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On the Borders of Cultural Relativism, Nativism, and International Society: A Promotion of Islamist Democracy in the Middle East after the Arab Uprisings*

Metin Koca
European University Institute

Abstract

This article focuses on post-Arab-uprising calls for democratization in the Middle East. Scrutinizing the then-Turkish government's coupling of a cultural relativist norm-promotion discourse in the global arena with a nativist discourse in the Middle East, the paper examines how much our current conceptual tools can explain successes and failures in this process. The article focuses on two schools of thought that pay considerable attention to the role of culture in institution-building: the English School of International Relations (ES) and the nativist strand of post-colonialism. It touches upon two problems in the ES literature and offers two solutions: (1) It reinforces attention on Buzan's conception of interhuman society compared to the ad hoc blending of different levels of abstraction in cultural analyses. (2) It aims to initiate a dialogue for a more precise distinction between various ideational and behavioral components of the concept of culture, since these components do not necessarily fit well together. Considering these two caveats, the article operationalizes culture in the given case to examine some limitations of the nativist ideological perception of cultural zones and its concurrent claims over true nativity. The paper seeks these limitations, first, by analyzing the extent of cultural commonalities between three sub-regional Islamist movements that shared a strong common identity, and second, by examining the dialogue between ideological mismatches in the constitution-making processes of Egypt and Tunisia.

Keywords: Relativism, culture, English School, identity, democracy

1. Introduction

Although social scientists do not necessarily enjoy following the agenda of popular debates,[1] this sharing may be the constitutive element of a field of academic inquiry. One such field is the study of culture, which is the chicken-or-egg debate in a centuries-old transmission of public discourse, due at least in part to the constant sharing of a large vocabulary (*e.g.* civilization, culture, tradition, identity).

A stark illustration of this transmission is the popular topic in Europe as to whether Turkey, as a candidate country, or *Muslim*, as a usually stereotyped religious identity, can internalize democratic values with characteristics other than the self-defined Western identity,

Metin Koca, PhD Candidate, European University Institute in Florence. Email: Metin.Koca@EUI.eu.

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[1] David Paul Haney, *The Americanization of Social Science* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008). See Haney for the ways leading sociologists in the US encouraged, for many decades, "a professional secession from public engagement in the name of establishing the discipline's scientific integrity" (inside cover flap).

ideals, and ways of thinking and behaving.[2] Another reflection of these identity politics is no less contemporary: how much culture matters in post-Arab-uprising institution-building processes. Starting in 2010, some military regimes in the Middle East began to disintegrate in the face of popular uprisings. During this process, Turkey's self-proclaimed conservative democratic government purported to help some rising self-proclaimed Islamist governments construct a set of regional norms that the former deemed a functional equivalent of the EU's Copenhagen Criteria, albeit in a different spirit—a cultural relativist manifesto in the global arena and a highly nativist one in the regional arena.

By examining the uses of culture in these simultaneous processes, this study aims to problematize the analytical frameworks of two schools of thought that pay considerable attention to culture in IR: the English School of International Relations (ES) and the nativist strand of post-colonialism (hereafter, nativism). I address two specific questions that relate to these highly broad literatures: (1) How did Turkey attempt to relativize the concept of democracy in the international arena during the Arab uprisings? (2) To what extent did the perceived common culture of Turkey and its interlocutors in the Middle East help initiate an institution-building[3] process in the region after the Arab uprisings?

"We look for a Middle East in which people, goods, capital and ideas move freely," said Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkish foreign minister at the time.[4] This thinking reflects what the EU has been struggling to facilitate in Europe since the Treaty of Rome. Davutoğlu, one of the top figures in the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, further clarified his country's regional goals as well as his perception of the ordinary Middle Eastern citizen:

> The values that we support in the Middle East are those that the EU accepts as [the] Copenhagen Criteria. They are the same […,] from fighting against corruption, democratic governance, and fair and transparent elections, to human rights and freedoms. The demands of any young Arab in Benghazi, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus and San'a are the things that the European societies naturally enjoy in their countries.[5]

He argued that the region should gradually institutionalize a democratic system *of its own*. In international forums, he defended a form of cultural relativism echoed by then-President Abdullah Gül, and then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as a must for a sustainable consensus between "the Middle East" and "the West", as they construed the geopolitics of these terms. On the flip side of this relativist position was a nativist regional imagination; that a foundational common culture would be the building block of institutionalizing anything *in* and *of* a space (*e.g.* the Middle East). This ambitious regional imagination has not materialized

[2] Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Talal Asad, "Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?" in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Unio*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 209-27.

[3] In current ES terminology, *democracy* and *human rights* are classified among the derivative primary institutions of contemporary international society. Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187. In Bull's definition of international society, a set of primary institutions shared by states constitutes the building blocks of an international society. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1977), 13. This approach within ES partially resembles the relatively new sociological understanding of institutionalism in IR. Martha Finnemore, "Norms, Culture, and World Politics: Insights from Sociology's Institutionalism," *International Organization* 50, no. 2 (1996): 326. Within the scope of this article, I mention democracy as a form of institution, democratization as a process of institution-building, and norm-promotion as an attempt to convince one's interlocutors of the need for the social construction of an institution.

