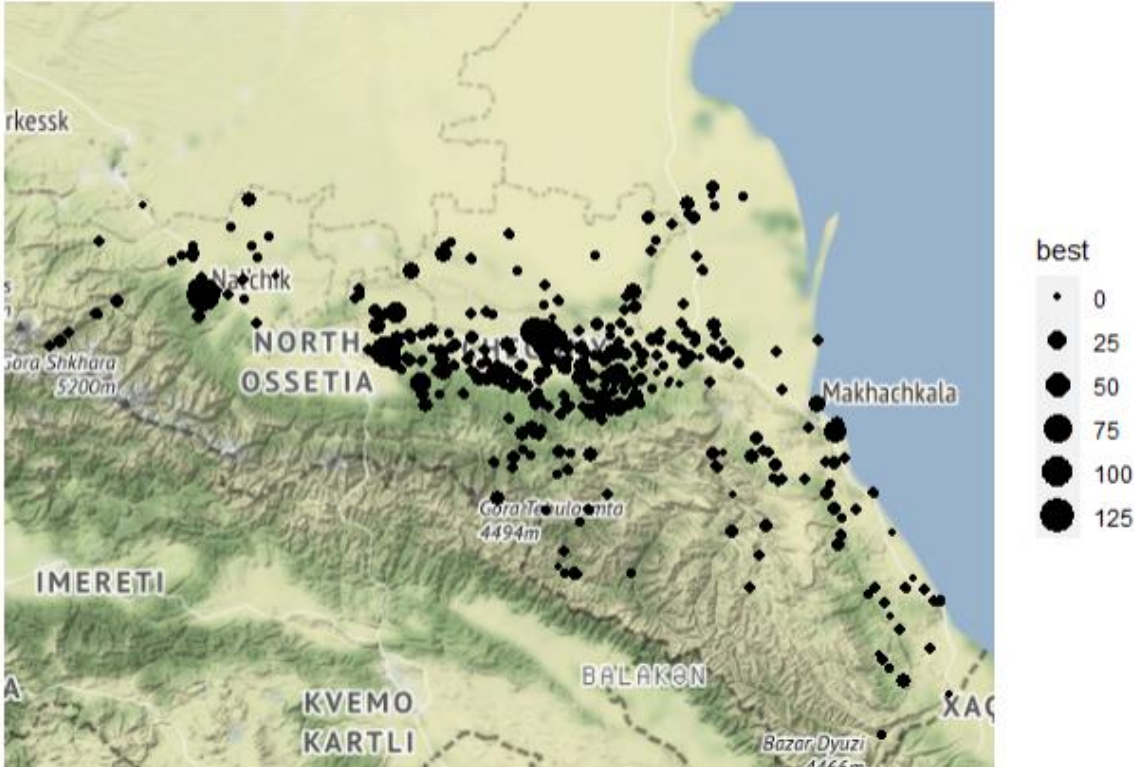


Figure 18: Violent Incidents 2002-2011



A second aspect to this ideological shift was a change in the spatial distribution of violence. As shown in figure 17, violence in the 1990s was heavily concentrated on Chechnya with only intermittent instances of violence beyond. Figure 18 shows that in the 2000s, the violence had diffused across the region, though being less intense than in the 1990s. This data also suffers from the issue of not adequately distinguishing between the Chechen independence movement and Islamist sub-factions. However, most of the violence in the 2000s took the form of terrorist attacks by Islamist actors as the violence shifted from a conventional war to a low-level insurgency.

The trajectories of the North-Caucasus republics was a function of their institutional make-up at the time of the Soviet collapse. In Chechnya, the Soviet policy of denying ethnic Chechens access to public office led to a near-complete replacement of the Soviet-era elite by a coalition of political outsiders, which partly explains why war erupted in Chechnya and not the other republics. This also meant that the Chechen republic's administrative apparatus barely functioned, and the reach of the government was severely diminished already before the outbreak of war. Chechnya therefore began its post-Soviet years as something of an archipelagic system where people became dependent on the favours of rival cliques of politicians, businessmen, and criminals, who often had their own militias.

War and independence only intensified the fractionalisation, and institutional collapse of Chechen society. In response, a number of Islamist parallel societies as a form of social protest against a society in which access to wealth and social advancement was contingent on having the right connections to corrupt and powerful elites. The flow of weapons, people, and smuggled goods also gave these parallel societies access to military hardware which meant the state could not afford to challenge them directly given the continued overhanging threat of a new Russian intervention. The war left Chechnya extremely fractionalized, essentially divided into fiefdoms by rival warlords, many of whom identified with Islamist ideologies.

This gave Islamist-leaning outsiders the capacity to compete with the nationalist-leadership for control over the state, eventually forcing it into a war with Russia. In the end, it fully replaced the nationalist resistance.

In Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia, the old Soviet nomenklatura managed to retain their positions and alliances to cling on to power through the turbulent years of the Boris Yeltsin presidency. They functioned as nightwatchman systems in that power was fractionalized, but institutionally absent as public goods were distributed through personal deal-making and clientelist relationships. These republics would experience Islamist violence in the late 2000s, but in the form of a terrorist campaign rather than outright insurgency. These groups also had their roots in Islamist parallel societies, but these were less independent than in Chechnya. They similarly embodied a form of resistance against the post-Soviet political order in which social advancement hinged on personal ties to corrupt elites. These were initially non-violent, but increasingly turned to violence in response to intensified state-repression and harassment of Muslims who adhered to forms of Islam which were not aligned with official Islam as sanctioned by the state. Interestingly, the Caucasus differs from the other cases in this thesis in that there are a few organizations which turned to Islamism despite not having roots in religious organizations, as seen in table 14,. This might partly be due to the extensiveness of Soviet repression, meaning that religion suddenly became available to a wide range of actors as the system collapsed.

The Caucasus-pathway to Islamist insurgency therefore began with the development of parallel societies which were either beyond the control of the state, as in Chechnya, or initially tolerated at a time of political transition, as was the case in the remaining republics. It became an organisational alternative for individuals who lacked access to the correct clientelist networks to get jobs and other goods. The tearing apart of the social fabric through Soviet repression and subsequently war, meant that the institutional infrastructure to create a

united front against Moscow was simply absent, allowing Islamist actors to actively challenge other oppositional factions.

Table 12 Approximate situation 1991

Archipelago Chechnya	Disorder
Cohesive Governance	Nightwatchman Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Ingushetia

Table 13 Approximate situation 2000

Archipelago	Disorder Chechnya
Cohesive Governance	Nightwatchman Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Ingushetia

Table 14: Militant Groups in the North Caucasus

Group	Religious Origins	Islamist	Area
Caucasus Emirate	Yes (Islamist factions of the Chechen republic)	Yes	Northern Caucasus
Garden of Martyrs Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion (O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011: 597)	Yes	Yes	Northern Caucasus
Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI)	No	No	Chechnya
Islamic State (IS)	Yes	Yes	Northern Caucasus
Sharia Guard	No (Abdul Malik Mezhidov)	Yes	
The Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB)	Yes (al-Khattab)	Yes	Chechnya
The Special Purposes Islamic Regiment (IPON)	No (Criminal Organization)	Yes	Chechnya
The Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus	No	No	Abkhazia
Jama'at (al-Jama'at al ul-Islamiyya)	Yes (Khattab)	Yes	Chechnya
Islamskaya Natsiya (Islamic Nation) (Moore 2015: 400)	Yes (Udugov)	Yes	Chechnya
Liberation Army of Dagestan			Dagestan
The Congress of Chechen and Dagestani People (CPID)	Yes	Yes	Chechnya, Dagestan
The Islamic Battalion	Yes (Sheikh Fathi)	Yes	Chechnya
Islamic Path	Unclear	Yes	Chechnya
Islamic Order	Yes (Udugov)	Yes	Chechnya
Islamic Jamaat (Vilayat Dagestan)	Yes (Jennet)	Yes	Dagestan
Jennet	Yes	Yes	Dagestan
Yarmuk	Yes (KBR Jamaat)	Yes	Kabardino-Balkaria
The Supreme Military Majlis ul-Shura of the United Mujahideen Forces of the Caucasus	Yes (CPID)	Yes	North-Caucasus
The Caucasus Confederation	Yes (Yandarbiev)	Yes	Caucasus
Insurgent Army of Imam Shamil	Yes (The Caucasus Confederation)	Yes	Caucasus

7.3 Chechnya: From Separatist Republic to Emirate

7.3.1 Social Configurations and the Path to War

The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was institutionally unique compared to the neighbouring republics in Soviet North Caucasus. While it was common practice for the first secretary of these republics to be a member of the titular nationality, this position was in Chechnya consistently held by ethnic Russians. It was only in 1989 that a Chechen assumed the position (Tishkov 2004: 35-40). This was emblematic of Moscow's broader policy towards the Chechen-Ingush republic, whereby ethnic Chechens were excluded from the political and economic elite. In a pattern reminiscent of French rule in Algeria, a divide developed between "European" modernized towns, while Muslims were pushed into the countryside. The Chechens constituted 54 % of the republic's population, but only represented 17 % of Grozny's population and ethnic Chechens were also largely confined to the city's outskirts or in villages which often had minimal state-provided employment, housing, or welfare opportunities (Derluguian 2005; Tishkov 2004: 41-45).

Some of the majority-Muslim republics in the region, such as Tatarstan became heavily industrialized and urbanized under Soviet rule. This was not the case in Chechnya despite the discovery of oil and development of an oil-refinery industry because the associated employment opportunities and education opportunities went almost exclusively to ethnic Russians. Chechnya therefore had a large lower-class of ethnic-Chechens which relied on family ties and high-fertility rates for social security (Derluguian 2005: 245). Chechens are also connected to *teips* which are often described as clans, though while others see them as territorially rather than genealogically defined social units (Akayev 2010: 71; Sokirianskaia 2005: 465).

The collective trauma of the mass-deportation of the Chechens to central-Asia in 1944 by Stalin was central to shaping Chechen grievances against Moscow, and a third of the Chechen population in the early 1990s was a survivor of the deportations. The Chechens were allowed to gradually resettle in Chechnya from 1957, but this led to tensions with ethnic Avars, Darghins, and Laks who had been settled in old Chechen homes and farmsteads by Soviet authorities (Sokirianskaya 2007). The Soviet authorities continued to treat the Chechens with suspicion, and sought to resettle Chechen highlanders into the flatlands (Tishkov 2004: 30-36).

Jobs in high-productivity sectors were largely given to ethnic Russians, and only a few hundred of the 50000 workers in the petrochemical industry in the late 1980s were Chechen or Ingush. Most Chechens instead worked in agriculture, many became migrant labourers. Structural unemployment among ethnic Chechens also led to the growth of a large informal economy (Derluguian 2005: 246). Labour migration led to a specific sub-culture of social solidarity along worker teams which later were repurposed as fighting groups during the Chechen war. These lost employment opportunities following the Soviet-collapse, and some utilized their transnational contacts to become involved in smuggling operations (Derluguian 2005: 251).

Religion also played a significant role to Chechen self-conception, despite Moscow's attempts at repressing Islam. Sufi practices were integral to Chechen society, but the Soviet policy of isolating the region from the Middle East meant that religious practices revolved around local customs or *adat*, ceremonial practices tied to shrines to saints, and a belief in miracles, often influenced by pre-Islamic beliefs (Vatchagaev 2014: 222). The Chechens were considered to be irreligious compared to the population of Dagestan, with general ignorance of Islam and the consumption of pork and alcohol being widespread (Russell 2010). Glasnost and Perestroika in the late 1980s loosened religious restrictions, allowing

Muslims to openly practice their faith and to conduct the hajj to Mecca again, leading to a religious revival and revitalization of Chechen identity (Gammer 2005: 835).

In 1989, the first ethnic Chechen, Doku Zavgayev, became head of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. Zavgayev was a Soviet functionary and a committed communist who espoused nationalism to satisfy popular demands for Chechen sovereignty while undermining calls for independence. He permitted public discussion of Chechnya's painful past, including Stalin's deportations, and Chechnya's Supreme Soviet declared sovereignty in November 1990 to counter the oppositional Chechen National Congress (CNC).

The CNC consisted of educated Chechens frustrated both by the sense of collective victimization at the hand of Russia, and the social and economic problems which plagued Chechen society (Bakke 2015; Lansky 2002; Tishkov 2004: 73). The CNC became increasingly radical after the election of General Dzhokhar Dudayev as its leader. Dudayev was widely respected due to being one of the very few Chechens to be allowed to reach a high position within the Soviet military (Tishkov 2004: 59). Yet, he was also a political outsider and openly hostile to the Supreme Soviet of the republic, and he declared the Chechen National Congress to be the only legitimate authority (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Sokirianskaya 2007). Dudayev also played an important role in pushing the CNC from demanding greater sovereignty, to calling for independence from the Russian Federation.

A watershed moment was the attempted putsch against Boris Yeltsin on August 19, 1991. Zavgayev's failure to take a stand against the putsch led to his downfall as the Supreme Soviet dissolved itself and Zavgayev resigned as Moscow proved unwilling to support him (Tishkov 2004: 62). This paved the way for Dudayev to emerge as Chechnya's leader. A consequence of this was that Chechnya was the only part of the former Soviet Union beyond the Baltic states where the Soviet elite was almost completely replaced by political outsiders

(Hughes 2007: 199). Dudayev represented a more visceral form of Chechen nationalism but had barely lived in Chechnya, was not fluent in Chechen, knew little about Chechen history, and knew even less about Islam. The 1992 constitution was a fully secular document with no references to Shariah. Religion did, however, play an increasingly important role to his regime as he relied on religious imagery to distinguish Chechens from Russians, and he built alliances with Sufi Qadirriya communities, particularly that of Ahmad Kadyrov who became the mufti of Chechnya in 1995 (Akaev 2009: 66-69; Russell 2011: 1082; Vatchagaev 2014: 225; Whitmeyer 2015: 29). 3 of 46 political parties at this time were self-declared Islamist, and all of these had been dissolved by 1993 (Hughes 2007: 24). Dudayev did receive support from Beslan Gantemirov's "Islamic Path" party, but Gantemirov was a Mafia boss with low credibility as a committed Muslim (Lieven 1998: 365).

The majority of ethnically defined regions in Russia declared sovereignty or 1990-1991, but most achieved bilateral treaties with the Yeltsin-government (Bakke 2015: 110). While Dudayev was initially cooperative with Moscow, he increasingly defied Moscow's attempts at bringing Chechnya into its ranks (Pokalova 2015: 27). This was partly due to Dudayev's fragile position in Chechnya, but Yeltsin's declaration of state of emergency in Chechnya in November 1991 eliminated the prospect for Chechen critics of Dudayev to challenge him (Yemelianova 2010: 68).

He also had significant support from the sub-proletariat, especially the many migrant workers who were left idle and frustrated due to the 1989 economic collapse. The social networks which developed to facilitate this labour migration, were increasingly repurposed for criminal activity, political demonstrations, and eventually for insurgency. Added to this was the fact that conscription laws meant that most Chechens were familiar with handling weapons, and wide availability of weapons as the federal military forces left its weapons with the locals upon its withdrawal early in 1992 and private militias became manifold (Bakke

2015: 85; Derluguian 2005: 256; Marshall 2010: 298-301; Tishkov 2004: 73). Dudayev relied on his own irregular army to crack down on the Chechen opposition, dissolving parliament in April 1993, killing dissidents, and outlawing newspapers and political parties. He also dissolved the constitutional court when it ruled his decrees to be unconstitutional, effectively making Dudayev a dictator (Hughes 2007: 73). His ascent to power also devastated the economy by triggering a mass exodus of ethnic Russians, Tatars, and Ingush, who constituted 90 % of the working professionals in the petrochemical industry (Sokirianskaya 2007: 115). This was exacerbated by an economic blockade imposed by Yeltsin on Chechnya which by 1992-1993 meant that Chechen state institutions were crumbling as the state could not pay salaries, while money from the oil industry disappeared into private pockets (Hughes 2007: 66).

Explanations for the eventual outbreak of war tend to emphasize the personalities of Yeltsin and Dudayev through their mutual dislike, fragile egos, and their tenuous political position which made them wary of showing weakness (Politkovskaia 2003: 19). Attempts at diplomatic resolution between 1992-1994 failed, and Yeltsin sanctioned the use of military force on 30. November 1994 (Gilligan 2009). The Russian army was in control of Grozny by March 1995, but never inflicted a decisive blow to the Chechen resistance whose fighters retreated into the mountains to wage a guerrilla campaign (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 20). The Chechen military was well-supplied through abandoned Soviet depots, but lacked trained officers, and the Chechen armed forces consisted of more than 18 distinct units led by warlords who often could pay their troops better than the state could (Hughes 2007: 82).

Outside help came in the form of veterans of the Afghan jihad. Most infamous was Amir Khattab whose militia ambushed a Russian regiment near the village of Yarysh Mardy in 1996, video-taping the entire attack. The Saudi-born Khattab was one of the many Arab-Afghan mujahidin who sought to continue waging jihad after the Afghan war. He initially

gained a small following of Chechens in Tajikistan who accompanied him to Afghanistan in 1994 (Smith 2014). Their impact in the war was more ideological and symbolic than militarily decisive, but certain elements within the Chechen armed forces came under the influence of Khattab and his advisor Abu Umar al-Sayyaf (Williams 2007: 161).

While Dudayev ruled out creating an Islamic republic, he threatened that non-recognition of Chechnya would lead to Islamic fundamentalism in Chechnya (Lieven 1998: 363). Indeed, the war paved the way for figures such as Shamil Basayev who put pressure on Russia through the hostage taking at the Budennovsk hospital in 1996, forcing a ceasefire which saved the Chechen resistance from collapse. This incident, along with the killing of Dudayev in an air strike in April 1996 gave Yeltsin the political room to negotiate. Russian troops withdrew from Chechnya in August 1996, but Chechnya lay devastated and with a barely functioning state which allowed multiple actors to compete for control over the fledgling republic (Gammer 2005).