[4] "Davutoğlu: Yeni bir Ortadoğu istiyoruz" [Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu: 'We want a new Middle East], *Istanbul World Forum*, 2012, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.iwf.org.tr/2012/10/disisleri-bakani-ahmet-davutoglu-yeni-bir-ortadogu-istiyoruz/?lang=tr.

[5] "Davutoğlu'ndan AB'ye Kopenhag kriteri sözü" [Promise of Copenhagen criteria from Davutoğlu to EU], *Haber 7,* November 8, 2012.

due to the intersection of many systemic, regional, and domestic developments that I do not extensively question in this paper. Specifically, I argue that the uses of *culture* throughout this process not only have policy implications but also sociological implications for cultural relativism, nativism, and conceptions of culture—in general in IR and in particular in the ES.

My argument is in line with Yosef Lapid's critique that "cultural wholeness superstitions"[6] in our analytical frameworks lead to essentialist readings of cultural zones and inter-cultural relativities. My normative position throughout the article is in line with the efforts to develop new approaches so as to study the differences between seemingly identical units, as well as the similarities between seemingly counterposed units. More specifically, first I touch upon two problems from the ES literature, which extensively question the role of culture in institution-building processes. The first of these problems is the *ad hoc* blending of different levels of abstraction in analyzing culture (*e.g.* sub-state, state, systemic). In this regard, I argue that the interaction between cultures at the sub-state and state levels can be more accurately traced with the relatively new conception of *interhuman and transnational domains,* in addition to the interstate domain. Second, by examining the ES' conceptualization of culture, I claim that the literature overlooks how different ideational and behavioral components (*e.g.* beliefs, values, ideologies, identities, habits) may vary under the umbrella term of culture. Within this context, I specifically problematize the common usage of *Islam* in the ES literature as the embodiment of a single culture.

Having recognized modern Islamism as the product of a particular ideological relationship with Islam, I initially argue that its claim over Islam and cultural relativism should be recognized as an ideological processing of culture. This processing explicitly contests several practices that are habitualized, hence culturalized, in the regions that Islamists address. Based on the two abovementioned caveats, the second half of the article analyzes the nativist call for institution-building in Egypt and Tunisia—the two countries that experienced deep contestations over the institutionalization of democracy in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. I first focus on the extent of cultural commonalities between Turkey's AKP, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and Tunisia's Ennahda. Then, I examine the ideological mismatches over what is native, and therefore acceptable in nativist terms, in the constitution-making processes of Tunisia and Egypt. I conclude that isolating an ideological reading of culture suggests little about the totality of a cultural system. Instead, as polarized but interlinked components, the mismatches should be examined together.

2. Revisiting Culture in the English School of IR

Defining culture is a multidisciplinary challenge. The concept is at odds with mainstream social sciences, especially when it is construed under the epistemological relativist traditions of anthropology, which go against universalist and objectivist concept-formations. Whereas anthropological definitions of culture[7] are based on strong interpretivist grounds, political science and IR scholarship generally favor more outcome-oriented definitions, which see culture as an explanatory causal condition, among others.[8] The English School is outside the

[6] Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 7.

[7] See, for a popular example: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, vol. 5019 (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

[8] Lisa Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (2002): 713-28.

mainstream theoretical positions in IR, and arguably more in line with cultural studies, with its rejection of "scientistic" methodology and many of its core assumptions.[9]

However, the operationalization of culture in the ES has seldom been challenged, although it is a highly important concept in its analytical framework. Culture in the ES is commonly associated with a combination of ideational and behavioral elements, such as "norm-setting beliefs and linguistic guidelines [that spawn, support, or eject] a given society's political system, art styles, social structures and dispositions to the outside world."[10] For Adam Watson, the limit of a culture is hidden in the limits of assumptions, theories, and values in a given society.[11] Whereas Martin Wight assumes that common culture is necessary for an international society to come into existence (i.e. the *gemeinschaft* notion[12]), both Watson and Hedley Bull do not mention culture as a building block of international society (*i.e.* the *gesellschaft* notion). Bull more broadly focuses on culture's role, not so much in the social construction of institutions during their foundation, but in enhancing normative cohesion afterwards.[13] Mark Hoffman defines what the ES often outlines as political culture: "the norms, rules, values and language of discourse and action."[14]

One major contribution of the ES to IR is its defense of the relevance of the sub-state level of analysis to international politics. However, the ways through which different levels of abstraction interact with each other is seldom questioned beyond some *ad hoc* illustrations in historical accounts of European international society. This is an important question, since values, rules, and norms at one level of abstraction are not simply reflected on another level. For instance, a state's pronounced values do not necessarily amount to an aggregation of its people's values. And its people's relationship with religion does not necessarily reflect the religiosity of state behavior.

With an *ad hoc* coupling, cultural analyses in the ES often tend to fluctuate between sub-state and state—even more radically, these are occasionally blended with civilizational abstractions: sometimes the people are taken as the mirror of a state, sometimes state behavior is assumed to reflect the people's behavior, and sometimes a timeless religious text is labelled as the embodiment of a civilization, with states and the people carrying this text for centuries. This totalizing approach underestimates the cultural complexity beneath each perceived cultural zone. Wight quoting Edmund Burke *inter alia* is one clear example of this jumping between different levels of abstraction: "[Turks] consider themselves as wholly Asiatic […] they despised and condemned all Christian Princes […]. What had these worse than savages do with the powers of Europe, but to spread war, destruction and pestilence amongst them."[15] A more critical part of the ES literature convincingly demonstrates how constructing 'the other' in the abovementioned way depicts monolithic imaginations of the other and the self,[16] while another part reproduces similar identifications under a notion of cultural wholes.

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[9] Hedley Bull, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach," *World Politics* 18, no. 3 (1966): 361-77.

[10] Adda Bozeman, "The International Order in a Multicultural World," in *The Expansion of International Society,* ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 387.

[11] Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[12] A core fault line in ES is between *gemeinschaft* (civilizational) and *gesellschaft* (functional) notions of international society, which results in different interpretations of the role culture plays in the formation and expansion of international society. Despite these clashing perspectives, the classical texts of ES overlap in finding that a degree of common culture is a precondition in the emergence of, or a facilitator in, the maintenance of an international society.

[13] Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 13-5, 32-3.

[14] In Peter Wilson, "The English School of International Relations: A Reply to Sheila Grader," *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 49-58, 56.

[15] Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 122.

[16] Iver Neumann and Jennifer Welsh, "The Other in European Self-Definition: An Addendum to the Literature on International Society," *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 4 (1991): 327-48.

Given that the abovementioned cultural attributes the ES literature questions necessitate going below the state level,[17] I aim to offer an illustration of the way to seek such connections between sub-state and state levels. Within this context, I argue that Buzan's introduction of *interhuman* and *transnational domains* is useful in identifying the symbolic systems of meanings that operate between sub-state actors, which may transcend, challenge or underpin the interstate system. Buzan defines interhuman societies as "sub-systemic communities with large-scale collective identities"—these may be civilizational, religious or ideological.[18] Based on their self-declared commonalities, I hereby take the leaderships of Turkey's AKP, Tunisia's Ennahda, and Egypt's MB as the claimants of an interhuman society with a strong collective identity. Although the leaders express commonalities that might otherwise have been a mixture of vague thoughts, their claims over societal formations are grounded in the social bases of these movements. However, what makes a society interhuman rather than transnational is the lack of a single network with an actor quality. In other words, both the leadership and social bases remain too fragmented to form a clearly delimitable transnational society. In this sense, interhuman societies have "shared identities, with networks posing the main ambiguity about classification."[19] Although the question of categorization remains open, I prefer calling the self-declared society between AKP, MB, and Ennahda as a claim of being one interhuman society.

This claim over interhuman society was relevant to the state level partially because their leaderships simultaneously ruled in Turkey, Tunisia, and Egypt with common aspirations but varying degrees of control over state apparatuses and social structures. It is necessary to examine these movements below the state level because they do not fully share the components of the interstate system, such as given nation-state borders that they occasionally criticized. Despite this collective identity, I claim that these societies do not necessarily share a uniform culture. This point brings me to the intermingled terms of culture and identity.

As the abovementioned definitions of culture in the ES literature suggest, the concept is used by ES thinkers in a way to integrate diverse symbolic systems, such as consciously made *ideologies*, hard-to-pin-down belief systems such as *religiosities*, their individual or collective expressions such as *identities*, and the routinized and mostly unconscious patterns of behavior such as *habits*—all under the rubric of culture. Scott Thomas' examination of Wight's work exemplifies this blending of symbolic systems.[20] For instance, in this article, almost all emphases on *culture* are followed by a complementary concept such as religion, ideology, or civilizational identity, since Wight's writings assume these are axiomatically in line. Connectedly, there are several references to a religion [*i.e.* Islam, Christendom] simply as a culture. However, it has been convincingly argued in recent multidisciplinary endeavors[21] that 'Islam' *per se* cannot be analyzed as a single cultural system, since it is clear that Muslims do not carry out identical practices with a uniform mode of Islamic perception.[22] Sketching a similar distinction between culture as practice and religion as belief, the opposite

[17] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Order and Change in the Middle East: A Neo-Gramscian Twist on the International Society Approach," in *International Society and the Middle East,* eds. Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 222.

[18] Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, 207-12.

[19] Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, 135.