7.2.2 Intermission: The Islamist Challenge

The Chechen victory was a pyrrhic one. Its social fabric was torn apart and its cities and economic infrastructure lay devastated, and Chechnya was politically isolated (Hughes 2007: 96). Furthermore, the state lacked a monopoly of violence as commanders refused to disband their units which continued to operate as paramilitary units which controlled their own fiefs. The state was in no position to disarm these warlord-militias, and external support for capacity building was not forthcoming because the end of the Cold War meant there was little international recognition for independent Chechnya (Gilligan 2009: 24). State weakness allowed for the emergence of Islamist-leaning figures such as Shamil Basayev, Movladi Udugov, and Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, to pursue their own agendas to continuously challenge the nationalist leadership for control over the state (Moore and Tumelty 2009: 74).

Islamisation was endogenous to the national liberation struggle and war in Chechnya (Hughes 2007: 96). The trauma and devastation of the war, the fragmented nature of Chechen society, state breakdown, warlordism, and widespread crime, made Islam a last-resort tool for social cohesion among large segments of the Chechen population, especially outside of Grozny. There was also a dearth of ideological alternatives. Communism was not an option given its association with the old regime, the absence of support from either European countries or the U.S. meant that Western-style liberalism was not a realistic, nor did it have an associated social base. While Chechen nationalism had been a unifier during the war, it became something of a pipe dream as it more so reflected the values of a small intellectual urban elite, rather than a political reality.

Glasnost and Perestroika paved the way for Islam as part of the search for new identities, and for some, political systems (Sagramoso 2007: 703). Missionaries from the Middle East began travelling to the region during the political opening of the 1980s, along with the first generation of Chechen graduates from Islamic universities abroad. Hundreds of mosques, shrines, and religious seminaries were set up by elders and shaykhs who were supported by the new rich elite of Chechnya (E. Souleimanov 2005). Socially radical and literalist forms of Islam also became more widespread. The followers of this trend became known variously as “New Muslims” or as “Wahhabis” due to their hostility towards “Old Muslims” and the Sufi traditions of Chechen society, and some of these new Muslims established jamaats in the region in the 1980s (Akaev 2009: 65). Islamic messianism also became intertwined with Chechen patriotism as part of the nation-building process (Tishkov 2004: 203).

Sharia courts first appeared during the war in 1995 on the initiative of Yandarbiev to maintain social order and military discipline, but Yandarbiev sought to expand their jurisdiction when he became interim president after Dudayev’s death in April 1996 (Lieven

1998: 365). The Supreme Sharia Court of Ichkeria was established the same year, along with several district-level courts, though the actual implementation of Islamic law seems to have been superficial at this point (Hughes 2007: 99; Klimentov and Jasutis 2020: 242).

Islam became a source of national cohesion in this new country which did not have a cohesive national identity. In the assessment of Ilyaz Akhmadov who became Chechnya's foreign minister in 1999:

*One of the crucial differences between us and the Balts was their greater ideological cohesion and organized infrastructure in their underground nationality struggle. They had developed an infrastructure, parties, underground publications, and political debates, which involved broad segments of the population... We still lack institutions that could foster a debate about national ideology, which eventually could rise to consistent ideas among broad segments of the population about how we want to organize our polity...*²⁰

The de-modernization of Chechen society preceded the war through the withdrawal of the Soviet developmental state, and the collapse of the industrialized economy it created (Georgi M. Derluguian 2005). While the Baltic states benefited from market liberalism, it had more of a deleterious effect on Chechnya which lay politically isolated in the Caucasus, far from other market economies (Tishkov 2004). De-urbanization and de-industrialization, along with the brain drain of Chechnya's labour force, and the political empowerment of rural Chechens, changed the composition of Chechen society to where it lacked the social coherence which was necessary for a common ideological vision for post-Soviet Chechnya (Derluguian 2005: 257).

²⁰ (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 237)

Nation-building instead came to revolve around religion. However, traditional Sufism was not a viable option for many young believers who saw the shaykhs as corrupt due to their ties to competing political and clientelist factions. The distrust of the shaykh also came from their dubious religious credentials where a new generation of Chechens who were allowed to travel to the Middle East returned after having received better religious education (E. A. Souleimanov 2015: 95).

Studies of Chechen Islamism has tended to portray this shift among Chechen political figures as the instrumentalization of Islam to attract foreign support (Bakke 2014; Hughes 2007; Wilhelmsen 2005). However, the viability of this was dependent on the growth of self-governed Islamic communities called jamaats. The first jamaats began appearing in Dagestan in the 1970s, but remained comparatively marginal in Chechnya until the late 1980s (Akayev 2010). The jamaats allowed Wahhabi converts to challenge established social conventions by giving them a place of refuge and security from the prospect of being ostracized upon criticizing Sufi institutions. The jamaats, therefore became platforms for social and political protest against the engendered social hierarchies (Souleimanov 2015: 98). The jamaats were open to all males regardless of their background and provided stable income and mutual protection from the chaos of the post-Soviet years.

Wahhabi activism in the Northern Caucasus was built on branches of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), formed in 1990 in Astrakhan led by Islam Khalimov and Akhmed Mataev (Akaev 2015: 58). This activism centred on advocating the introduction of Shariah by setting up religious schools, literature, and preaching, and rallies criticizing secular society (Akayev 2010: 78). Nevertheless, these Wahhabis were marginal to Chechen society before the war, not least due to the mutual hostility with Sufi shaykhs (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013). In addition to the IRP, there was also the Islamic Ar Risalah organization whose members included Isa Umarov, Isa Khalimov, and Movladi Udugov. I Ar Risalah established

an Islamic batallion under Islam Khalimov (Zakaev 2018: 361). Movladi Udugov founded the Islamic Nation in August 1997, seeking to emulate the state-systems of Sudan under Hassan al-Turabi, and Afghanistan under Taliban (Sagramoso 2012a). Islamist organizations such as the Saudi *Igatha and al-Haramein* and Kuwaiti *Jamaat al-Turath al-Islamii* became important providers of funding (Pokalova 2015: 89). Some also became intertwined with criminal networks, where figures such as Arbi Barayev and the Akhmadov Brothers were considered to be Wahhabis, but were heavily involved in the hostage trade.

Jamaats also became associated with foreign fighters, beginning in 1995 with a unit formed by Sheikh Abu-Salman (Fathi), an ethnic Chechen from Jordan. He established the Caucasian Institute of Islamic Da'wa in Serzen-Yurt, which turned into an ideological and military training camp. The jamaats which subsequently appeared would often have better finances and discipline than the regular army (Russell 2010: 179). Two of these were the Jamaat Islami (Islamic Assembly) created in 1995, and the Caucasian centre of the Islamic Mission which was established near Serzhan Yurt in 1998.

Sheikh Fathi never challenged either Chechen religious customs, nor the Chechen state, he also seemed to have held most of the foreign fighters and local Wahhabis in check by avoiding hostilities with other Chechen factions (Zakaev 2018: 361). However, Sheikh Fathi died in 1997, and his successor Abdurakhman, a Syrian, turned the jamaat into an armed opposition group against the government of President Aslan Maskhadov.

Intercommunal tensions between Wahabists and Sufis subsequently sometimes erupted into violence. Unlike in Bosnia where foreign fighters were expelled after the conflict ended in 1995, the independent Chechen state was in no position to do the same. This is because they were protected by warlords such as Basayev (Williams 2007: 161; Wilhelmsen 2005: 42).

For Basayev, in particular, the encounter with Islamist foreign fighters such as Ibn Khattab, seems to have spurred his personal turn to Islamist ideology (Cornell 2003; Garner

2013; Souleimanov 2005; Moore 2012; Moore and Tumelty 2018). This shift was a gradual process which seems to have begun while he led the Abkhaz Battalion in Abkhazia in 1992-1993 against the Georgian state. While he had an interest in radical Islam already before the 1995 war, his public image was more of a revolutionary than a strict Islamist. He did, however, admit to having spent several months in Khost in Afghanistan in 1994 and was likely inspired by jihadist trends there (Bakke 2013: 46; Hughes 2007: 102). Basayev did, nevertheless, attempt to recast his image as a cosmopolitan and secular statesman after the war ended, promising to travel to Budionnovsk in Russia where he had led a hostage-taking operation against a hospital., promising to seek repentance and reconciliation and welcoming ethnic Russians to remain in Chechnya (Derluguian 1999: 4).

Khattab, who may have commanded between 150 and 300 Afghan Arabs of his International Islamic Brigade (IIB), established the Kavkaz centre in 1996 near Sherzen-Yurt (Giuliano 2005; Shah 2004; Evangelista 2004). Khattab set up training camps in 1995, and established Kavkaz training centre in 1996 which included camps for military and religious training near Sherzen-Yurt village. Khattab and Basayev organized the Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade in 1998 (Wilhelmsen 2004: 34). Locals who went to the camps for training also received salaries. Several thousand Chechens, up to 3000 Dagestanis of mostly Avar-descent, and hundreds others may have received training at Kavkaz (Sagramoso 2007; Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Aliyev 2020; Klimentov and Jasutis 2020).

Presidential elections in January 1997 were widely seen as a vote over the role of Islamism in for the new Chechen state. Some of the most prominent candidates were Aslan Maskhadov, Shamil Basayev, Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, and Movladi Udugov (Bram and Gammer 2013). While each candidate competed in terms of portraying themselves as most authentically Islamic, Maskhadov was still perceived to be an ideological successor to

Dudayev in terms of seeking the continuation of a secular state. He was also seen as a moderate who was willing to compromise with Moscow (Bakke 2013: 43).

Maskhadov did in fact win an extremely convincing victory in the election which was widely perceived to be fair. Yet, he found himself in charge of a state which was in no position to challenge the many militias which controlled Chechen territory, including the followers of Basayev and Yandarabiev (Campana 2006; Souleimanov 2005). Chechnya was essentially divided into fiefdoms controlled by warlords who governed according to their own whims with some introducing Sharia courts and hosting foreign jihadis, even after the war had ended (Wilhelmsen 2005: 46). Arbi Baraev in particular headed Shariah courts with foreigners employed in the courts, and Yandarabiev helped facilitate this development. Around 30 Sharia courts were established in Chechnya. A Wahhabi centre was established in Grozny in 1997, and Bagautdin Magomedov who fled from Dagestan, established an Islamist centre in the town of Gudermes, which played a part in spreading Islamism to a “sharia enclave” in the Kadar zone in Dagestan (Akayev 2010: 177; Yemelianova 2010: 71).

For Shamil Basayev, the defeat in the election was personally unacceptable, and he became increasingly involved with the Wahhabis after this point, establishing contacts with Islamist leaders in Dagestan and encouraging these to migrate to Chechnya (Sokirianskaya 2007: 121; Souleimanov 2005; 2011). Maskhadov was forced to accommodate these Islamist tendencies as he realised the Chechen state was not in a position to survive internal divisions, especially due to the continued threat of another Russian invasion. Basayev was well aware of this and repeatedly challenged Maskhadov’s Islamic legitimacy, seeking to portray himself as an Islamic liberator for the Caucasus. In an effort to restore balance. Maskhadov appointed several of the Islamists, including Basayev, to ministerial positions, to reduce tensions (Zakaev 2018: 267). Yet, Basayev was unwilling to live in Maskhadov’s shadow.

Tensions had been on the rise for years as the Wahhabis attacked symbols of traditional Islam, including saint-shrines and clergymen, leading to violent confrontation already in 1995 (Souleimanov 2005: 52). By 1998, the ideological battle for Chechnya's future was all-pervasive, and the media was dominated by Grand Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov would preach against Wahhabists on state TV; while Wahhabi preachers raved on Udugov's Kavkaz TV against traditional Islam. The spark which lit the powder keg was an incident in which Kadyrov loyalists were beaten up by Wahhabis for drinking alcohol, leading to a shootout in which both sides called their allies. In a clear example of the state itself being divided, Islam Khalimov, who was minister of Sharia state security sent his supporters to aid the Wahhabi in Gudermes, while Sulim Yamadaev sent the national guard, so troops under different state-institutions were in conflict with each other (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 132; Zakaev 2018: 351).

The Wahhabis were defeated and only avoided outright destruction through Basayev's intervention. They were instead given free passage to Urus-Martan, while foreign jihadis were deported. Urus Martan became the main ideological and military training centre, continuing to attract believers and young men tempted by the monthly allowance given to those willing to receive ideological training (Yemelianova 2010: 72). Maskhadov subsequently forced a number of government officials associated with the Wahhabis to resign.

Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov had emerged as the central figure willing to confront the Wahhabis, and united with Maskhadov to provide a united front in the phony war which developed after the Gudermes-clash. Kadyrov also organised a congress in 1998 of traditional Muslim leaders in the North Caucasus to appeal for the region's leaders to ban Wahhabism. Though Maskhadov declared Wahhabism to be an extremist ideology, and the forced disarmament of jamaats became a policy, the Wahhabi figures continued to be powerful, and

there was an assassination attempt on Maskhadov in July 1998 and the establishment of the “Supreme Shariah Court” which united the warlords in opposition to the government (Hahn 2008; Wilhelmsen 2005: 50; 2016; Ware 2009; G. Yemelianova 2003).

Maskhadov banned Wahhabism and disbanded most Sharia courts, but fatally allowed important Islamist figures such as Basayev to remain in their government positions. Basayev along with other figures such as Ibn Khatab convened the Congress of Peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan in April 1998 (Gilligan 2009; Giuliano 2005: 212). Basayev was elected as its military emir, and the organization announced its goal of establishing an Islamic state covering all of the North Caucasus (Hahn 2014; Youngman 2019). This organization was not disbanded by Maskhadov, and Basayev remained one of Maskhadov’s most powerful opponents as he refused to live in Maskhadov’s shadow as part of the government. While during the war there had been the Islamic Battalion under Islamic Khalimov, The Congress of Nations of Ichkeria and Dagestan was a union of many jamaats which had foreign financial support, high-profile commanders such as Basayev, and which formed an ideological opposition bloc to Maskhadov’s secularism (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 97). Basayev had failed as a presidential candidate and as Prime minister, and the Congress opened an opportunity for him to reinvent his image as a revolutionary, posing an active challenge to Mashkadov (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 143).

A wave of kidnappings and murders developed around 1998, ostensibly with the support of Abdurakhman’s jamaat as he issued a written indulgence for these murders after his forces’ altercation with Maskhadov’s forces in Gudermes. Udugov became Maskhadov’s First Deputy Prime Minister, and founded the Islamic nation with the goal of creating an Imamate in the North Caucasus (Hughes 2007: 103). This drew explicitly from Imam Shamil’s concept. However, this was overshadowed by Basayev’s 26. April 1998 “Congress of the Peoples of Daghestan and Ichkeriya” (Gammer 2005b: 838). On February 3. 1999,

Aslan Maskhadov announced the introduction of Sharia government to counter attempts at discrediting the regime by figures such as Basayev (Souleimanov 2005). According to Zakaev, Maskhadov made this decision because he knew that a coup-attempt by the Wahhabis based in Urus-Martan was imminent, therefore seeking to pre-empt their plot. This included the dissolution of parliament, the establishment of an Islamic council, the introduction of head scarves, and public beatings (Gilligan 2009). Maskhadov's attempts at outbidding the Islamists backfired as it led Mufti Kadyrov realise that his only way of surviving the onslaught of the Wahhabis was to throw his lot in with the Russians (Russell 2010: 181). Maskhadov's inability to restrain the Salafis and preventing their influence on Chechen politics led large branches of the Qadiriyya to switch its support to Moscow, and Kadyrov would head a pro-Moscow government from 1999 to his assassination in 2003 (Bram and Gammer 2013: 307).

Dudayev predicted that Chechnya would prosper as a secular Muslim nation if afforded peaceful independence, but that Islam would be instrumentalized for war if not (Hughes 2007: 65). Chechen independence was therefore defined by the development of multiple and parallel economic and political systems due to the legal vacuum from the government's lack of a monopoly of violence (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016: 373). The inability of Maskhadov's regime in disarming Chechen warlords meant that these actors could continue challenging his government (Derluguian 1999: 5). The state simply lacked the resources needed to strike stable social bargains, leaving Chechnya's destiny at the mercy of warlords such as Basayev, rather than the government. Maskhadov was forced to navigate between the Salafis and Sufi interests. After the clash in Gudermes, there was no way back as Kadyrov and the Islamists were on collision course (Gammer 2005b: 841).

Yandarbiev argued that appealing to Islamic fundamentalism was no different than seeking the help of Western investors, therefore portraying it as a matter of expediency

(Bakke 2013: 52; Tishkov 2004: 203). The realisation that support would not come from Western states or international organizations was a major motivator for this shift towards Islamism. Support was more forthcoming from Afghanistan and the Middle East, both in terms of foreign fighters, but also access to funds and education. Many younger Chechens turned to a puritanical interpretation of Islam, cracking down on traditional rituals and alcohol, severely challenging the pervasive secularism of urban Chechens (Georgi M. Derlugian 1999; Giuliano 2005; Marsh 2016). Eventually, Chechen elites were forced to pick sides, and the realisation that the Wahhabis were becoming too powerful led Mufti Kadyrov to form an alliance with Moscow.

7.3.3 The Second Chechen War and the Caucasus Emirate

The trigger for the Second Chechen War was the intrusion of militants under Shamil Basayev and Ibn Khattab into Dagestan in 1999, ostensibly to create a confederation for the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. Several bombings in Russian cities in September also pushed Russian public opinion in favour of war (Gilligan 2009: 31). These events dragged Maskhadov into a war initiated by the Islamists, destroying any prospect for a negotiated settlement between Maskhadov and Moscow (Lanskoy and Akhmadov 2010: 164). The shift in tactics, such as the first suicide attacks in 2000, the presence of foreigners in the ranks of Basayev, and the jihadist rhetoric and propaganda such as snuff films of ambushes against Russian troops also alienated world audiences who previously had been sympathetic to the Chechen cause (Williams 2007). The most infamous of these were the hostage takings and massacres at 'Dubrovka' Theatre in Moscow in October 2000 and of the middle School in Beslan in September 2004 (Sokirianskaya 2007: 125).