[20] Scott M. Thomas, "Faith, History and Martin Wight: The Role of Religion in the Historical Sociology of the English School of International Relations," *International Affairs* 77, no. 4 (2001): 905-29.

[21] These multidisciplinary endeavors question the anthropological roots of conceptualizing religions as cultures. See footnotes 23 and 24.

[22] Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam,* trans. George Holoch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 91-102.

was recently argued for Catholicism: many have recently claimed that Catholicism survives solely as a culture in today's Western Europe, but no longer as a strong belief system.[23] Whereas religion is a matter of community and biological descent for Jews, it is a matter of personal belief for American Protestants.[24]

Although these symbolic systems are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are not necessarily cohesive. Not only might beliefs and practices de-couple, but also a common identity may not necessarily be a marker of cultural cohesion. A society may have a strong sense of common identity, with little consensus over the meaning of its cultural symbols: many anthropologists have demonstrated that societies that consider themselves to be well-integrated tend to have surprisingly little agreement on the content of their cultural commonalities.[25] In the same vein, habits and values might contradict one another. People's habitual practices do not necessarily reflect what they say they value as the order of their moral systems (always a critique from Islamists toward traditional Muslims). Connectedly, a religious ideology does not necessarily call for the re-embracement of historical cultural baggage. For instance, Islamism, as a modern ideology, calls for the purification of religion from other cultural artefacts. However, although Islam is a world religion for Islamists, their way of construing Islam is informed by distinct local structures that they are tied to.[26] This distinction between the particular and the universal is further questioned in the following section.

2.1. Cultural relativisms, nativisms, and the territory

The totalizing conceptions of culture necessarily result in a perception of monolithic cultural spaces—counter-posed against one another, wary of dialogue, and mostly uniform within themselves. New approaches[27] in the ES aim to challenge this conventional understanding with stronger "syncretic"[28] accounts of history that prioritize the communicative evolution of cultures, as opposed to the reproduction of essentializing labels in the literature.

Essentializing labels extend far beyond the literature mentioned above. A notion of almost-impermeable cultural borders is shared in parts of global history[29] and political and social sciences.[30] A common feature is the rendering of the originally theoretical debate of cultural relativism into a matter of territorial factionalism, through which each culture is reified as a delimited territory. Within this context, cultural relativism no more marks a claim over how cultures communicate but turns into an argument over how the centers of power that talk in the name of *cultural zones* ought to interact with one another. This form of cultural relativism goes beyond the empirical recognition of cultural variability.[31]

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[23] Roy's study asks what conversion is, if religion is simply culture. Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 33.

[24] Adam B. Cohen and Peter C. Hill, "Religion as Culture: Religious Individualism and Collectivism among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants," *Journal of Personality* 75, no. 4 (2007): 709-42.

[25] Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 16.

[26] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 15.

[27] Iver B. Neumann, "Entry into International Society Reconceptualised: The Case of Russia," *Review of International Studies*, 37, no. 2 (2011): 463-84; Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[28] Barry Buzan, "Culture and International Society," *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010): 1-26.

[29] Bernard Lewis, "Empire and the Turks: The Civilization of the Ottoman Empire," *History Today* 10, no. 3 (1953).

[30] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49. For Huntington's conception of culture, see pg. 23. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 63.

[31] See, on the empirical recognition of cultural variability: Melford E. Spiro, "Cultural Relativism and the Future of

A strong illustration of this intermingling of cultural relativism, power, and territory is *nativism*, which denotes a desire to return to the indigenous, pre-colonial cultures. Although many post-colonialists agree that it is impossible to return to a cultural essence, some of them justified nativism for other reasons.[32] Taken together, these schools of thought present nativism either as a defense of a particular understanding of the *true native*, or a defense of inventing one against colonial forces. One key argument in post-colonialism is that colonial forces have their carriers in post-colonial societies: these carriers may not simply be residual institutional structures, but also people, who are claimed to lack a moral agency[33]—they are "captive minds."[34] In this sense, nativism was occasionally used to describe Islamism as a revival of indigenous forces against modernity and Westernization: "Of course, the real people could never be banished."[35] To the contrary, many students of Islamism note that Islamism has itself appeared as a modern ideology[36] in multiple forms, with the projection of a particular relationship between modern politics, social secularization, and religion. By introducing the temporal dimension, this opposite argument underlines that Islamist nativism ignores the historical trajectory of Islamism.

Nativist claims are not necessarily about a native itself, however, but about the ideological efforts to form one relative to others. One major response to this form of cultural relativism is that its defenders never come from non-dominant social classes: in the 'West,' they are "white male intellectuals,"[37] and in the 'rest,' they are ruling classes that negotiate their power.[38] Within this context, Gayatri Spivak questioned how nativism in itself implies its own "permission to narrate," by offering "phantasmatic hegemonic counternarratives" against the narratives of colonialism.[39] In a similar vein, Terry Eagleton points out that "cultural relativism can come to ratify the most virulent forms of cultural absolutism."[40]

The second half of this paper aims to demonstrate that the nativist discourse refuses to recognize many other natives as they could be, as many may not fit into a particular ideological imagination of the true native. This exclusion has its limitations in an institution-building process, especially in diverse societies in terms of their cultural attributes. Given that nativism is intended to foster easier dialogue for an autonomous democratization process, it is essential to question the extent to which Turkey's reference to a common culture has contributed to its ties with its Egyptian and Tunisian interlocutors. In addition, the consequences of the cultural relativist discourse should be examined by seeking its characteristic features in the post-uprising constitution-making processes of Tunisia and Egypt. Although I think that the

Anthropology," *Cultural Anthropology* 1, no. 3 (1986): 259-86. See, for an empirical account of the particularities of Middle Eastern International Society: Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez, "The Primary Institutions of the Middle Eastern Regional Interstate Society," in *International Society and the Middle East,* eds. Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 92-117.

[32] See Spivak's "Strategic Essentialism," in Bill Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (Routledge, 1998): 159.

[33] Nativism is not the only post-colonialist position that may undermine moral agency of actors: see the critique of Joseph Massad by Katerina Dalacoura, "Homosexuality as Cultural Battleground in the Middle East: Culture and Postcolonial International Theory," *Third World Quarterly* 35, no. 7 (2014): 1290-306.

[34] Syed Farid Alatas, "On the Indigenization of Academic Discourse," *Alternatives* 18, no. 3 (1993): 307-38.

[35] Kevin Robins, "Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe," in *Questions of Cultural Identity,* eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: SAGE Publications, 1996): 71.

[36] Asef Bayat, *Post-Islamism: The Many Faces of Political Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[37] Bronwyn Winter, "Women, the Law, and Cultural Relativism in France: The Case of Excision," *Signs* 19, no. 4 (1994): 959.

[38] Roland Burke, "According to Their Own Norms of Civilization': The Rise of Cultural Relativism and the Decline of Human Rights," in *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011): 115. Also see, Elizabeth M. Zechenter, "In the Name of Culture: Cultural Relativism and the Abuse of the Individual," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53, no. 3 (1997): 328.

[39] Gayatri Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?" in *Remaking History,* eds. Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani (Seattle WA: Bay Press, 1989), 269-92.

[40] Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 76-7.

process in Turkey should also be analyzed on the same ground, I believe it suffices within the scope of this article to take Turkey only as a norm-promoter.[41] With the abovementioned aims, I ask three questions, and the answer for each cumulatively addresses the following: (1) What did the claim over common culture consist of for the norm-promoter, the Turkish government? As a sub-question, How did this usage of culture differ from a more objectivist representation [*e.g.* that of the EU Neighborhood Policy] of the democratic norms? (2) How have the interlocutors, that is, the Tunisian Ennahda and Egyptian MB governments, reacted in response to this discourse of common culture? (3) Could the references to *nativity* pave the way for the initiation of a re-making of democracy?

After describing the main tenets of this particular cultural relativist political imagination of democracy, I argue that the Tunisian and the Egyptian governments responded positively to Turkey's cultural relativist norm-promotion discourse. Although these ties did not necessarily mean a total sharing of cultural attributes, they often implied a strong common identity. However, it follows that the nativist discourse did not operate as intended, which was to be a facilitator of dialogue in the region. Instead, its consolidative effect was limited to the self-conception of *an interhuman society,* which consisted of a mainstream political Islamist ideological current shared by at least three organizations with strong grassroots bases: Turkey's AKP, Egypt's MB, and Tunisia's Ennahda. Although the relativist international and nativist regional perspectives proved highly influential and well-represented, it is difficult to claim that the characteristic features of this discourse underpinned a constructive dialogue beyond its own ideological circle. I trace where it reproduced *exclusion*, *marginalization*, and *cultural-moral monism* against numerous sub-regional elements.

Given the outcome of constitution-making processes, it may be argued that the social polarization at the sub-state level did not allow the attempt of institution-building to mature at the interstate society. In Egypt, the military leadership exploited this social polarization to legitimize the coup. In Tunisia, arguably with a historic lesson-drawing, the Ennahda eventually managed to contribute to a widely supported constitution. The relationship between the compromises the Ennahda made in this process and its abandonment of exclusionary narratives is briefly questioned in the final section.

3. Norm-Promotion in the Middle East: Relativism versus Objectivism

A couple of studies specifically address the characteristic features of the EU's objectivist norm-promotion discourse. These researches process the relevant data in distinct ways—they touch on a double-speak between ideals and security,[42] an efficiency-centered technocratic and depoliticizing norm-promotion language, and connectedly, an indifference to the possibility of political and cultural divergences.[43] By contrast, I set forward that Turkey has recently used a nativist discourse that is based on its perception of common culture with the region. Having further deepened the self-exceptionalism[44] of previous governments, the AKP's aim

[41] In the sense of being primarily based on persuasion rather than a hegemonic norm-diffusion, I use the term *norm-promotion* similar to the term *norm-entrepreneurship*, coined by Finnemore and Sikkink. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 895.