These incidents, ordered by Basayev, undermined the Chechen nationalist leadership by making the Islamists the most visible actors in the Chechen resistance, and allowed

Russian president Vladimir Putin to portray the war as part of the global “War on Terror” (Russell 2011; Wilhelmsen 2016)

Russian tactics also became more sophisticated through a policy of “Chechenization” whereby Chechen sub-factions were co-opted to split the Chechen resistance and to retain the support of the populace by reducing the use of indiscriminate violence. This included announcing an amnesty-program for surrendering Chechen fighters . Pro-Russian Chechen paramilitary units had formed by late 1999, notably the Vostok and Zapad Battalions (Russell 2010: 513; Hughes 2007: 118; Souleimanov and Aliyev 2015: 694). The wider use of Chechen militias only became possible through the defection of Akhmed Kadyrov who had defected due to his fears over the Wahhabis. Kadyrov’s defection was a severe blow to the Chechen cause, not just due to the militia he commanded, but also because he had been a prominent associate of Dudayev and a central figure in the Chechen war having declared jihad against Russia. Moscow decided that the new Chechen political system would be built around Kadyrov, and he was given a free hand in the republic (Gilligan 2009: 65; Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016: 373; Russell 2008).

The Chechen resistance, meanwhile, was severely hampered by the fragmented distribution of power as a parallel command had developed around Basayev and other Islamists. Maskhadov had no power to control the actions of Basayev who launched operations on his own, including suicide attacks (Moore and Tumelty 2009: 426). Maskhadov was continuously undercut and outbid by the Islamist warlords, especially Basayev, who frequently squabbled with his government, rather than presenting a unified front against Russia. Maskhadov was eventually forced to bow to the pressure and implemented Sharia. He also granted more power to Basayev and Khattab by having the Majlis al-Shura coordinate the fight against the Russians (Whitmeyer 2015: 3). Maskhadov’s death in 2005 decisively shifted the internal balance of power towards the Islamists. The average age of Chechen

combatants was also younger than in the previous war, with many having been born during, or immediately before the first war and were motivated by feelings of revenge and the desire for freedom from Moscow which increasingly became intertwined with the concept of jihad (Sokirianskaya 2007: 131).

Maskhadov's successors solidified the grip of the Wahhabis on the government, especially as Doku Umarov became president. While the 2006 death of Basayev led to a decline in jihadist attacks, Umarov situated the insurgency in North Caucasus within a global Islamic struggle (Hahn 2008: 14; Pokalova 2015; 2017). Umarov's rhetorical approach was also influenced by the drying up of financial support and foreign fighters which went to other theatres such as the Iraq war.

This culminated in Umarov's proclamation of the Caucasus Emirate on 7. October 2007. This effectively marked the end of the Chechen republic, replacing it with an Islamist organization with regional rather than nationalist goals. The Caucasus Emirate is less a state, than a collection of underground organisations or cells which were equal rather than hierarchically organized, which rely on terrorist methods to advance their goals. The shift from a republic to an Emirate also marked the successful outbidding of the nationalist by Salafist sub-factions, and as it was disentangled from its Chechen origins, it became increasingly available to figures throughout the region who sought to challenge elites (Campana and Ratelle 2014: 126; Hughes and Sasse 2016).

The Russian-controlled Chechen state also Islamized as Akhmet Kadyrov was followed by his son Ramzan after his assassination in 2003 (Marshall 2010: 314). Kadyrov undercut the appeal of Islamism by implementing restrictions on alcohol and encouraging a dress code for women (Russell 2011b: 515; Whitmeyer 2015: 27). He also established a morality police, Kadyrov established a morality police to maintain Islamic law as he sees it. He also pushed for the informal Islamization for society, distributing headscarves to

university professors, at one point offering female Chechen students at a conference money for covering their hair (Bram and Gammer 2013: 308; Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Muedini 2015: 142). He did this by relying on the the Kadyrovtsy which operated as his paramilitary group. was formed as a bodyguard unit and expanded into a paramilitary group operating with the FSB's direction (Gilligan 2016; Hughes 2007: 124). After 2001-2002, large scale warfare shifted to "zachistki" or mop-up operations where Russian forces would block entire villages and neighbourhoods and clear out houses door to door with suspects being subjected to torture while some ended up dead. Chechenisation has ignited feuds between families who have members in the Kadyrovsky or the opposition (Sokirianskaya 2007).

The Chechen pathway to Islamist insurgency was a product of the collapse of a state order, and fractionalization of power among multiple actors who were vying for control over the post-Soviet state. In a contest where warlord-networks competed for control over limited resources, the jamaats emerged as another type of actor which figures such as Shamil Basayev could rely on to compete for control over the Chechen independence movement.

7.4 Dagestan

7.4.1 A Consociational System?

Dagestan's fortunes are intertwined with those of Chechnya and its populace shares the historical memory of resistance against Russia, not least through the example of Imam Shamil in the 19th century. Dagestan also faced significant turmoil in the early 1990s as each of the republic's 14 titular nationalities sought to carve out their position in the post-communist order. This turmoil did not lead to confrontation with Moscow, and Dagestan was spared from the level of violence seen in Chechnya, though there were multiple incidents of

significant intercommunal violence. It was only in the early 2000s that there was a significant increase in separatist and Islamist violence, and this has taken the form of terrorist attacks, rather than conventional warfare or outright insurgency.

Dagestan is extremely heterogeneous compared to Chechnya. The largest ethnic group, the Avars, constitute less than 30 % of the republic's population, followed by Dargins (17 %), Kumyks (14.9 %), Lezgins (13.3 %) and Laks (5.6 %) (Souleimanov 2018: 438). Nevertheless, studies among Dagestanis indicate that a majority identify themselves first as Dagestani, and secondly according to their ethnicity. Two exceptions to this are the ethnic Russians and Chechens who live in the republic. One explanation for this is that traditional institutions cut across clan and ethnic ties (Ware and Kisriev 2001; 2001; Ware et al. 2003: 17).

One such institution is the jamaat which in the Dagestani context refers to local traditional political communities, usually a village or a group of villages with, often consisting of several extended families or tribal structures, and even ethnic ties. Jamaats are traditionally led by elder councils drawn from each of the main families, and governed by traditional law or *adat*. There's great emphasis on wide political representation in these councils, and the inclusion of different segmented kinship structures governed by cooperative elites is why the jamaats have been described as proto-consociational societies. These also functioned as a forum for dispute resolution in lieu of the state (Derluguian 1999: 14; Ware and Kisriev 2001).

Uniquely to Dagestan, the disintegration of the Soviet system led to the reinforcement of the jamaats because Dagestani elites were forced to look to these to strengthen vertical ties and build political organizations (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Ware and Kisriev 2014: 147). The 1994 constitution carried on some of the consociational traditions of the jamaats by facilitating elite co-operation as no ethnic group was large enough to govern by

itself. The dynamism of Dagestani politics is a source of instability, but also entails that equilibriums of power develop between the ethno-parties and the elites which dominate Dagestani politics (Ware and Kisriev 2001: 121).

Soviet social engineering was particularly responsible for creating multiple grievances between these groups and political liberalisation allowed these grievances to be translated into political action (Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin 2012). One conflict line was between lowlanders of mostly Turkic-speaking peoples, and Caucasian mountain-dwellers. Massive resettlement and urbanisation in the 1950s-1970s intensified these tensions as several people moved from the mountains into the lowlands. Under the Soviet system, ethnic groups such as the Avars and Dargins were treated more favourably compared to the Kumyks, Nogays, Lezgis, and Laks. Another issue was the legacy of the deportation of Chechen Akkins in 1944, and subsequent rehabilitation in 1957 under Nikita Kruschev, leading to disputes over what constituted “historical” lands for different ethnic groups. Perestroika in 1987-1988 lifted the lid on underlying inter-ethnic tensions which had been kept under control through Soviet censorship (Ware and Kisriev 2014: 383).

One organization was the *Tenglik* organised by Kumyks to demand cessation of migration of other ethnic groups, especially Avars into the lowlands (Kemper 2002: 99). *Tenglik* also demanded territorial autonomy for each nationality according to historical territory rather than the current distribution of ethnic groups. This was opposed by Avar organizations and became intertwined with a dispute over the Chechen-dominated Aki district which had been disconnected from Chechnya during the Soviet era and settled by ethnic Laks. The return of these lands and the resettlement of the Laks threatened the local dominance of the Kumyks, however, and was also opposed by the Avar national movement (Gammer 2014: 40).

The three highest political positions in the republic were traditionally held by a member of the three largest ethnic groups, the Avars, Dargins, and Kumyks. This balance was unsettled as Magomedali Magomedov, a Dargin, became the most powerful post-Soviet politician in the republic (Ware and Kisriev 2014: 54). In return, Avars came to dominate the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Dagestan (DUMD) from February 1992. Magomedov essentially entrenched his own grip on power through such complex processes of ethnic balancing, which strengthened the consociational tradition (Ware and Kisriev 2014: 58). This system of bargaining between the three largest ethnic groups was reinforced because the elites of the thirty smaller ethnic groups would wander between alliances with the Avar, Dargin, Kumyk, and Lezgin elites (Ware and Kisriev 2014: 63).

While this inter-ethnic competition could have led to a catastrophic conflict paralleling that of Yugoslavia, the highly complex ethnic composition of the republic may in fact have prevented a large crisis. In 1992 the people of Dagestan voted against private land ownership and concentrating power in a single president which might have unsettled existing agreements among elites over the distribution of resources. Economic rent was divided among the elites within the ethnic groups. The Dargin elite controlled customs operations, Avar elites were in charge of the oil company and secret service forces, and Laks were influential in the caviar industry. Another source of economic rent was the subsidies from Moscow which maintained the clientelist networks of these elites within their ethnic groups. This competition among Dagestan's ethnic communities to secure their economic and political position was the dominant dynamic of the early 1990s and may have prevented the growth of separatism due to the fear that greater autonomy would leave the republic dominated by the Avars and the Dargin (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016: 374; Murray 1994).

Elite-continuity prevented the drift to violence as was seen in Chechnya, but stability did not mean prosperity or political freedom for the populace. Dagestan's political scene was dominated by a small number of families, involving 6000-7000 individuals, who utilised patronage networks to enrich themselves, while maintaining power through clientelist relationships with retainers throughout society. These families were completely in control of state-rents, and were above being held accountable by regular citizens (Derluigian 1999: 15). These elites also controlled their own armed retinues, and assassinations in the form of car bombings were quite common in the 1990s.

The absence of a dominant ethnic group in Dagestan, in contrast to Chechnya, along with the institutionalization of ethnic representation through traditional institutions and the 1994, constitution, prevented Dagestan from spiralling into instability as did Chechnya. Rather than downsizing the state, the number of state officials in Dagestan doubled in the 1990s as rival elites handed out positions to their clients (Holland and O'Loughlin 2010; R. Ware and Kisriev 2014: 44). Democratization entrenched these elites.

7.4.2 The "New" Muslims

Dagestan is often considered to be the most religious of the North Caucasus republics, having housed important centres of Muslim scholarship since the 11th Century. It also has more than two thousand mosques, and Sufi clerics exercise significant influence over social and political life, including having influence over the censorship of books and other media. Though the Soviet state sought to erase the influence of Islam on Dagestani society, it ultimately proved unsuccessful as religious traditions and scholarship were carried on by clandestine Sufi brotherhoods called *tariqats* (Bram and Gammer 2013: 151; Yarlykapov 2010: 302). These tariqats aligned with state elites to Islamize Dagestani society from above

as power was concentrated in state-approved religious boards run by a few shaykhs (Matsuzato and Ibragimov 2005; Giuliano 2005; Makarov and Mukhametshin 2002).

The main Soviet institution for controlling Islam in the region was a Spiritual Directorate for North Caucasus which split into seven spiritual boards for each republic in the region in 1989. The spiritual board of Dagestan was consolidated under Avar-control by the mid-1990s as part of the deal-making between elites. With this access to state power, the Sufi tariqas stopped demanding an Islamic state, instead promoting cultural Islamization within the existing political order (Giuliano 2005: 204; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011: 259). This symbiotic relationship between Sufi tariqats and the state, along with the ethnic clientelism of these institutions, served to de-legitimize Sufi institutions in the eyes of some, notably the Salafists.

Salafi-inspired groups may have been present in Dagestan already in the early 1980s, and there was a comparatively effective infrastructure for Islamist groups to disseminate their beliefs in Dagestan upon the Soviet collapse in 1991 (Comins-Richmond 2004: 68). At one point a greater proportion of urban youth in Dagestan identified with Salafism rather than Sufism according to one survey (Souleimanov 2018: 440). Islamic jamaats developed as alternative societies whereby youth without political connections could gain protection against criminals and corrupt police (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 63).

The most important promoter of Salafism in Dagestan was the Islamic Revival Party (IPR) which was formed in Tajikistan, with Akhmed-Kadji Akhtaev, an ethnic Dagestani residing in Tajikistan becoming the organization's chair. Other Islamist organizations which emerged during this time include the Islamic Democratic Party of Dagestan (IDP), the Union of Russia's Muslims (SMR), and the Community of Muslims. The All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) was founded in 1990 and included Bagautdin Kebedov (Fagan 2014: 94; Wilhelmsen 2005: 39). Akhtaev represented the moderate strain of Salafism who rejected

jihad against Russia and sought to cooperate with political leaders and the state spiritual board to Islamize Dagestani society through peaceful means (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 95). The majority of Salafis jamaats supported Akhtaev's non-violent agenda in the early to mid-1990s, an agenda which bore resemblance to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's goal of bringing about an Islamic state through proselytization and Islamic education (Sagramoso 2012: 570).

Akhtaev's approach ultimately failed. After the Avars became dominant in the DUMD in 1992, Akhtaev's network of imams shifted their allegiance towards the state itself, rejecting Akhtaev's appeal to push for an Islamic state. He also lost funds from Islamist networks who instead supported the more militant-minded Kebedov. When Akhtaev died in 1998, the religious opposition lacked a moderate leader, shifting power towards Kebedov (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 98).

Salafi jamaats emerged in Khasav Yurt, Kyzyl Yurt, and Buinaksk districts, but their main concentration was in the Karamakh Jamaat in Buinaksk, including the villages of Karamakhi, Kadar, and Chabanmakhi (Gammer 2005b: 837). These attracted followers from across the North Caucasus who were searching for "pure" Islam. For militant-minded Islamists, the war in Chechnya in 1994-1996 provided opportunities to meet militants and receive training, and some of these established themselves in local jamaats after returning to Dagestan. Some, such as Bagautdin Magomedov embraced jihad and fled to Chechnya (Yemelianova 2011; Pokalova 2015).

These villages implemented Shariah, set up their own madrassas and paramilitary training camps, as well as a publishing house and television studio. Their militias also began regulating social behaviour, cracking down on alcohol and prostitution (Bram and Gammer 2013: 305). The killing of the administrative head of a local village, ostensibly committed by Salafists, and a clash in May 1997 over the supposedly idolatrous funeral rites of Sufis,

signalled the deterioration of social relations (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 102). Dagestani authorities moved against the Salafis through legislation and propaganda, proclaiming them to be a fifth column while the DUMD branded them as heretics.

Confrontations between the Islamists and state authorities came to a head in the summer of 1998, after Chief Mufti Abubakarov was assassinated, leading to accusations that the “Wahhabis” were responsible. Armed Wahhabis drove out the local administration, in Karamachi repelled an intervening police force, and declared Sharia (Williams 2007: 167). They also set up roadblocks and seized police stations in the Kadar Zone, declaring it an Islamic territory where the Dagestani constitution did not apply (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 109). Shamil Basayev announced he was willing to defend Sharia in Dagestan, at which point the Russian interior minister intervened and reached an agreement with the Wahhabi leaders (Pokalova 2015: 92). The agreement entailed Salafi recognition of the Russian and Dagestani constitutions, but also entailed tacit Russian tolerance of an autonomous Islamist enclave centred on the primarily Dargin towns of Karamakchi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Matsuzato and Ibragimov 2005). Some criminal actors latched on to this Islamist trend. One example was the Hachilayev brothers who were arms smugglers who attempted to launch a coup in Mahachkala in 1998 under the guise of establishing an Islamic state (Derluguian 1999: 15).

The emergence of this Islamist enclave was not simply a religious project, but also a social-revolutionary oppositional movement which gave disenfranchised individuals outside of clientelist networks access to economic opportunities and protection. This included protection against racketeering schemes by criminal actors and extortionate police and local officials. The Islamists had substantial support in these villages due to their efforts against alcoholism, lawlessness and crime (Sagramoso 2012: 575). The enclave also became a small hub for trade

because transaction costs were lowered due to the crackdown on corruption, and because the state did not tax these towns (Derluguian 2005: 259).

Political fragmentation prevented the emergence of a strong nationalist force which could overtly challenge Russian supremacy, as in Chechnya, but also left the Dagestani political system in a state of rut, unable to address social problems and the economic grievances of ordinary people. As argued by Derluguian (2005: 213), Islam remained as the only legitimate alternative for social organization where neither the Dagestani government, nor federal authorities functioned. Many of the people who joined these jamaats were not violently inclined, but became convinced of the necessity for violence as security forces became increasingly repressive in the lead-up to the Second Chechen War. The outright prohibition on “Wahhabist” movements and activities after September 1999 in response to an Islamist incursion from Chechnya in August forced these groups underground, and many Salafists who had been willing to co-operate with the DUMD turned to violence (Comins-Richmond 2004: 68).