[42] Helle Malmvig, "Caught between Cooperation and Democratization: The Barcelona Process and the EU's Double-Discursive Approach," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9, no. 4 (2006): 343-70.

[43] Milja Kurki, "Democracy through Technocracy? Reflections on Technocratic Assumption in EU Democracy Promotion Discourse," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 5, no. 2 (2011): 211-34.

[44] Lerna Yanik, "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism': Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy," *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 80-9.

was at least twofold: (1) telling the West that the Western concepts of norm-promotion are alien to the region and (2) telling the peoples of the Middle East that they should localize democratic norms in order to be strong enough against 'the enemies of the region.'

3.1. Turkey's AKP: normative relativism at a global level, nativism at a regional level

In this section, I analyze all official foreign policy declarations of the Republic of Turkey in relation to Europe and the Middle East between 2010 and 2014, including most speeches and some interviews with the AKP leadership, primarily Davutoğlu, Erdoğan, and Gül. Whereas relying on older sources may have been beneficial in questioning the changes actors went through, they would not help me understand how actors situated their claims into the specific social context of the Arab uprisings. Within this specific context, I scrutinized the data by prioritizing frequent repetitions of certain markers of identity in consideration with the wider social context behind their usage (*e.g.* when and for whom something is told, and what it meant for the interlocutors). These markers, such as "Westerners," "orientalists," "we," "they," "our civilization/culture," and "our democracy" were of representational importance in my analyses of the actors' relational[45] senses of the world. In light of this framework, I argue that the Turkish government aimed to sketch a collective transnational identity that highlights the distinction between 'natives and 'others.'

First, the government used a highly political discourse that labelled technocratic Western attempts of norm-promotion as ineffective, if not harmful. Instead, the government repeatedly underlined its self-perceived cultural proximity with the uprising countries. For instance, Davutoğlu touched several times upon his government's unprecedentedly close relations with the first democratically elected governments of Tunisia and Egypt, stating that the three governments interacted as though they were the cabinet of a single country.[46] This relationship was often backed by a religious repertoire with strong post-colonialist connotations. According to this framework, the reasons for the underdevelopment of the Middle East were worthy of addressing, but not from an "orientalist" viewpoint: "[W]e will ask this question not from outside, but from inside."[47] Opinions about outsiders have occasionally been more clearly expressed. For instance, then-President Gül mentioned "apartheid and intolerance towards different cultures" as "the West's chronic illness."[48] Davutoğlu further stated: "the producers of [fear scenarios against our regional unity] are the orientalists. [According to them,] Westerners, Europeans, Americans can experience democracy but Middle Eastern societies cannot."[49]

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[45] Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (2006): 695.

[46] "Dışişleri bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Stratejik Düşünce Araştırma Vakfı'nın '2012'de Türk Dış Politikası ve Gelecek Ufku' konferansında yaptığı konuşma, 27 Aralık 2012" [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's speech at the conference of the Strategic Thinking Research Association, entitled 'The Future Vision and Turkish Foreign Policy in 2012', December 27, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-stratejik-dusunce-arastirma-vakfi_nin-_2012_de-turk-dis-politikasi-ve-gelecek-ufku_-k.tr.mfa.

[47] "Dışişleri bakani sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun 'Arap Uyanışı ve Ortadoğu'da Barış: Müslüman ve Hristiyan Perspektifler' konferansı kapsamında yaptıkları konuşma, 7 Eylül 2012" [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's speech at the conference, 'The Arab Awakening and the Peace in the Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives', September 7, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-_arap-bahari-ve-yeni-ortadogu_da-baris_-musluman-ve-hritiyan-perspektifler_-konferans.tr.mfa.

[48] "Gül Addresses the Symposium on Immigration, Islam and Multiculturalism in Europe," Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, June 23, 2013, http://www.tccb.gov.tr/news/397/85740/gul- addrebes-the-symposium-on-immigration-islam-and-multiculturalism-in-europe.html (as of July 8, 2016, the link could not be reached from the Official Website of the Presidency. See, http://www.dunya.com/mobi/gul-addresses-symposium-on-immigration-islam-and-multiculturalism-in-europe-188447h.htm).

[49] "Dışişleri bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun V. Büyükelçiler Konferansında yaptığı konuşma, 2 Ocak 2013" [Foreign

This boundary delimitation was also occasionally apparent as an instrumental tool during Turkey's accession process to the EU. For instance, in his article in the Austrian newspaper *Die Presse*, Davutoğlu claimed that any obstacle to Turkey's accession would resonate not only within the boundaries of Turkey but also in surrounding areas, "primarily in Muslim countries and Turkic Republics."[50] The central argument behind this discourse is that Turkey was speaking to the West as the voice of a region that exceeds its nation-state boundaries.