7.4.3 A Failed Insurgency

In 1999, Chechnya’s issues spilled over into Dagestan. Shamil Basayev and Ibn al-Khattab organized the Congress of the Muslims of the North Caucasus in April, bringing together Islamist elements who sought to overthrow the political order in Dagestan (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 123). This included Bagautdin Magomedov who in July declared sharia in the Tsumadinski region, leading to clashes with security forces and an intervention by Moscow which led Magomedov to call for help from their Chechen counterparts. Consequently, Basayev and Khattab led a small force across the border from Chechnya on 7. August into the Botlikh district in Dagestan and seized several Avar villages, declaring the Islamic republic of Dagestan there (Menon and Fuller 2000; E. Souleimanov 2005; Campana and Ratelle

2014). However, the incursion failed to spread beyond these initial villages as local villagers and other Dagestanis formed citizen militias, supported by Dagestani special forces and Russian bombardment to resist the group. Basayev and Khattab were forced to withdraw on 22. August, and Dagestani special forces moved against the Islamic Jamaat in Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Khadar in late August (Ware and Kisriev 2015: 63).

Basayev and Khattab attempted a second invasion on September 5 in Novolakskii district which had historically been Chechen-territory until Stalin's deportations, but then resettled by ethnic Laks. As this territorial grievance remained unresolved, this incursion was likely an attempt at attracting support from Dagestan's Chechens . The incursion failed to save the Islamic Jamaat, and the Islamist enclave was destroyed by mid-September.

The attempt by Basayev and Khattab at fomenting an Islamist revolt in Dagestan had been a complete failure. They did not attract much support and only held a few remote villages, despite Dagestan's reputation as the most religious of the North Caucasus republics (Ware et al. 2003a). The Chechens invaders were resisted by Lak militias, and by Avar contingents while in places like Kazbekovskii districts. The inherently fragmented and clientelistic nature of Dagestani politics seems to have been a barrier against the invaders as different actors had a stake in the system and they united against the common external threat (Derluguian 1999: 18). One sentiment seems to have been that Basayev and Khattab on the notion that they were opportunists who wanted control over the smuggling route along the Azerbaijani border, or to resettle Chechens in historically Chechen lands. This was partly instilled due to the violence committed by the extremely unpopular Chechen warlord Salman Raduyev some years earlier (Derluguian 2005: 259). Consequently, despite the notion that Salafism was strongest in Dagestan out of all the Caucasian republics, Islamist militancy was very marginal in the 1990s.

While the post-Soviet nomenklatura previously avoided intervening in religious conflicts, the war convinced them of taking the side of the Sufi clergy against the Salafis. The Salafis were treated as pariahs and driven underground, not just by the state, but due to the general resentment of the general population. The Dargin-dominated government was strengthened in the short term, but also led to Avar-political ascendancy due to the legitimization of private militias, and what became known as Dagestan's "Northern Alliance." Furthermore, the Avar-dominated DUMD became increasingly proactive in dictating the boundaries of legitimate religious conduct, and pushed for legislation which effectively turned the DUMD into a state organ for regulating religion. The DUMD was given broad authority to define who the Salafis were, allowing it to target ideological opponents, regardless of their actual view of the state (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 63).

Vladimir Putin's election to the Russian presidency in March 2000 set about a process of federal centralization which upended politics in Dagestan by disrupting the traditional consociational power-sharing arrangements which were enshrined in the 1994 constitution. Putin had visited Dagestan already in August 1999 as Prime Minister, intent on abandoning the Russian state's position of tacit tolerance towards the Islamic Jamaat (Pokalova 2015: 146; Ware 2011). Putin's efforts at centralising authority, beginning in April 2000, gradually led to the dismantling of the local political order by shifting power from local elites towards Moscow and personal political power was transferred to functionaries. In this sense, Moscow presented an uncompromising vision for Dagestan where local consociational traditions were overruled in favour of Russian supremacy (Kisriev and Ware 2005; R. B. Ware and Kisriev 2001b; Kim and Blank 2013). Yet, this formalization of political power in federal institutions would ultimately lead to more instability.

The failure of the Chechens in replicating the successes of the first war against Russia led to disillusion among young Muslims in Dagestan with many reverting to moderate forms

of Salafism in the vein of Akhmad Akhtaev's teachings. The main intellectual behind this was Yasin Rasulov who favoured a moderate and flexible form of Salafism adjusted to Dagestan's realities, as an alternative to Bagauddin Kebedov's militancy (Sagramoso 2012b: 580; Youngman 2019). However, intensified repression against all religious activity which deviated from the DUMD's tenets meant that even moderate Salafis were subjected to humiliation, torture, and disappearances by the security forces. Consequently, some militants established fighting cells and hit and run tactics and IED attacks became more common after 2003 (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Sagramoso 2007: 703). The group behind this was called Jennet led by Rasul Makasharipov which transformed into the Dagestani Shariaat Jamaat in 2004. The organization became a subunit of the Caucasian Front, coordinated by the Chechen Sadulaev in 2005 though operations continued to focus on Dagestan. In 2007 it joined the Caucasus Emirate as the Vilayat Dagestan (Souleimanov 2011).

By the mid-2000s, moderates within the Salafi movement such as Rasulov were increasingly willing to defend these attacks against the security forces as being a reaction to state excesses in both Chechnya and Dagestan. In fact, Rasulov joined the Dagestani Jamaat Shariaat himself in 2005, becoming a central ideological leader until his killing in 2006. Widespread harassment of individuals due to minor religious markers such as wearing long beards with shaved moustaches led to further support for these jamaats (International Crisis Group 2015). Dagestan has in later years, along with Ingushetia, been among the most violent republics in the North Caucasus, with 824 killed in 2011, overtaking that of Chechnya. This violence takes the form of clandestine cells of jihadist jamaats initiating terror attacks, with jamaats being separated by their territorial presence. Still, the violence never reached the level of a rebellion.

7.5 Kabardino-Balkaria

7.5.1 Kabards and Balkars

Kabardino-Balkaria lies in the west of North Caucasus and is ethnically heterogeneous compared to Chechnya, though less so than Dagestan. The region's 850,000 inhabitants consists of Kabards (57 %), Russians (22 %), and Balkars (13 %), and it was multi-ethnic by design, having been set up in 1922 by the Bolsheviks. This was followed by an influx of ethnic Russians, and Russian became the dominant language in schools and media (Yemelianova 2005: 55). Inter-ethnic competition over land and control of the local state apparatus was a significant source of tension, though kept more latent during the Soviet period. Despite this, and the widespread unemployment and corruption in the region, there was no large-scale violence after the Soviet collapse, except for smaller local disputes, and it was really only in the 2000s that the influence of Islamist militancy would gain traction in the republic.

In contrast to Chechnya where the transition from communism entailed a complete replacement of the political elite, there was a great deal of political continuity in Kabardino-Balkaria. The chairman of the republic's Soviet managed to win the 1992 presidential election despite being associated with the old regime. The nomenklatura was generally hostile to reform due to having uniquely strong personal ties to functionaries in Moscow. This is to some degree because the republic was a common tourist-resort for Soviet leaders and bureaucrats which gave Kabardino-Balkarian leaders unparalleled access to Moscow-based functionaries and leaders, and these personal ties continued into the turmoil of the 1990s (Richmond 2007; O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011). Kokov consolidated his position by making himself the node around which clientelist networks worked, having access to financial resources from Moscow due to his good relationship with Yeltsin, and to

local elites who sought access to economic rents. He also cultivated the emerging business-community which mainly consisted of former Soviet functionaries (Derluguian 2005: 277). By having such firm control over the distribution of goods, Kokov managed to co-opt the opposition and criminal actors, while balancing the interests of the republic's Balkar, Kabardin, and Russian populations.

Political liberalization brought latent ethnic tensions to light as the republic's 80 000 Balkars aired their grievances over the political and economic domination of the 400 000 Kabards. With elections came the realization for the Balkars that they would remain politically disadvantaged due to only consisting of 10 % of the population and the question of lands lost during the deportation of the Kabars in 1944 was a major point of contention. Balkar political organizations began calling for sovereignty for the Balkar while masses poured into the streets of the capital Nalchik (Derluguian 2005: 215; Gammer 2014: 39).

The Kabardin nomenklatura counteracted this by restoring the ethnic balancing system of leadership positions in state offices which was the unwritten rule during the Soviet era, which split the Balkar opposition and ensured that the Soviet-era nomenklatura and their networks would remain in power while outside officials appointed by Gorbachev were discredited and expunged (Derluguian and Zhemukhov 2013: 514). Elite-replacement was also avoided during Yeltsin's presidency due to Kokov's good relationship with the president. Ultimately, a 1994 Balkar referendum voted for keeping Kabardino-Balkaria, possibly due to the faltering situation in Chechnya (Comins-Richmond 2004: 65).

A great number of Kabardin, some 1500-2000 fought in Abkhazia after a 1992 invasion of by Georgian warlords. This triggered a wave of volunteer fighters who went to the region, usually with the blessings of state officials, primarily framed as a project of pan-Caucasian. In contrast to Chechnya, when these foreign fighters returned in 1994, they would

not upend the political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria (Derluguian 2005: 271). Kabardin discontent was thereby directed towards an external enemy (Derluguian 2005: 263). Kokov's introduction of the position of president also allowed the Kabardin to maintain political dominance, thereby placating the demands of the Kabardin nationalist movement. At the same time, the regime intensified repression of nationalist movements which sought to break apart the republic and Kokov promoted himself as the president of all of the region's peoples, marginalizing radical nationalists while co-opting oppositional elites into the political and economic establishment (Yemelianova 2005: 58-65).

Furthermore, there was no equivalent to the oil industry, as was the case in Soviet Checheno-Ingushetia, which created a stark divide between urban settlers who were often Russian, and the Chechens. In Kabardino-Balkaria, Russian settlers were more widely dispersed across the republic. A number of Russian political organizations emerged around the issue of preserving territorial integrity and recognition of the Russians as a titular ethnic group, but these remained relatively politically passive.

While the Balkars would largely be relegated to the lower-ranked occupations, they nevertheless did have access to employment compared to the Chechens. Furthermore, there was an unwritten rule that the top positions in government offices and factories should be divided between Balkars, Russians, and Kabardin. Balkar nationalism continued to be strong, and a Balkar congress held in 1996 endorsed a resolution on establishing Balkaria as a republic within the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, Balkar nationalist parties failed to do well in elections due to infighting as Kokov managed to co-opt segments of the opposition (Derluguian and Zhemukhov 2013: 541; Koehler et al. 2020; G. M. Yemelianova 2005: 65)

7.5.1 Official and Oppositional Islam

Political liberalization was associated with religious revival in Kabardino-Balkaria, as in the other Caucasus republics, though the Kabardin and Balkars lacked strong Sufi traditions compared to Chechnya and Dagestan. Soviet religious repression had been very effective by comparison, and there were few religious institutions and clerical figures to preserve such traditions (Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011: 309). In contrast to Dagestan where hundreds of mosques appeared by the late 1980s, there were only two mosques in the region in the 1980s. This state of affairs changed quite rapidly as the first official religious school opened in Nalchik in 1993, while around 100 were registered in 1994. By 2000 there were around 100 mosques in the region (Bram and Gammer 2013: 311; Fagan 2014: 30).

As in Chechnya, the traditional clergy had dubious religious credentials having little if any Islamic education and rarely any familiarity with Arabic. The first jamaats which emerged during the early 1990s were highly critical of traditional Islam and distinguished themselves by committing to praying five times a day and wearing long beards inspired by similar movements in Dagestan. A new generation of religiously devoted youth seized the opportunity to receive education abroad, including Muza Mukozhev and Anzor Astemirov who studied for a year in Saudi Arabia. Mukhozev and Astemirov returned as young imams willing to confront traditional clerics for their lack of religious education and support of the authorities. Yet, both opposed the use of force for Islamization, opting instead for proselytization (Sagramoso 2012b: 571; Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 56).

After returning from Saudi Arabia in 1993 they set up the Islamic Centre of Kabardino-Balkaria (ICKB) in Nalchik. This included thirteen jamaats associated with a council which elected Mukozhev as its amir. These were not overtly militant at first, but were nevertheless a source of tension as the Salafists accused clerics associated with the official

Spiritual Board (DUMBK) as practicing a corruption of Islam (Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011).

The Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat (KBJ) was established in the mid-1990s by uniting all the jamaats in the republic under Mukozhev's leadership. The jamaat became very popular among young men without significant prospects for social advancement, at one point reaching around 10 000 members in a region of 650 000 self-identified Muslims (Whitmeyer 2015: 144). The KBJ gave opportunities to young men in a region with high youth unemployment, and its condemnation of high-dowries and lavish weddings and burials associated with traditional Islam was popular among the poor. Rampant corruption and inequality turned many disenchanted youths towards the KBJ as a form of protest against the traditional Islamic institutions which had been co-opted by the state (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016: 38). Similar to the other regions, there was a stark generational divide between "old" and "new" Muslims as liberalization allowed younger generations to seek religious education abroad. Arguments would break out in mosques between younger Muslims who chastised elders for how they practiced Islam. However, this challenge to the status quo also meant that younger imams were often denied employment by the state, or subordinated to the authority of an elder imam (Fagan 2014: 30; Richmond 2007: 93).

Intra-Muslim tensions in the KBR were not as tense as elsewhere in the region, at least not initially. Astemirov and Mukoshev were in fact employed at the Nalchik Islamic Centre, and then the Islamic Institute under the purview of the DUMBK. However, criticism over mishandling of money by the Muftiate leadership, along with the violence in Dagestan, led to increased repression of dissenting voices and the government closed the Islamic Institute in Nalchik, eventually also closing all mosques, except during Friday prayers (Zhemukhov, Markedonov, and Yarlykapov 2018: 289). At the same time, Kokov's co-option of the ethno-nationalist opposition meant that the KBJ was the only realistic platform

to express opposition to the regime in a system where the opportunities to voice grievances without repercussions from those in power were limited (Richmond 2007: 92; Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016: 378; Koehler et al. 2020: 106).

The resulting social tensions were not purely a question of theological disagreements. It also reflected a generational and class-based divide whereby young Muslims and individuals without access to patronage networks saw puritanical Islam as a transformational force to challenge corrupt leaders and social structures. Economic instability following the transition from communism led to unemployment rates near 90 %, exacerbated by the conflict in Chechnya which drove the tourism-industry to a standstill. Islamic networks increasingly provided economic opportunities for individuals who lacked the personal connections to gain access to state-funds. This is also one reason why Islamic groups became intertwined with criminal organizations, especially in the 2000s as religious leaders driven underground by the DUMBK's policies challenged criminal bosses and took over businesses such as loan-sharking (Koehler et al. 2020: 100; Yemelianova 2022; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011; Derluguian and Zhemukhov 2013; Souleimanov 2011).

Astemirov and Mukhozev, two central figures in the KBJ initially opposed the use of violence to address these grievances, despite their frustrations with the DUMBK in particular (Fagan 2014: 33; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011; 2015: 264). Yet, by the mid-2000s, the KBJ transformed into an insurrectionist organization with Astemirov and Mukozhev's approval.

7.5.2 Oppression and Violence

Kabardino-Balkaria, like the Northwest Caucasus in general, was largely considered to be immune to the militant Islamism which emerged in Chechnya. One reason was the

rather effective secularisation of this part of the Caucasus during the Soviet era, but also the repression of traditional social bonds which could have been used for militant mobilization.

Yet, similarly to Dagestan, the state security forces' hunt for "Wahhabis" after 1999 led to the emergence of a "jihadized" opposition. As the situation deteriorated in Chechnya, the Kabardino-Balkarian government and the DUMKB vilified the New Muslims and the KBJ as Kokov denounced Wahhabism as a totalitarian sect in a speech in November 1999, while the DUMBK essentially shut down Astemirov and Mukozhev's Islamic centre. The government also banned education in mosques in 2000, and in 2003 restricted the opening times of mosques to Friday prayers (Pokalova 2015: 152; O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011: 607; Souleimanov 2011: 123). Muslims not associated with DUMBK-approved mosques were subjected to continuous harassment by the security forces including surveillance, illegal searches, arrests, and torture (Koehler et al. 2020: 98). Even minor external identifiers such as wearing a full beard could be enough to be labelled a Wahhabi. One telling example of the discontent and sense of fear this created among the republic's New Muslims is that 4000 residents at one point petitioned Moscow for permission to emigrate over religious discrimination (Richmond 2007: 94).

The authorities drew no distinction between militant-minded Islamists and other Muslims not associated with DUMBK-approved mosques, mass arresting members of the KBJ. Complaints about excesses committed by the police fell on deaf ears, leaving the victims of repression without any formal channels for airing their grievances. In March 2002, president Kokov announced a list of 400 alleged Wahhabi extremists who were subsequently targeted by the security agencies. However, many of the names on the list belonged to individuals who simply were theological or personal competitors to DUMBK-imams. Five of Nalchik's six mosques were forcibly closed in 2004. The same year the DUMKB decided

that all imams were to be officially designated by the head of the DUMKB (Fagan 2014: 42; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011: 319).

The KBJ was strong and highly centralized compared to other jamaats in the North Caucasus. This allowed its leadership to moderate militant-minded members and factions in the 1990s and early 2000s. Yet, in 2003 a shoot-out broke out between security forces and militants associated with the Chechen Shamil Basayev in the village of Baksan. Furthermore, state-repression along with the emergence of jihadi groups in Chechnya put significant pressure on Astemirov and Mukozhev, and some members broke away to form their own militant cells in the early 2000s. The most prominent of these was the Yarmuk Jamaat formed in 2002 and led by Muslim Atayev. It declared war on the state in 2004, leading to a manhunt and the killing of Atayev in January 2005 (Pokalova 2015: 154; O'Loughlin, Holland, and Witmer 2011: 607; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2015: 265).

Atayev was succeeded by Anzor Astemirov as head of the Yamuk Jamaat, despite the latter's previous stance against violence. His move towards militancy was gradual and followed his multiple arrests after 1999, including in 2001 when he and Mukozhev were arrested on suspicion of organizing a terrorist attack. The final impetus in his shift towards militancy seems to have occurred in late 2004, and he re-emerged in late 2005 as the head of an attack on the republic's capital (Fagan 2014; Malashenko 2000; Shterin and Yarlykapov 2011; Sagramoso and Yemelianova 2010: 320; Yarlykapov 2010).