Furthermore, the government justified its mission of norm-promotion with a civilizational political imagination. Davutoğlu repeatedly sketched a roadmap for the "Islamic Civilization":

> We have two forthcoming challenges: theoretical and practical. The theoretical challenge is rebuilding the values of the Islamic civilization in accordance with the essence of the basic notion of human rights. Without this, the realization of a thought revolution, it is very difficult for us to find solutions to our practical problems.[51]

Having embraced a civilizational level of argument, Davutoğlu called for the members of the civilization to find solutions to problems that "others" exploit, expressing that only a deep intellectual change will prove to the world that "our culture is one in which freedom of religion and conscience is enjoyed". [52] Similarly, Erdoğan repeatedly called for a change in the region's structure as a necessary precaution against increasing Islamophobia globally.

This norm-promotion is efficiency-centered; nevertheless, it somewhat prioritizes relative gains over absolute gains; in other words, a call for the region to be strong against "the enemies of its unity."[53] Davutoğlu described Turkey's regional vision not only as one with cultural solidarism but also one that is economically and geopolitically integrated, through visa exemptions, free trade agreements, power transmission lines, and transportation networks. He regarded Turkey's relationship with Egypt as strategically most important to accomplish these aims. He also warned against "those who support the status quo and instigate conflicts in the region to prevent this solidarity."[54] Lastly, the nation-state borders were often contested by Turkish leadership, although a re-configurative plan has never been brought to the interstate level as a challenge to the current international system. Davutoğlu repeatedly labelled the Sykes-Picot agreement as a wall between Turkey and the region.

The Turkish government's normative cultural relativism made room for a contestation of universalist definitions of democracy. The discourse recognized varying definitions of democracy, emanating from subjective formulations of each society with its specific

minister Davutoğlu's speech at the Fifth Ambassadors Conference, January 2, 2013], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-v_-buyukelciler-konferansinda-yaptigi-konusma_-2-ocak-2013_-ankara.tr.mfa.

[50] "Dışişleri Bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Die Presse gazetesinde (Avusturya) yayımlanan makalesi, 22 Mart 2012" [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's article published in *Die Presse* (Austria), March 22, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-die-presse-gazetesinde-_avusturya_-yayimlanan-makalesi_-22-mart-2012.tr.mfa.

[51] "Dışişleri Bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun İslam İşbirliği Teşkilatı Bağımsız Daimi İnsan Hakları Komisyonu toplantısının açılışında yaptığı konuşma, 27 Ağustos 2012" [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's opening speech in the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation[…],August 27, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-islam-isbirligi-teskilati-bagimsiz-daimi-insan-haklar-komisyonu-toplantisinin-acilisi.tr.mfa.

[52] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, August 27, 2012, par44.

[53] "Dışişleri Bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Stratejik Düşünce Araştırma Vakfı'nın '2012'de Türk Dış Politikası ve Gelecek Ufku' konferansında yaptığı konuşma" [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's speech at the Conference of the Strategic Thinking Research Association, entitled 'Future Vision and Turkish Foreign Policy in 2012', December 27, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-stratejik-dusunce-arastirma-vakfi_nin-_2012_de-turk-dis-politikasi-ve-gelecek-ufku_-k.tr.mfa.

[54] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, December 27, 2012, par56.

historical experience. For instance, then-President Gül criticized the imposition of Western-centric blueprints to modernize the Middle East.[55] For this reason, Turkey officially avoided using coercive connotations of the particular 'Turkish model'. Davutoğlu told the French newspaper *Le Monde* that Turkey never desired to be a model because every country has unique features, although he noted that Turkey is willing to share its experience.[56]

This cultural relativist position empirically claimed that value judgements are relative to cultures, and that normatively there is a value in preserving different cultural zones as they are. Davutoğlu made this nativism explicit in many of his speeches, one of which was a panel that he sat on with Morocco's Foreign Minister Saâdeddine El-Othmani: "If we take heart from a common civilization, […] we internalize modernity differently when we face it."[57] In these civilizational claims, the call for cultural relativism is combined with a strong regional nativism, which puts its own spatial and ideational limits on relativism. This concept is explored in the final part—the following part discusses the ties facilitated by sharing a common identity.

3.2. Claimants of a common identity: AKP, MB, and Ennahda

I claim that the Islamist governments of Tunisia and Egypt at the time considered the AKP government an extension of their identity, and partly of their ideology. They regarded the AKP's knowledge production as a source to share, especially when they needed external legitimation, strategic advice, economic assistance, and cultural dialogue. The MB and Ennahda justified their privileged connections with the AKP by referring to "the common culture." This section discusses the period before the Egyptian coup in 2013, in the aftermath of which the close relations between AKP and MB became much more apparent.