On 13. October 2005, 150-200 Islamist militants targeted Nalchik's airport and the offices of the FSB and interior ministry, leaving almost 150 people dead (Koehler et al. 2020: 97). Shamil Basaev announced that the attack was carried out by troops under the command of Astemirov. The attack was costly for the insurrectionists as most of the dead were militants. However, it signalled a drastic shift in the nature of the KBJ, away from its non-

violent origins, towards violent action. Astemirov might have hid the drift towards jihad secret from several of their members as only 200 out of the membership of 3000 heeding the call to jihad, and several members expressing befuddlement with the attempted uprising. However, the attack made it impossible for the KBJ-members to practice their faith openly, and even Mukhozev declared jihad in 2006 (Fagan 2014: 41; Sagramoso 2012: 577; Wilhelmsen and Youngman 2020).

The attack did not lead to any tangible benefits for the insurgents, and the level of violence in the republic remained low between 2005 and 2010. It symbolised a shift in the Salafi movement where repression pushed these elements towards militancy. Astemirov became a central figure in the attempt at creating a region-wide Islamist insurgency and became part of the Caucasus Emirate as leader of the Kabardino-Balkaria Vilayat, and later as the head of its Sharia Court (Zhemukhov, Markedonov, and Yarlykapov 2018).

By 2005, Kokov was something of an anomaly as a legacy of the late-Soviet political system, presiding over an economy which remained dependent on subsidies from Moscow, and Mosco forced him to resign (Derluguian and Zhemukhov 2013: 556). He was replaced by Arsen Kanokov, who acknowledged that repression had contributed to the KBJ's radicalization, and he hated hardliners in the security establishment (Hahn 2008: 11). However, Kokov's system of ethnic representation in the doling out of political rents disintegrated under Kanokov due to his attempt at monopolizing control over the economy, along with Putin's attempts at centralizing power. Kanokov also turned out to be unable to limit the excesses of the security forces (Koehler, Gunya, and Alkhazurov 2016; Koehler et al. 2020: 101; Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 63).

Kabardino-Balkaria avoided large-scale disorder because the Soviet nomenklatura managed to stay in power after the transition to capitalism, due to the continuity of power-

bargains and patronage networks which allowed President Kokov to co-opt the ethno-nationalist opposition. However, this situation also prevented economic restructuring, leading to a massive drop in industrial productivity, the development of a large black market, and the rise of criminal groups which profited from smuggling and mafia-style protection-schemes. Given the co-optation of the opposition, there were few ways for disenchanted individuals to challenge this system. The Islamic jamaats allowed individuals to seek an answer to these social woes through religious revivalism. Young Muslims who received education abroad had the religious credentials to challenge the Sufi-establishment, and the ideological credibility to provide an alternative to the corrupt and clientelist state-order (Yemelianova 2005: 68). State-repression turned these social forces against the state itself.

7.6 Ingushetia

7.6.1 Ingush-Chechen connections

The republic of Ingushetia is Chechnya's Western neighbour. It has, like the other republics of the region beyond Chechnya, only experienced Islamist violence in the form of a terror campaign in the 2000s, but no rebellion. This is interesting given that the two republics are particularly strongly intertwined both administratively, as the republics were part of the Checheno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), through ethno-linguistic similarities, and due to the common historical trauma of deportations to Central-Asia.

Ingushetia became a republic separate from Chechnya in June 1992 due to a referendum in which voters overwhelmingly favoured remaining within the Russian federation. This outcome represented, not just an assertion of Ingush nationalism from Chechnya, but also signified a rejection of the Chechen path towards separatism (Moore and Tumelty 2009). Its conflicts would instead largely revolve around unresolved territorial

disputes, as opposed to opposition to Moscow. The key issue was that when the Chechens and Ingush were allowed to return from exile in Central Asia, large portions of land had been transferred to the region of North Ossetia. As a form of compensation, the Soviet authorities transferred land from Stavropol Krai to the Checheno-Ingush SSR. However, this land remained in Chechnya when Ingushetia split from Chechnya in 1992 (Soldatova 1993). Consequently, there was a nationalist drive towards reclaiming land from the Ossetians, which led to several eruptions of inter-ethnic violence in the early 1990s.

Such violence first broke out in 1992 over competing claims to the Prigorodnii District which was assigned to North Ossetia (Pokalova 2015: 18). 600 people were killed with 60 000 ethnic Ingush being displaced from the district. A stabilising factor was the election of General Ruslan Aushev to the presidency in 1993 who was an ethnic Ingush and arguably the most distinguished Soviet veteran of the Afghan war. He managed to pressure Moscow to demand greater autonomy in return for making peace with North Ossetia, and Moscow, pressured in 1994 by the Chechens, agreed.

7.6.2 “Wahhabis” in the Caucasus

Ingushetia was as affected by the growth of puritanical Islam as was the other republics in the region. A crucial difference, however, was general Aushev’s non-confrontational approach towards the New Muslims. Aushev directly pleaded to villages and communities to make sure that their sons were married and occupied with jobs, despite widespread unemployment. Additionally, the Ingush state stretched its resources to employ as many as possible in the police, start a university, and initiated construction projects.

The general revival of religiosity led to the establishment of new mosques, though primarily belonging to Sufi orders, including by Chechen religious figures who left due to the

political instability there. The Islamic brotherhoods, called *virids*, in Ingushetia, have a uniquely strong position in the region. The virids control key markets like the gasoline trade, factories, and markets, and the virids are core providers of funds for the poorest members (Dettmering 2005; Meskhidze 2006; Sokirianskaya 2005).

Another policy of his was the attempted legalization of polygamy and the tradition of vendetta. The goal was both to placate the demands of the Islamist opposition, but also to prevent that young men would turn to the Islamists for support in fulfilling their personal vendettas in a region where every household had weapons (Matveeva 2013: 255).

Ingushetia followed the other republics in banning Wahhabism in 1998 with the support of the official clergy, while also co-opting some ideas of the Wahhabis, including having the president support sharia to counter corruption (Campana and Ratelle 2014; Ratelle and Souleimanov 2017). Wahhabi missionaries were expelled and religious schools were closed. As in the other republics, the backlash against the Wahhabis followed from Wahhabi condemnation of traditional Sufi practices (Bowers, Akhmadov, and Derrick 2004). Notably, the Islamists were not only from the poorest strata, but also youth from more privileged families who were frustrated with the corrupt state system (Matveeva 2013: 255). Aushev warned Moscow repeatedly against the threat of Islamist influences, both from Chechnya, Afghanistan, and the Middle East through foreign fighters and money flowing to jamaats and madrassas. Yet, Aushev was also willing to criticize Moscow's hardline approach to this issue, and he was forced to resign in 2001.

His successor, Murat Ziazikov led a regime which saw corruption and embezzlement reach new heights, while also repressing grassroots initiatives at protesting. Ziazikov also targeted Chechen refugee camps, and furthermore, the system of sharia courts which functioned under Aushev was forcibly dismantled under Ziazikov's rule. By the late 2000s,

Ingushetia had become the most violent republic in the region (Pokalova 2015; Sagramoso 2012b).

7.6.3 Repression and Islamist Resistance

The destabilization of Ingushetia was a consequence of a policy-shift by Kremlin whereby it sought to replicate the Chechen-model of picking its own stooge to centralize power and brutally crack down on the opposition. The regional situation was particularly tense due to the flow of 300 000 Chechen refugees into the republic after the outbreak of war in 1999, and the refugee population outnumbered the settled Ingush population at one point. Despite repeated claims by the security forces that Chechen militants were among the refugees, there was almost no Russian military presence in the region, and there was little evidence of Chechen rebels being involved.

While militants associated with Basayev tried to gain influence in the republic, they had little success, except for symbolically entering the region in 2002 and shooting down a Russian helicopter. This, in turn, led Russian security forces to lash out against all suspected collaborators among the Ingush, intensifying the use of illegal abductions by the security forces against individuals, families, and villages suspected of cooperating with the militants (Lokshina and Human Rights Watch 2008).

As Putin rose to power and consolidated his grip on the administration in Moscow during the Second Chechen War, he also sought to extend his control over the peripheries by having administrative roles filled by loyalists. This meant in Ingushetia that the popular Aushev was forced to resign despite having been highly effective in limiting the fallout from events in Chechnya. Aushev had been a vocal critic of Moscow's approach towards Chechnya and the region, and had countered Islamist militancy through a conciliatory

approach and a policy of integrating potential fundamentalists into mainstream society. He was replaced by FSB General Murat Zyazikov.

Zyazikov was much more pliable for Moscow's purposes, but he lacked a local political base and his authority depended on the security forces more so than popular support (Ware 2011). Upon seizing power, he abandoned the multi-faceted approach of his predecessor, instead ordering tough sweep operations against supposed rebels hiding in refugee camps and homes, imitating the sweep-operations in Chechnya. Abuses and human rights violations by the security forces became frequent, including forced disappearances and killings (Sagramoso 2007: 688).

Such methods made segments of the New Muslims open to the idea of responding to state-repression with violence. The first group to do so was the "Shura of Ingushetia" which called for the liberation of the republic in 2004. Ingush groups which had fought in Chechnya in the 1990s formed the Ingush sector of the Ichkeriia Armed forces, and formed jamaats in Ingushetia. These were consolidated into the Islamic Front of Ingushetia under Ali Taziev who was approved by Basayev as leader of the Ingush forces in 2004 as Emir of the Ingush jamaat (Pokalova 2015: 148; 2017; Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 66).

When Basayev declared the intensification of attacks outside of Chechnya in 2002, Ingushetia was one of the first to experience violence as 170 Chechens crossed the border from Georgia and attacked the Ingush village of Galashki. Violence gradually intensified by 2003 as a first suicide bombing was carried out. In June 2004, Islamist militants coordinated by Shamil Basayev attacked the Ingush capital of Nazran, targeting government buildings. Many of the Ingush involved had faced repression, or had relatives who had disappeared after being rounded up by the security forces (Pokalova 2015: 148).

Notably, this was the first case in which an attempted Islamist insurrection displayed significant support from the locals, in stark contrast to Basayev's incursion into Dagestan in 1999. Basayev also took credit for the Beslan-massacre in September 2004 whereby 334 hostages, including 186 children, died. The attempt was ostensibly part of an attempt at gaining support in Ingushetia as Beslan is in North Ossetia, but its actual effect was to alienate both Russian and global audiences. It also gave Putin room to further centralise power (Ware 2011). While most of the Ingush supported counter-insurgency efforts following Basayev's incursion, the reliance on the Chechen model of sweeping villages, abductions and torture led to hatred for the security forces (Lokshina and Human Rights Watch 2008).

The violence reached a peak in 2010, but dissipated after, partly due to the arrest of Emir Magas, the leader of the Ingush Jamat (Campana and Ratelle 2014: 127). After his arrest, the focus of the Ingush Jamat shifted away from targeting Ingush law enforcement, to focusing on the nationalist issue of reclaiming land held by North Ossetia (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2017; Tarín-Sanz and Ter-Ferrer 2018: 204). What ultimately caused the Islamist militant movement in Ingushetia to fizzle out was the replacement of hardliners such as Zyazikov, with new leaders who by 2012 facilitated a major rapprochement between the Sufis and Salafis. At a symbolically important conference that year, representatives of both groups declared that they belonged to the same ummah, signifying the state-administration's willingness to tolerate new forms of Islam in return for political loyalty (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013: 72).

7.7 Conclusion: The Caucasus Pathway

Radical political thought and action has been pervasive in the North-Caucasus in recent decades, as the collapse of the Soviet system brought to light the aspirations and grievances of the region's populations. It was only in Chechnya that this led to outright hostilities with Moscow, as Chechnya's old elite of Soviet functionaries was replaced with a new radical-minded group of outsiders who clashed with Yeltsin. This in contrast to the republics of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia, where Soviet-era elites managed to remain in power through personal alliances and patronage networks.

Access to such patronage networks became the only path for social advancement in a region where, in contrast to the Baltics, long distance to Western markets meant that the material promises of liberalisation never materialised. Political liberalisation did, however, permit the circulation of ideas, funds, and people with many travelling to the Middle East to receive religious education. In a time of socio-political instability, religiously-inspired ideologies provided a coherent vision for a region where communism had lost all legitimacy, and where economic liberalism had been undermined by political cronyism.

Religious parallel societies developed throughout the region as a form of social protest against a political order which failed, comprised of "New Muslims" who rejected traditional Sufi practices which they associated with superstition and corrupt elites. In the Chechen case, the experience of the first Chechen War rendered Chechnya a patchwork of fiefdoms with their own militias, and Islamist-enclaves became too powerful for the independent Chechen state to deal with. This, in the end, proved to be the undoing of independent Chechnya as Islamist factions triggered a second war with Moscow in an attempt to outcompete the nationalist leadership. As Chechnya was defeated, only Islamist factions remained in the form of underground terrorist groups.

The republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and Ingushetia also saw the development of such religious parallel societies which in multiple cases were willing to cooperate with authorities and accept Russian sovereignty. However, many turned to violence after intensified repression by the state in the 1990s. Money was laundered through legitimate businesses, Sharia courts were set up, while social services and taxation was set up for locals, especially families of killed group-members. Furthermore, the local branches of the Emirate effectively outcompeted local bandits and criminals who were better armed and organized, and criminal activity such as extortion of local businessmen became the domain of the Islamist militants (Derluguian and Zhemukhov 2013: 551). Islamists never managed to hold significant territory beyond Chechnya, except for some minor villages, and Islamist violence in the region took the form of a terrorist campaign against symbols of the state, rather than outright rebellion.

Islamism came to embody a counter-hegemonic movement in a region where state-institutions rested on fundamental contradictions, formally set up to serve all residents, but in reality benefitting only those with the right connections. Social alienation and economic hardship, corrupt embedded elites, along with the lack of formal channels for political action has driven many youth in the region towards alternative sources of belonging and social advancement. The structural conditions for this to turn into an outright rebellion was only present in Chechnya, but jamaats persist in the region with occasional bursts of violence, as the only real oppositional force.

Part 4: Theoretical Inferences and Conclusion

One of the deepest of human desires is to find a unitary pattern in which the whole of experience, past, present and future, actual, possible and unfulfilled, is symmetrically ordered... We shall be reminded that there is no sharp break between history and mythology... no absolute touchstone can in principle be produced...²¹

Chapter 8 Pathway to Islamist Civil War: Re-establishing Social Cohesion through Religious Institutions

8.1 Theoretical Inferences from The Case Studies

What do these cross-national and temporal comparisons tell us about the origins of Islamist insurgencies, both as a macro-historical shift, and the dynamics which drive them at

²¹ Berlin 2002a

the micro-level? A key claim of this thesis is that it is relying on abstract theoretical assumptions about the motives of Muslim populations broadly, or Muslim-dominated armed groups, can fundamentally distort our understanding of how religions matters politically, and how it relates to militant Islamist mobilisation. The reliance on backwards-teleological assumptions about such groups leads to the ecological fallacy that such groups are all the same, driven by the same causal factors, and supported by communities whose only relevant characteristic are their “Muslimness” which ostensibly tells us all there is to know about their political propensities (Sartori 1991). While such theorisation may provide interesting points of discussion, it may also become so disconnected from political realities to fundamentally misguide research.

Theorising about civil wars in general, and Islamist rebel groups in particular, should instead hermeneutically move between empirical studies and theoretical inferences, to ensure theoretical concepts are grounded in real-world dynamics. The area-studies literature on Muslim countries and Islamist groups, has come a long way in providing more refined accounts of Muslim politics, but overt theorising is generally avoided in favour of broad theoretical intuitions (R. H. Bates 1997; Valbjorn 2003; 2020b; Szanton 2004). Research by political scientists on specific countries or subsets of regions has also come a long way, though mostly focusing on middle-range theorising. The field of civil war studies has not fully benefitted from this as research is focused on narrow hypothesis-testing with research being disparate, fragmented, and therefore non-cumulative (Lyll 2014; Mearsheimer and Walt 2013) Research on Islamist rebel groups, unlike the literature on Islamist political parties, has not moved significantly beyond the assumptions that Islamist groups are all-pervasive, and simplistically explained as a strategically optimal position, or as a “natural” ideological characteristics (March 2015; Toft 2007; Toft 2013; Toft 2021; Walter 2017a).

The case-studies in this thesis leads to several clear inferences about why such theoretical approaches are inadequate. First, the absence of state power is not sufficient to explain the emergence of Islamist armed groups. In all cases there was a significant temporal lag between state withdrawal and the emergence of Islamist groups. In the Somali territories, it took 15 years of civil war before an Islamist actor became a major power player (Barnes and Hassan 2007; Marchal 2019a). There was also great spatial variance, as only one of three regions which experienced state collapse saw the rise of an Islamist rebellion, despite the many similarities between these regions (Bradbury 2008; Höhne 2015; Schwoebel 2018).

Second, the strategic calculation of whether or not to adopt Islamist ideology is not at all as straightforward as portrayed by the outbidding-literature. In the case of Balochistan, it could have made perfect sense for nationalist rebel groups to adopt Islamism to ally with Taliban aligned groups at a time when Balochi groups were significantly weaker than both the state, and the Taliban. Yet, no such thing occurred as Balochi society seemingly had not experienced the same shock to existing social institutions which paved the way for the Taliban among the Pashtun (Marino 2020). Similarly for the Somali nationalist rebellion in Somali state in Ethiopia, it could have made strategic sense to ally with Islamist groups such as al-Shabaab which were making impressive gains in neighbouring Somalia (Hagmann 2014). This did not happen, possibly due to the strong persistence of traditional institutions, along with the gradual integration of the nationalist opposition into formal politics.

Third, transnational actors only played an auxiliary role in all of these cases, and were not in themselves sufficient explanations for local manifestations of militant Islamism. Certainly in many cases, including Chechnya and the Pashtun-areas, the presence of transnational groups with money, expertise, and weapons served as an important “push-factor” (Bakke 2013; Wilhelmsen 2016; Wilhelmsen and Youngman 2020). In particular tended to empower sub-factions among Islamist organisations. For example in the case of

Chechnya, it ensured that a figure such as Shamil Basayev had more influence than he otherwise would have had (Wilhelmsen 2004). These foreign actors depended on alliances with local actors, and were in several cases unable to establish lasting footholds due to hostility from locals. For example, one key point of contention between branches of the Pakistani Taliban was that groups associated with the Wazir-tribe sought to rid themselves of al-Qaeda affiliated Uzbek militants, whereas factions associated with the Mehsud-tribe saw the Uzbeks as allies (Khattab 2014). A second example is that an attempted al-Qaeda expedition into Somalia in the early 1990s failed miserably due to the hostility of local actors. In fact, al-Qaeda's leadership thought that expansion into Somalia would be a simple endeavour due to the persistent instability there, but this proved to be far from the reality. In the end, it only gained any form of influence in the late 2000s as a faction of al-Shabaab joined the group. The balance of power was therefore consistently in favour of local actors (Hansen 2013).

Fourth, the dynamics of ideological outbidding were far more subtle than existing theories allow for. Almost all groups studied were remarkably consistent in their broad ideological profiles, with Islamist groups growing out of religious networks and non-Islamist groups emerging from non-religious networks. This is not to say that ideological rebranding is impossible, indeed there were cases of it in the North Caucasus. Nor is it to say that rebels do not use ideology strategically. Rather, the evidence shows that ideological rebranding is more difficult than existing theories allow for, as groups have established in-group norms and reputations which also means that rebranding sacrifices ideological credibility. Additionally, groups did not simply move towards more extreme religious positions to outbid each other as expected by some scholars (Walter 2017a; 2017b). Outbidding was instead more measured with Islamist rebels shifting their focus, occasionally appropriating nationalist issues, other times focusing on class divides and social injustice. In most cases, the focus was explicitly on

local political grievances, with notions of global jihad having secondary significance, if it mattered at all. The notion that groups seek to outbid each other through religious extremism is not an adequate explanation for the ideological positions of Islamist groups.

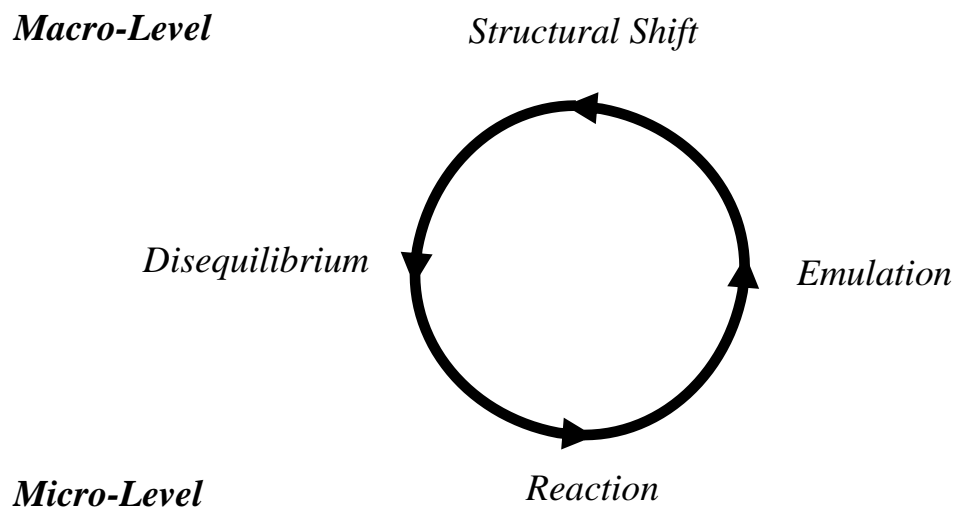
8.2 A Theoretical Framework for Islamist Mobilisation in Civil War

A key argument in this thesis is that the dynamics of civil wars, including their ideological content, are largely endogenous to pre-war social structures (Staniland 2012; 2014). Cederman and Vogt (2017: 2008). have called for civil war research to “steer a middle course between overgeneralized macromodels and myopic microinvestigations,” and the goal here has been to examine how micro-level dynamics are part of a broader macro-historical process in a mutually constitutive way (Balcells and Justino 2014; Cederman and Vogt 2017; Kalyvas 2003; 2006).

This logic is captured in figure 19 which illustrates the interaction between historical dynamics at the micro- and macro-level as a continuous cycle of mutual constitution. The argument has been that macro-level historical processes associated with modernity forces institutions to adapt or falter, in some cases leading to institutional disequilibrium. This leads to a multitude of local responses, where some institutional adaptations will be more effective than others, and these may be emulated at other levels, reinforcing a new macro-trend, such as the rise of Islamist institutions. Historical trends are therefore made up of the multitude of micro-level responses which develop in reaction to structural shifts.

The character of the local response is not pre-determined, but a question of contingent positionality. In a multitude of Muslim societies, religious institutions were the best positioned to respond as through their capacity of being the last-man standing institution as institutional alternatives collapsed, were repressed, or lost legitimacy through failures to adapt to new circumstances. In Chechnya, Mogadishu, and the Pashtun areas of Pakistan, existing institutions crumbled under pressure, paving the way for religious institutions as nodes for social cohesion. In other cases, ranging from Balochistan to Dagestan and Somaliland, pre-existing institutions survived similar pressures and ensured both institutional, and therefore ideological continuity.

Figure 19: Historical Interaction



This implies that the rise of Islamist rebel groups and civil wars does not follow from Islamism being a choice made with an eye to gaining strategic advantages in war. Rather, it reflects the social needs and demands of specific social configurations. These experiments in establishing social-cohesion through religious institutions need not inevitably lead to war, and in many cases do not. However, the attempt at establishing particular kinds

of societies locally may be met with hostility by outside actors, especially states which seek institutional homogeneity, increasing the possibility of violence. The ways in which this plays out at the local level can be understood through repeated local comparisons which traces micro-level dynamics through the following analytical steps:

Step 1: Institutional Rupture and Disconnection From Social Demands.

The impetus for institutional shifts comes from a disequilibrium between the social needs and demands of a population, and the ability of institutions in providing public goods ranging from security, justice, to welfare and other services. For example, the functions of social institutions in a tribal society will necessarily be different than in an urbanised industrialised society. The transition from a tribal system to an urban and industrialised society therefore represents a point at which interests and social needs are shifting, but institutions may not necessarily follow through, for example in cases where the state is relatively weak or absent.

A recurring finding in all the cases studied here, was that there was a gradual process whereby old institutions proved to be ill-fitted with the social needs of their communities. In Pakistan there had been a long-winded process of monetarisation in the peripheries which upended social relations in the semi-feudal settled areas and tribal areas of the Pashtun. State-policies led to institutional inflexibility in both territories, as feudal privileges and tribal hierarchies were maintained despite losing their socio-economic function. The introduction of wage-labour, along with access to networks outside of tribal hierarchies through madrasas, meant that new generations of self-made men had both the independence, and the will, to challenge traditional hierarchies (Ahmed 1991: 98; Ahmad 2015; Sultan-I-Rome 2014).

In the North Caucasus, state-guided attempts at modernisation profoundly upended social relations by rendering a large proportion of Chechens into an urban underclass of

migrant labourers with little access to education or stable forms of employment. As the Soviet system collapsed, it was eventually replaced by an independent, but barely functioning Chechen state. As warlords and criminal gangs partitioned its resources, some disenfranchised Chechens without access to clientelist networks saw Islamist enclaves as a way of establishing a just society, or simply having a career (Derluigiian 1999; 2005; Wilhelmsen 2004; Wilhelmsen and Youngman 2020). In Somalia, attempts by both colonial authorities under Italian rule, and the subsequent socialist state, at social engineering undermined the viability of tribal institutions in maintaining welfare and security. Forced resettlement and urbanisation made Mogadishu into a patchwork of clans and sub-clans which proved fatal at the point of state withdrawal as tribal institutions gradually fragmented in contrast to the more homogenous northern regions (Lewis 2002: 299; Kapteijns 2013).

These societies rested on some fundamental contradictions as traditional institutions and hierarchies persevered despite economic shifts and the internal expansion of the state. In some cases, notably Pakistan, the state itself encouraged such contradictions by banning all forms of modern political organisation in the tribal areas while simultaneously subsidising a clientelist system of appointed tribal lords.

The fundamental source of disorder was the expansion of political participation to people who had not inherited their positions through birth (Berman 2003: 250; Huntington 1965; 1966; 1968). Not just access to wage labour, but also access to new forms of education and association, especially through transnational networks of religious seminaries, gave previously disconnected individuals the networks and abilities to organise in new ways. This included both the implementation of a state-run school system, often colonial states, and education associated with missionaries. It also included transnational seminaries which promoted a form of individualisation of religion through education, as village-clerics and Sufi shaykhs were no longer the only ones with the literacy and education to read and interpret

religious texts. Not least, it also created awareness of revolutionary developments abroad, both against colonial regimes, but also within societies (Özcan 1997; Khalid 2005; Knysh 2017; Ridgeon 2015; Sidel 2021). Generally, the uprooting of young males from families and village-ties gave access to new social relations which created recruitment pools for radical political activism. The rise of a transnational public sphere therefore contributed to the “zeitgeist” of change (Gourevitch 1978; Mann 2004: 359). While nationalist intelligentsias has received significant attention in terms of their influence on early post-colonial societies, it is also true that societies saw a more fundamental and all-pervasive form of reordering as the means for political participation spread beyond narrow elites, to broader segments of the population.

The macro-level processes which contributed to institutional rupture were therefore the combination of state expansion, either internally or as empires, the extension of the modern monetarised economy to global peripheries, and greater access for people in these peripheries to new forms of education, transport, and information (Balcells and Justino 2014; Thaler 2017). These amplified micro-level processes whereby pre-existing social tensions were coming to the fore due to the increasing irrelevancy of old institutions. Notably, in all cases studied here, the pre-existing social systems lacked flexibility to respond to these shifting demands, and change came through institutional collapse and reform, rather than incremental change.

Step 2: Institutional Intermezzo: Contingent Positionality

A classic argument in modernisation theory is that economic transition in traditional societies leads to social strains, which may also increase the probability of violence. Traditional societies are often considered to exhibit a high level of uniformity, in line with Ibn Khaldun’s notion of *asabiyyah* (Gellner 2008; Ibn Khaldūn 1969; Malesevic 2015;

Huntington 1968). It follows from the notion that agricultural and pastoral societies and sustenance-based economies exhibit low social mobility with individuals being attached to large family units which is necessary for social security. Attachment to extended families can also be an important source of physical protection against outsiders, and a signifier of trust, making marriage an important institution for social cohesion. In-group cohesion is therefore maintained through the continuous development of strong personal and familial ties (Gellner 2008; Hobbes 2017). Notably, such systems can differ strongly in the degree to which they are hierarchical or not. They can take the form of feudal systems on the one hand where the landless essentially are subjugated to landholders. They can also take the form of certain tribal systems which exhibit egalitarian features such as decision-making through unanimous votes in councils.

It is commonly pointed out that a key feature which distinguishes such societies from modern states, is that modern state systems rest on the notion of physical power being held more or less exclusively by one central power (Black 2011: 180; Gellner 1991; Weber 1965). However, another more fundamental difference is that modern economies are defined by functional differentiation. Agricultural-pastoral societies are defined by most of the population essentially working in the same occupations, except for a small number of skilled artisans. An economy based on wage labour, however, requires a workforce which is able to acquire new skills, move locations, and adapt to the demands of the labour market. Social cohesion through genealogy also loses its viability in such societies, as people necessarily move away from “ancestral” lands and family, to new cities or even countries. This also paves the way for broader notions of identity, such as belonging to a nation, an ethnic or linguistic group, or even a religious community as traditional norms and local social relations erode (Dowd 2015; Gellner 2008). The division of labour is therefore a source of social

fragmentation through individualisation, which gave primacy to trans-local identities, while also expanding the capacity for political participation beyond a narrow elite.

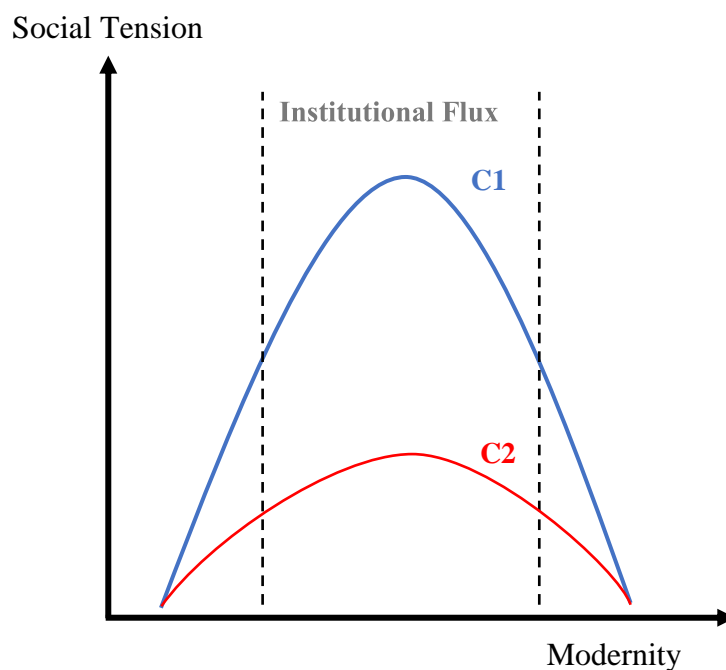
Crucially, the manner in which societies deal with these transitions are strongly defined by pre-existing institutions. To Huntington, a key reason why Japan was able to compete with Western powers during the age of colonialism was due to it already being a highly centralised and institutionally cohesive society (Huntington 1965; 1968). In other cases, the state apparatus itself was a creation of colonial administrations who drew borders and governing-institutions in ways which often did not correspond to local political realities. The transition to political modernity is therefore far from a linear process. It is not a linear process in either its impact, nor in terms of moving towards some supposed end-goal. It is inherently uneven, and the political issues which follow are a function of the pre-existing social-institutional landscape.

Some degree of political unrest is an inherent feature of political transitions, as it embodies the demands of the populace for institutions to adapt to changing demands. Revolutionary activism is therefore most pervasive in in-between societies which are neither traditional sustenance-based societies, in highly modernised urbanised and industrialised societies. It is most likely to be a feature of societies with some degree of social and economic development which unsettled traditional society, institutions, and hierarchies (S. Berman 2003: 259).

The underlying logic is captured by figure 20. Social tensions will reach a peak at times of political transition and as there is an ill-fit between social institutions and the demands of a changing society. As institutions are in flux, it is also the point at which revolutionary aspirations and violent activism are most likely to pervade, as rival groups, individuals, communities, and the state, compete to influence the trajectory of the society in

question. However, different societies will not experience the same risk of political turmoil during such transitions, as illustrated by the difference between country 1 (C1), and country 2 (C2) in the figure. What distinguishes them is that C2 is constituted by a social-institutional landscape of institutions which are better able to absorb external shocks and exhibit flexibility in the face of changing social demands. Another distinguishing factor, beyond flexibility, may be whether power is fractionalised among many actors, or more centralised at this stage, and whether the state has the capacity for societal control and ability to become the primary focus for of its subjects' loyalty (Cederman and Girardin 2007; Fjelde and De Soysa 2009: 10).

Figure 20: Institutional Shifts



The cases studied here also exhibited significant variance in the ability of social-institutions in absorbing the social tensions which followed from both the subtle influences of modernisation, and more dramatic external shocks. In the Somali territories, the state itself

was far too weak to substantially respond to political changes, culminating in a complete collapse in 1991. Variance among the territories was instead a question of the persistence and strength of traditional institutions and social ties (Hagmann 2014; Hoehne 2018; Bradbury 2008). In Somaliland and Puntland, the dominant armed factions could rely on the strength of tribal councils and village elders to continuously negotiate disputes, to prevent violence from spiralling out of control in a context where no state could have filled this role. In Mogadishu, these same institutions had been undermined through attempts at social engineering by both the Italian colonial administration, and the post-colonial socialist regime of Siyad Barre, and further violence in the 1990s. This meant that the locals were forced to look to new modes of organisation to bring about stability. The external shock of the collapse of the state in the early 1990s made the search for institutional alternatives especially acute, and the solution became the establishment of Sharia courts at the neighbourhood-level (Samatar 1992: 634; Menkhaus 2006; 2007).

In the North Caucasus there was significant variance among the Muslim republics in the strength of state and non-state institutions due to Soviet policies. Social institutions among the Chechens were significantly upended through Soviet policies which forced Chechens into low-skill jobs or to work as migrant labourers. This simultaneously reinforced the importance of genealogical ties for social security, and undermined trust in state institutions. The policy of preventing ethnic Chechens from acquiring higher education, or achieving positions in the state administration or high-skill employment also led to a complete replacement of the Chechen elite as Soviet repression ended. This also significantly undermined the functioning of the Chechen state, especially during and after the Chechen War of Independence, as the state bureaucracy and oil industry had been almost exclusively staffed by ethnic Russians who fled the republic (Derluguian 2005: 244; Tishkov 2004: 41-45). This effectively meant that the Chechen state had to be built from the ground up by a

new generation of political outsiders, a project at which they failed as state-control was limited to only parts of Grozny. This also meant that Chechen independence led to a competition of defining the character of the Chechen nation, as different factions competed in setting up their own institutions and patronage-networks in the pursuit of power. Once the Soviet-system collapsed, there were no institutions which could reliably tie the Chechens together around a common vision for the republic.

By contrast, in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria, the Soviet state had allowed the local administrations to be filled by individuals from the local nations, with complex formal and informal rules for power-sharing among ethnic groups, and between elites were solidified under the Soviet system (Ware and Kisriev 2014; Souleimanov 2015; 2018; Yemelianova 2005: 65). These same relationships and rules for power-sharing became the template for governance after the Soviet collapsed, providing a form of social and political cohesion which simply was absent in Chechnya. While these elite-deals may have been perceived as corrupt by segments of the population, they were strong enough to keep political radicalism at the margins of society.

In Pakistan, the Pashtun settled areas in Swat continued to be defined by a semi-Feudal system where the privileges of a landed elite were maintained, despite this system being rendered superfluous through the monetarisation of the economy. In the tribal areas, political inflexibility was also imposed by the state which made it illegal for political parties to operate in the province, while also denying ordinary tribesmen the right to vote. Instead, it imposed a clientelist system in which only state-favoured tribal leaders were given direct access to state-representatives and subsidies (Gul 2010a: 111; Omrani 2009). In both the settled areas and in the tribal areas, governing-institutions had become obsolescent by favouring narrow groups of people in positions which stemmed from pre-modern subsistence-based agricultural economies. At the same time, the state effectively denied those

not lucky enough to enjoy those privileges from airing their grievances through official channels.

In all cases, the state itself was either too weak or unwilling to adapt to the grievances of their citizens. In multiple post-colonial Muslim countries, the failures of the state led people at the periphery to look to either customary social patterns, or religion for escape from chaos (Hechter 1975: 7; 2000). In countries with stronger state presence, the state would in many cases withdraw from civil life, opting to rule through reigns of terror, especially in the wake of failed experiments with state-led modernisation and import substitution (Ayubi 1995; Bellin 2004).

In this sense, the institutional confusion which paved the way for experiments in religious governance followed, not from liberalisation per se, but from liberalisation built on weak or inflexible institutions, sometimes with half-hearted attempts at social reforms by the state (Keddie 1969; Mann 2004: 355; Moore 1967; Skocpol 1982). This may also have prevented the development of the necessary class-alliances to bring about sustainable political liberalisation, in particular between industrial workers or urban middle classes (Dahlum, Knutsen, and Wig 2019). Such class-interests may instead have been pushed towards other institutional alternatives, especially religious institutions which maintained credibility in ways liberalism did not (Ahmad 2017).

In places like Chechnya, the Pashtun-areas of Pakistan, and Somalia, the notion of a liberal-democratic order was a distant reality with little prospect of gaining ideational stickiness, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. It both lacked the support of local social groups, but was also unrealistic politically and economically due to the distance and disconnectedness from Western markets. While different articulations of socialist-ideology could have appealed to segments of the population who sought institutional

change, these were gradually delegitimised between the 1970s and 1990s, or simply lacked the institutional fundament for effective mobilisation (Derluguian 2005; Gellner 1997; Malley 1996; I. Wallerstein 1999). In Somalia, the experiment with “scientific socialism” lost credibility under Siyad Barre’s dictatorship, socialism in Pakistan lost much credibility due to Soviet interference in Afghanistan, and in Chechnya it was seen as part of the ancien regime.

Some scholars such as Hadiz (2016: 15) argue that the ideological momentum of Islamism follows from the ability of Islamist political entrepreneurs in appealing to the economic anxieties and lack of upward mobility for the urban poor, and the middle class who lack access to patronage networks. It need not necessarily be the case that it is these exact same classes which underpin Islamist mobilisation throughout the Muslim world. In fact, there is a strong link between militant Islamism and traditionally peripheral tribal areas (Roy 2018; Dawod 2018; Khoury et al. 1990). In this regard it may seem that what Hadiz (2016) refers to as Islamic Populism which primarily takes the form of urban political movements, should be understood as a phenomenon which is separate from militant Islamism writ large, despite their common rhetorical references to the religion.

What seems to be the critical factor is that religiously-informed ideologies became the foundation for cross-class alliances which gave rise to Islamist political parties in places ranging from Turkey to Indonesia, becoming the primary opposition to oligarchical elites (Brooke 2019; Cammett and Luong 2014; Hadiz 2016; Hadiz and Robison 2013; March 2015; Munir 2021). In some cases the state itself withdrew from social life, leaving Islamic institutions to take on such roles (Derluguian 2005: 26).

In peripheral areas, the state was either absent, or contributed to the upending of traditional social relations by half-hearted or ineffective attempts at modernisation through development projects and social engineering as in Somalia and the Soviet North Caucasus, or

through clientelism as in Pakistan's tribal peripheries. These failures also carried with them the failure of the ideological projects they represented, ranging from socialist and communist policies in Somalia, the Soviet Union, and in Afghanistan for Pakistan's Pashtun community along with the delegitimization of the idea of Pakistan as a secular state. The turn to Islam became an alternative to the failures of these nationalist and left-leaning movements of previous decades as the state itself lacked legitimacy, and traditional institutions became associated with corruption, elitism, and superstition (Dalacoura 2001: 238). While Andrew March' (2015) description of the state as an "asteroid" which crashed into premodern Muslim society may be hyperbolic, there certainly seems to be a recurring tendency in these peripheral areas where Islamist rebellions developed that the state failed to attract the loyalty of its nominal subjects, even becoming an object of hatred.

The search for institutional solutions to social woes as traditional systems collapsed was therefore not filled by the state, but instead turned to what in many cases was the last-man standing as a source of social cohesion and legitimacy, which became religious authority and networks. The idea that the template for such projects lay in the religion was further promoted by major developments in the 1970s which advertised the viability of Islam as a political platform where Arab nationalism and its equivalents failed (Roy 1990; 1994). The Iranian Islamic revolution and the Afghan Mujahideen's successes also promoted articulations of Islamism which were specifically counter-hegemonic, revolutionary, and openly hostile to perceived Western values which in both cases were associated with the atrocities of the Shah in Iran and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Added to this was the competition over Muslim minds between Iran and Saudi Arabia, both of which sought to export their own interpretations of political Islam to outcompete the other as petrodollars were spent on religious seminaries and charities throughout the Muslim world in support of these ideologies (Nasr 2000; Nasr 2006)

Crucially, and a major point in this thesis, the “trendiness” of such ideas after the 1970s was not enough for militant Islamism to gain local stickiness through the Muslim world. Indeed, the cases studied here show that there is significant sub-national variance in the emergence of either militant or peaceful Islamist actors, as these were most likely to appear in areas where pre-existing institutions had ceased to function. In Somalia, it would be decades before these ideological trends had any influence, playing only a marginal role in the war against Siyad Barre’s regime, and remaining marginal for at least a decade after the state collapse in 1991 (Dowd 2015). The influence of this transnational trend on local politics was therefore primarily a question of whether the social-institutional landscape was receptive to these ideologies.

The critical factor in all cases studied here was that the pre-conflict social-institutional landscape shifted social capital towards religious institutions, ranging from Somalia’s Islamic Courts, to Wahhabi communities in the North Caucasus, and to networks of students at religious seminaries in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These all embody widely different understandings of the religion, but represent a response to broad historical processes which unsettled old orders, initiating the search for something new. In some cases it led to nation-building around ethnicity and local tradition as a way of tying people together as local and kinship-based networks lost their significance. If Ernest Gellner (1991; 2008) is to be believed, religion played a functionally equivalent role to national-identity in places where Andersonian (2006) processes of nation-building had not matured (Osborne 1992).

The turn to religion as the solution to local social needs was therefore a function of the contingent positionality of religious networks, institutions, and authority. It represents less a form of civilizational inevitability, than the resort to forms of social cohesion which remain standing where institutional alternatives, pre-modern or modern, have failed. Mogadishu, Chechnya, and the Pashtun territories in Pakistan all represented examples of incomplete

modernization, in different forms. Old institutions built on genealogical ties lost their social function, and their ability to provide either security or other public goods, and yet they were not replaced by something which functioned better in the form of the state.

Rather than being a “natural” category, the turn to religious modes of organisation and governance reflected a turn to a common signifier of identity which remained unspoiled as genealogical ties, ideas of the nation, the state, or socialism, were undermined by the international political developments of the 20th century. While the social ties and institutions organised around Islam, heterogeneous as they are, necessarily are unique to Muslim societies, the fact that these ties sometimes becomes the basis for social organization and mobilisation has less to do with them being natural institutions, than a question of historical contingency which undermined the alternatives in certain societies. Critically, as seen in multiple cases, including Somaliland, Puntland, the Ogaden, to Balochistan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and Ingushetia, the basis for social organization rested on alternative institutions which were better situated to take on governance-functions, ranging from tribal to state institutions. In Gould’s (1995) terms, it was in societies where mobilisation occurred along religious lines that Islamism became the predominant participation-identity over other identities and ideologies, and this occurred only in the societies where social capital had shifted towards religious institutions.

Step 3: Violence?

Civil wars are ultimately struggles over territory where rival actors seek to impose their systems of government on controlled populations. This does not mean, however, that it is only during war that multiple actors pursue their own governance projects. The notion that most aspects of social life is governed by state institutions is misleading in many countries

where the state is either completely absent, or only rules through the threat of power, neglecting social services. Consequently, in a number of countries, state institutions are complemented by bottom-up solutions to social issues ranging from religious charities and community centres (Belge and Blaydes 2014; Brooke 2017; Ismail 2006), to mafia-like organisations which establish their own orders in urban slums (Lessing 2021), or even in prisons (Skarbek 2011). In peacetime, states may tolerate, or even desire but lack the ability to repress such institutions. In some cases, states may see such institutions as a way of privatising the provision of social services as the state withdraws to rule through its monopoly of power (Dorman 2009; Malley 1996; Richards 2013). Institutional plurality is therefore pervasive in most societies, and bottom-up attempts at maintaining social cohesion need not inevitably lead to a confrontation with the state.

In some cases, the state's desire for total social control clashes with the aspirations of such local governance-experiments (Asad 2003; Hirschkind 1997; Schwedler 2011: 356). This is also why the fractionalisation of power is key to understanding civil wars. The social demand for certain forms of governance may lead to the emergence of new types of political actors, but low state-capacity is a key predictor for the outbreak of war (Bates, Greif, and Singh 2002; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hendrix 2011; Sobek 2010). Violence may still break out where the state's capacity is high, but is in those cases more likely to take the form of terrorist-campaigns on behalf of non-state actors, or violent state terror or repression by the state. This can also take the form of the state leadership feeling confident that it can assert its authority internally through force in regions and among communities in which it state has little legitimacy as a form of "internal colonialism" (Hechter 1975).

The essence of nation-formation is that separate cultural identities of regions begin to lose social and political significance in favour of a national culture to which the inhabitants

within a country's borders primarily identify with (Hechter 1975: 5; 2000: 23). However, a recurring feature of the cases studied in this thesis, is that the rise of Islamist armed actors was preceded by a fundamental reordering of civil society whereby Islamic networks the primary nodes for welfare and security provision, and therefore also political loyalty. Critically, the dynamics which lead to war follow from tensions between these experiments in Islamic governance, and the state or other rival non-state actors.

In all three cases of rebellion, a key cause of violence was the state seeking to assert its control over peripheral spheres of local governance. In Chechnya there was the dual hostilities between Moscow and the Chechen republic, but also between the nationalist leadership in Grozny and rival Islamist enclaves. In Somalia, the Islamic courts were perceived as a threat by rival warlords who also controlled the state, leading to recurring armed clashes. In Pakistan, the onset of the war on terror and the military's entry into tribal lands signalled a breach of old pacts that the tribes would be self-governed. Such state attempts at eroding the local basis of social order may spur mobilization to defend the prerogatives of local institutions and authorities (Hechter 2000: 28).

Notably, in the case of Mogadishu, these same experiments in Islamic government became involved in the project of creating a functioning national government and state after 2000. There was therefore a brief window in which the Islamic courts were supportive and complimentary to the authority of the fledgling Somalian state, as moderate factions were empowered. Yet, the Islamists were eventually forced out of state-negotiations as the state itself fell under the control of rival warlords. Subsequently, increasing hostility with the warlords led to militant sub-factions such as al-Shabaab to gain leadership positions and hijack the broader courts movement in favour of militant mobilisation, rather than simply governance (Barnes and Hassan 2007). Similarly, in places like Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria, Islamist actors initially expressed their acceptance of the secular state's authority,

only turning to militancy after intensified repression during the Second Chechen War (R. B. Ware and Kisriev 2001b; E. Souleimanov 2011). Similarly in Pakistan, Islamist sentiments were initially turned towards Afghanistan, only really targeting the Pakistani state after the War on Terror changed Islamabad's policy towards the Frontier-territory (Abbas 2014) .

As such, the presence of Islamist actors in the form of quasi-autonomous spheres of governance does not in itself mean that a showdown with the state is inevitable. In some cases, such as Mogadishu for a brief period of time, they may play a role in state-building. What seems crucial, however, is whether these actors are dominated by moderate or militant sub-factions. Hostility from the state is likely to favour militant sub-factions who espouse a rhetoric of revenge and protection. Inclusion and selective incentives may favour moderate factions by creating political opportunities for learning and ideological debates. Ultimately, the relationship between the state and such Islamic institutions is a struggle over carving out specific political orders in societies unsettled by the transition to modernity. Whether or not this leads to violence is ultimately a question of whether both the state and non-state institutions are controlled by individuals who are willing to accept the other.

The above analysis indicates that the variance in the emergence of Islamist insurgencies followed from the fact that these were fundamentally different types of pre-war societies. Table 15 revisits the intuition that there are connections between the character of societies and the pathways to war, judged by levels of fractionalisation and the effectiveness of institutions in providing public goods. The table does not represent an exhaustive list of mechanisms, but provides an overview of the cases here and the mechanisms which pushed them towards violence.

Table 15: Examples of Pre-war Mechanisms for Islamist Emergence

Fractionalization of Authority	Public goods provision	
	Effective	Limited
High	<p>Archipelago</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intra-Group Competition (e.g. Social revolution against tribal structures) - Swat, FATA 2. Inter-group competition (E.g. Tribe vs. Tribe) - FATA 	<p>Disorder</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Polity-Building (Demand-Driven) - Mogadishu 2. Roving Bandits (Supply-Driven) - Chechnya
Low	<p>Centralised Authority</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State Overreach/Repression - Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia 2. Ideological Discontent 	<p>Nightwatchman</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State Overreach 2. Social Discontent

It illustrates one manner in which the pursuit of explanations for the outbreak of civil war broadly, and Islamist civil wars specifically, may be studied in a more cumulative manner. Rather than continuously gathering disparate empirical findings, I argue that different mechanisms may be associated with different types of societies. This also means that the repeated micro-level study of the outbreak of war may be positioned in relation to the

broader literature in ways which help us to understand which aspects are general traits, and which are purely local (Cederman and Vogt 2017: 2008). For example, it begs the question whether the path to Islamist civil war in Mogadishu is emblematic of disorderly societies and could explain cases such as Yemen and Mali. It could also be the case that there are multiple pathways for disorderly societies to experience Islamist insurgencies, but that these are fundamentally different than Islamist insurgencies in archipelago- or nightwatchman systems.

Also, this table allows for the study of societies in transition. Notably, Mogadishu moved from an archipelagic system in 1991, towards a disorderly system around 2000s as armed groups fractionalised and social institutions ceased to function. Chechnya, by contrast, began moved from a cohesive system under Soviet rule, to a nightwatchman-state as the Soviet Union collapsed, and increasingly towards a disorderly system as the Chechen war and independence left it without a functioning state. Chechnya might be comparable to Iraq in that it moved from a nightwatchman-system to one of near disorder following a sudden external shock. The table may therefore also allow for the comparison of countries based on their trajectories. Notably, countries move between more or less fractionalisation, or more or less effective institutions, and there may be particular mechanisms associated with such different shifts.

This is not to say that this captures everything, notably it does not say anything about the ideological responses of non-state actors. This is deliberate, and fits with the argument earlier that the question of which types of networks and institutions fill social demands for security and public goods is a matter of contingent positionality, rather than determinism. This also means that the table allows for a way of comparing Islamist to non Islamist civil wars, first to examine whether there are fundamental differences in their trajectories, and second to distil whether there actually is anything unique about Muslim societies. The table also allows for the distinction between civil war and other types of political violence.

Notably, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia, may have gone the path of Chechnya in the 2000s, but the Russian state had by that point successfully asserted its power, meaning that only hit-and-run terrorist attacks were a viable form of violent opposition.

Another key implication is that Islamist insurgencies are not the same at all. Treating Islamist civil wars as a unitary category may fundamentally distort our understanding of how such wars erupt, by shrouding the social dynamics and conditions which drive them. It also prevents us from understanding how Islamist insurgencies are similar or different than other wars. It may, for example, be the case that Islamism's emergence has parallels to the rise of socialism and fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, or to communist rebellions during the Cold War. Our current classification of wars through their ideological signature, rather than underlying conditions, prevents us from exploring such recurring patterns.

In essence, classifying wars according to the pre-war social landscapes they emerge from may be one way of solving a fundamental issue in the study of civil wars., which is the lack of clear ontological foundations for how groups are comparable, and the non-integration of sources of heterogeneity into existing datasets (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Eck 2012; Sambanis 2004; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). The study of civil war has gone down a path of relying on increasingly fine-grained data, but relies on fundamentally unquestioned ontological assumptions that different civil wars in fact are comparable, and that sources of heterogeneity can be controlled for (Samii 2016).

The lack of big theories in the study of civil war is an issue, not just for the study of ideologies and war, but represents a fundamental barrier to progress as the question of what exactly we are studying or capturing in datasets and empirical studies is based on implicit assumptions which have never been fully elucidated. Positioning wars in the types of societies they develop from may be one way out of this situation.

Conclusion

A defining feature of civil wars in recent decades is that rebel groups with an Islamist ideological profile have become the predominant type of rebel groups. While such groups are heterogeneous in their goals and methods, it is still curious that religiously-inspired ideologies have become widespread when the common academic assumption was that the political significance of religion would diminish as the societies of the world entered modernity. As it turns out, modernisation is far from a linear process, and religion has in multiple contexts become the idea-system to which some communities turn where other idea-systems and institutions failed. However, the civil war literature has not adequately dealt with this ideological shift. A dual inattention to both historical processes and to ideology means that the causes and impact of Islamism becoming pervasive among rebel groups remains enigmatic.

At the macro-historical level, there was a shift from socialist-inspired ideologies in the 1950s and 1960s, to Islamism gradually becoming the foremost counter-hegemonic for Muslim would-be revolutionaries, and eventually among Muslim rebel groups as well. While existing explanations of this shift have pointed to the purported strategic advantages of adopting Islamist or religiously-extremist ideologies for rebel groups, the evidence suggests that this explanation is wholly inadequate as it takes the appeal of Islamism among Muslim audiences as a given, an assumption which in itself is highly questionable. At the micro-level, the question of how ideological choice occurs remains a frontier in civil war research with few answers as of yet.

This thesis is an attempt at theory-building to explain the macro-historical rise of Islamism among rebel groups, through an inductively-derived theory of how group-ideology is determined by the process of mobilisation at the micro-level. Through the inductive study

of eleven cases in the Somali territories, the Russian North Caucasus, and Pashtun and Baloch territories in Pakistan, I find that critical factor which explains the emergence or non-emergence of Islamist rebel groups is that there was a pre-war social-institutional landscape in which social capital lay with religious institutions. Contrary to explanations of outbidding, I find that Islamist ideology was not selected with an eye for war, but was associated with institutional shifts whereby religious institutions took on security and public goods provision roles previously reserved for traditional institutions, or for the state.

Ideological choice among groups was strongly shaped and constrained by the process of mobilisation, which in turn dependent on the pre-war social-institutional landscape. Islamism as a participation identity was only pervasive in cases where conflict was preceded by a shift in social capital towards religious networks. At the micro-level, I find that Islamist rebellion was most likely to occur in contexts where an external shock had undermined pre-existing institutions, leaving religious institutions to take on security and public goods provision. This did not occur in cases where pre-existing institutions were able to adapt to and survive such shocks. The turn to religious institutions was neither pre-determined, nor inevitable, as even cases of state collapse saw other associational forms take primacy.

At the macro-level, I argue that broader processes of modernity has left multiple Muslim societies in a state of incomplete modernity where traditional institutions have ceased to function or serve their purpose, while the state has failed to replace them. It is in these in-between societies that we are likely to see experiments in new forms of association and governance. As a matter of historical contingency, religious networks have in many cases been best positioned to fill this gap. The outbreak of violence represents a clash between such local experiments in religious governance, and states which seek to impose institutional uniformity within their territory.

Finally, I set out an agenda for studying both Islamist civil wars, and also civil wars more broadly by classifying societies according to their pre-war social-institutional configurations. In so doing, I seek to overcome a persistent issue in civil war studies where research has become fragmented, disparate, and non-cumulative. By classifying wars according to the types of societies they emerged from, it may be possible to incrementally identify recurring pathways to war, and to elucidate how this relates to macro-historical shifts.

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Appendix:

The following list includes all types of Islamist-oriented groups, including Shi'ite and other non-Salafi-Jihadist groups. The criteria for a group to be labelled as Islamist is that it proclaims to seek the imposition of an Islamic system of governance. This is a deliberately broad criteria, as the goal is to understand why some groups choose to adopt an Islamist political identity, not to assess to what degree they are “true” believers or adhere to some abstract academic definition. This does lead to the exclusion of some cases, for example RSO²² in Myanmar, and AFD in Uganda which are included in the FORGE data but not in RELAC. Some insurgent groups might have had sub-factions of Islamist-oriented individuals, but these are excluded if the broader organizational identity is not Islamist.

Table A1: Groups

Country	Groups
Afghanistan	Jam'iyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan-Khalis faction, Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan, Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli-yi Afghanistan * Ittihad-i Is, Hizb-i Wahdat, Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami, Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Taleban, Haqqani Network
Algeria	Takfir wa'l Hijra, AIS (FIS), GIA, AQIM (GSPC), MUJAO
Bosnia	Mujahideen
Chad	Islamic Legion
Egypt	al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, IS-SP, Egyptian Islamic Jihad
Eritrea	EIJM – AS
Ethiopia (Somali)	AIAI
India (Kashmir)	Kashmir Insurgents, PULF
Indonesia	Darul Islam, GAM
Iran	Jondullah
Iraq	SCIRI, Al Mahdi Army, RJF, IS, Ansar al-Islam
Israel	Hezbollah, PIJ, Hamas, PRC

²² Labelled as such by Braithwaite and Cunningham, but this seems implausible. See (Brennan and O'Hara 2015)

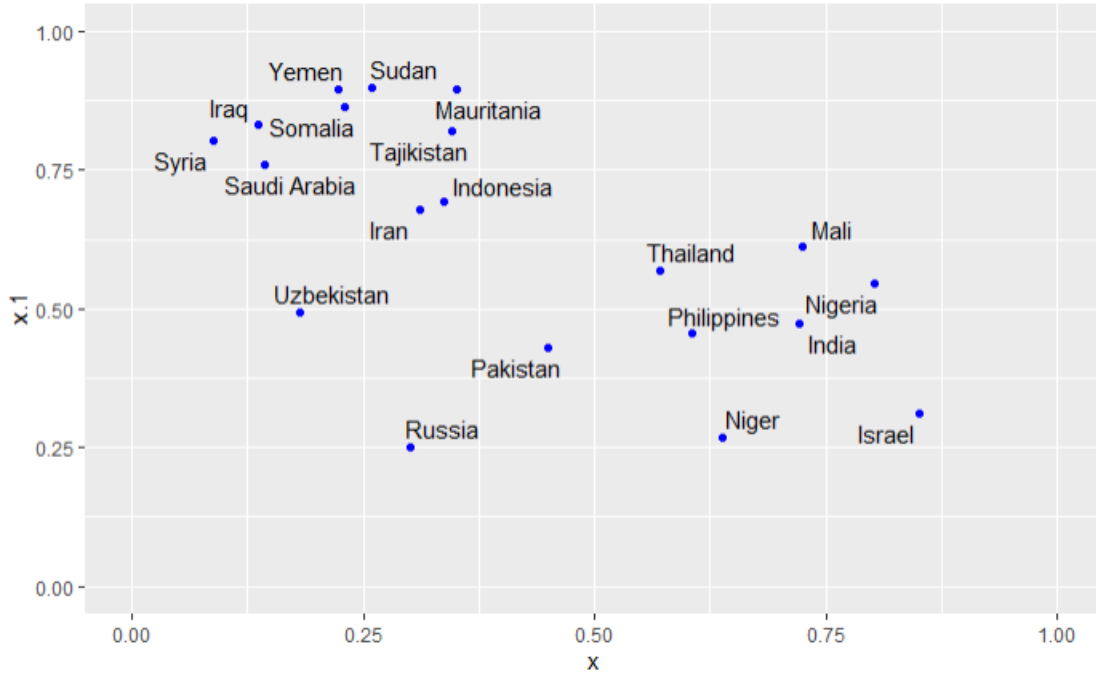
Mali	Ansar al-Sharia, Libya Dawn
Mauritania	Ansar Dine, AQIM, Al-Murabitun, Mujao
Nigeria	Ahlul Sunnah Jammah, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)
Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Balochistan)	TTP-TA, TNSM, TTP, Lashkar-e-Islam, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Lashkar-e-Jhangyi, Ansaar ul-Islam
Philippines (Parts of Mindanao)	MILF, ASG, BIFM
Russia (North Caucasus)	Wahhabi movement of the Buinaksk district, Forces of the Caucasus Emirate
Saudi Arabia	JSM
Somalia	ARS/UIC, Al-Shabaab, Harakat Ras Kamboni, Hizbul-Islam, AIAI
Sudan	Islamic Charter Front, JEM
Syria	Muslim Brotherhood, Jabhat al-Nusra li al-Sham
Tajikistan	UTO, IMU
Thailand	Patani Insurgents
Uzbekistan	IMU, JIG
Yemen	AQAP, Ansarallah

Table A2: Muslim Countries

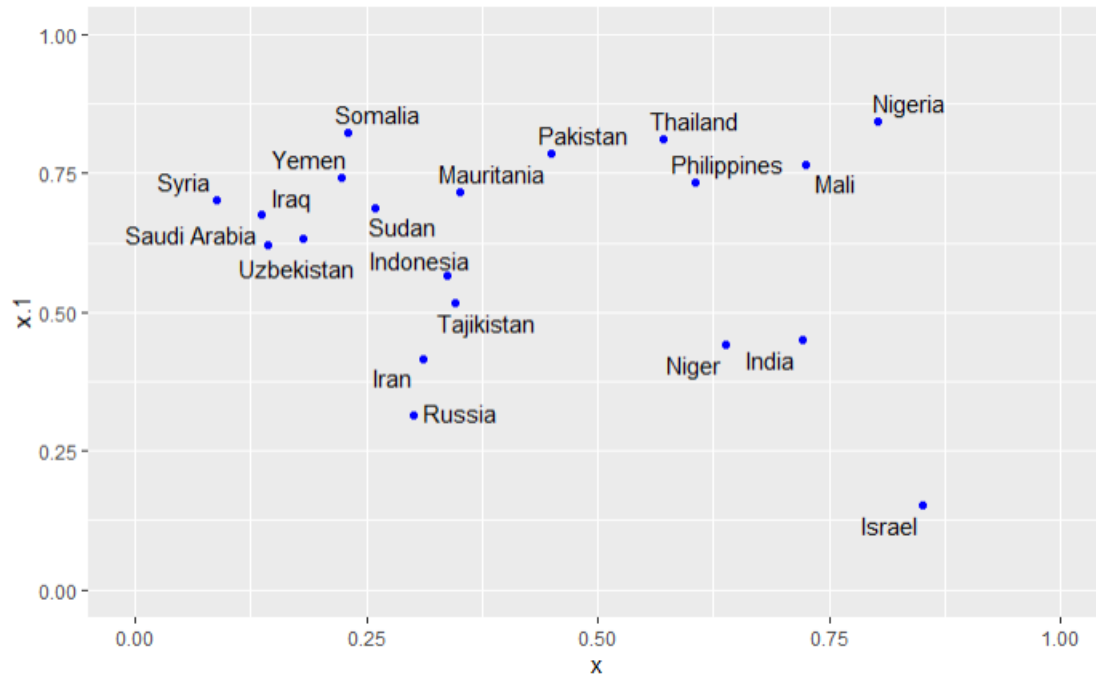
Percentage Muslims	Country
50 %+	Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Kosovo, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Palestine/Gaza, Palestine/West Bank, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Bosnia Herzegovina
15 % - 49 %	Benin, Cyprus, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Cameroon, Bulgaria, Suriname, Tanzania, Uganda
< 15 % or Historically Significant Presence	Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, India, Israel, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius,

	Montenegro, Mozambique, Russia, Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Philippines, Serbia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Sudan
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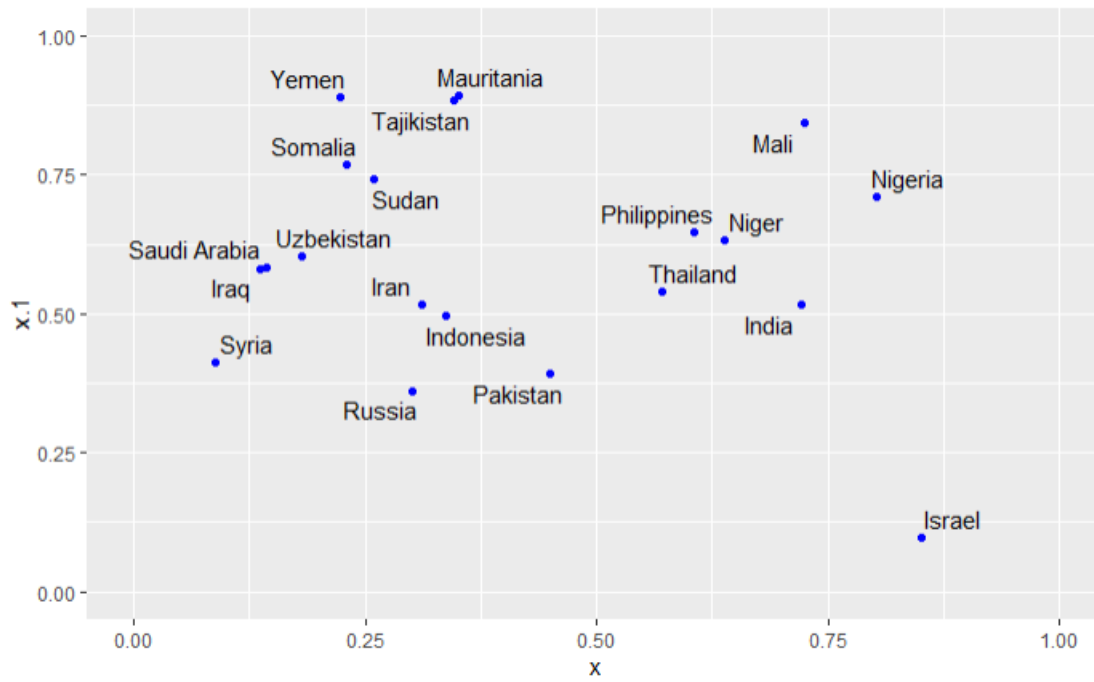
- **Y= Civil Society, X= Rule of Law**



- **Y= Civil Society, X = Administrative Impartiality**



- **Y= Civil Society, X= Rule of Law**



- **Y= Social Exclusion, X= Urban-Rural Exclusion**

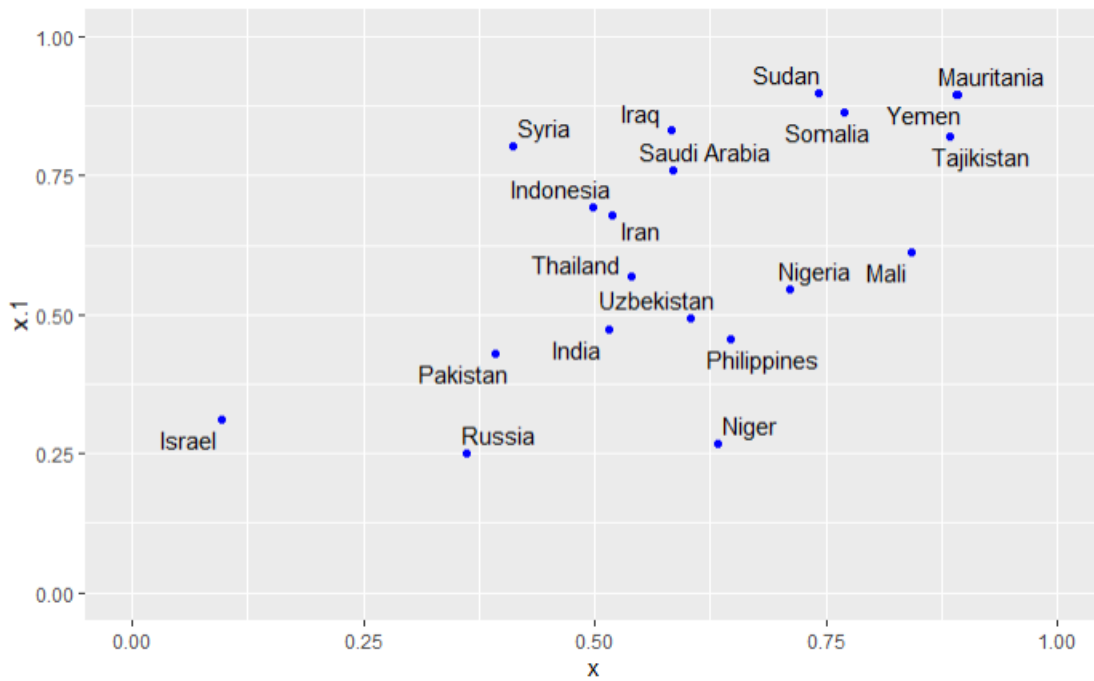


Table A3: Cross-Case Patterns

		Somali Territories				Pakistan			Northern Caucasus		
	South-Central	Somaliland	Puntland	Somali State (Ethiopia)	NWFP	FATA	Balochistan	Chechnya	Dagestan	Kabardino-Balkaria	Ingushetia
Social Landscape	High Fractionalisation, Ineffective Institutions	Moderate Fractionalisation, Institutional Continuity	Moderate Fractionalisation, Institutional Continuity	Low Fractionalisation, Institutional Continuity	Moderate Fractionalisation, Moderate Institutional Continuity	High Fractionalisation, Moderately Effective Institutions	Moderate Fractionalisation, Institutional Continuity	High Fractionalisation, Effective Institutions	High Fractionalisation, Effective Institutions	High Fractionalisation, Effective Institutions	High Fractionalisation, Effective Institutions
Institutional Disruption	Yes (Disorder)	Limited	Limited	Limited	Yes (Afghan Jihad)	Yes (Afghan Jihad)	Limited	Yes (Elite Replacement)	Limited (Elite Continuity)	Limited (Elite Continuity)	Limited (Elite Continuity)
Religious Politicisation	Yes (Oppositional)	Yes (Coordinated)	Yes (Coordinated)	Yes (Coordinated)	Yes (Oppositional)	Yes (Oppositional)	Limited	Yes (Coordinated and Oppositional)	Yes (Oppositional)	Yes (Oppositional)	Yes (Oppositional)
Transnational Influence	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
Outbidding	Intra-Group	No	No	No	Intra-Group and Inter-Group	Inter-Group	No	Intra-Group and Inter-Group	No	No	No

Islamist Militarisation	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (Invasion)	Yes (Terrorist)	Yes (Terrorist)	Yes (Terrorist)
Islamist Insurgency	Yes	No	No	No	Yes (State Expansion)	Yes (State Expansion)	No	Yes	Yes (Low-Intensity) Low-intensity (2000s)	Yes (Low-Intensity)	Yes (Low-Intensity)
Mechanism	Security	NA	NA	NA	Social Revolution, Intertribal Competition	Social Revolution, Class Competition	NA	Intergroup-Competition, Parallel Societies	State Repression (Terrorist Campaign)	State Repression (Terrorist Campaign)	State Repression (Terrorist Campaign)
Ideological Alternatives	None. Socialism, Clannism, and State-Building Delegitimised.	Yes. Dominant Party's State-Building Process	Yes. Dominant Party's State-Building Process	Yes. Somali Nationalism.	None. No Reach for Political Parties	Limited. Pashtun Nationalism Associated with Communism and Landowning Class	Yes. Baloch Nationalism.	Limited. Chechen Nationalism Without Strong Roots	None	None	None