3.2.1. International legitimacy

First, both the MB's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Tunisia's Ennahda Party aimed to take advantage of the AKP's international image in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. The AKP was the reference point for the MB and the Ennahda, who were in need of an ideologically similar example in the international arena. For some time, modernists in the MB have been claiming that Islamist parties can be compatible with parliamentary systems. The appreciated position of the AKP in the MB dates back to mid-2007; the year the AKP swept the Turkish elections. After the elections, Mahdi Akef, then-Supreme Guide of the MB, defined this win as an evidential moment, in the sense that an Islamist party achieved "constitutional, political and economic development and social reform when operating in a democratic, free and fair environment."[58] Similarly, during leader Rachid Ghannouchi's early descriptive presentations of the Ennahda Party to foreign news agencies, he repeatedly emphasized that the Ennahda took the AKP as a model. For example, in an interview with *Euronews*, he noted the two countries' similar levels of proximity to the West and their similar

[55] Abdullah Gul, "Egyptian Muslims Should Embrace Secularism," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2012): 48-51.

[56] "Sn. bakanımızın Le Monde gazetesinde (Fransa) 21 Aralık 2011 tarihinde yayımlanan mülakatı" [Davutoğlu's interview with Le Monde (France), December 21, 2011], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sn_-bakanimizin-le-monde-gazetesinde-_fransa_.tr.mfa.

[57] "Dışişleri bakanı sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Fas dışişleri bakanı Saad Eddine El Othmani ile birlikte katıldıkları 'Demokratik Dönüşüm ve Ortak Bölgesel Vizyon' konulu Seta panelinde yaptığı konuşma, 19 Mart 2012 [Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's speech entitled "Democratic Transition and Common Regional Vision, March 19, 2012], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-fas-disisleri-bakani-saad-eddine-el-othmani-ile-birlikte-katildiklari--_demokratik-d.tr.mfa.

[58] "Egypt's brotherhood 'project' said boosted after Turkish elections," *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, July 30, 2007.

historical conditions and social structural developments as among the key reasons for the flourishing of "Moderate Islam" in both countries.[59] In short, both the MB and the Ennahda often referred to AKP as their ideological twins, especially when they needed to describe themselves to various circles that were suspicious of the two parties' political stances.

3.2.2. Strategic advice

The MB and the Ennahda also requested strategic advice from the AKP. Both parties welcomed AKP experts in their election campaigns. Whereas MB hired the AKP's propaganda team,[60] Ghannouchi's Ennahda also benefitted from the experience of Erol Olçok, a top figure in the AKP team.[61] One can easily see rhetorical similarities between MB and Ennahda propaganda and AKP slogans, from their almost-identical TV advertisements,[62] to the MB's definition of its voter base as "the silent majority," to the Ennahda's claim of being "the real sufferers of the former regime" rather than the "leftists."[63] The AKP's advice was not limited to election campaigns. Joe Parkinson wrote that the AKP periodically sent its officials and businessmen "to help President Morsi reform the country's secular-dominated institutions."[64]

3.2.3. Economic assistance

With confidence in the countries' exceptional ties, Turkish businessmen also invested in Egypt and Tunisia. Jamel Eddine Gharbi, Tunisia's minister of planning and regional development, called for deeper economic ties during an international fair organized by MUSIAD, one of the largest businessmen's associations in Turkey, and which ideologically represents the AKP's business base. Gharbi noted in his speech that Europeans' investments in Tunisia have been closely related to the ports and railways that Westerners built in accordance with their colonial interests.[65] He invited Turkish businessmen to invest in the country by underlining that the problems Tunisia has been facing emanate from this "dependency of the country on the Europeans." Similarly, a week before the first Tunisian-Turkish-Libyan Economic Forum, hosted in Tunisia under the auspices of that government, the chairman of the Turkish-Arab Association for Science, Culture and the Arts (TASCA), advised Turkish businessmen to consider these countries as "Tunisians are bored of the French, just as Libyans are bored of Italians."[66]

In relation to Egypt, the AKP was even more ambitious. Then-Minister of Finance Mehmet Şimşek and then-Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan announced Turkey's decision to grant Egypt a loan of two billion USD in return for accelerating Turkish business projects in Egypt. The first visit of the Turkish Entrepreneurs Businessmen Association to Egypt was

[59] "Post-revolution politics in Tunisia," *Euronews*, January 13, 2012.

[60] "Mısırlı Müslüman Kardeşler'in partisi AKP'den seçim taktikleri alıyor" [Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood takes election advice from AKP], *Milliyet*, November 19, 2011, http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/misirli-musluman-kardesler-in-partisi-akp- den-secim-taktikleri-aliyor/dunya/dunyadetay/19.11.2011/1464679/default.htm.

[61] "AK Parti Tunus'ta seçim kazandirdi" [AKP achieves electoral victory in Tunisia], *USASabah*, October 25, 2011, http://www.usasabah.com/Guncel/2011/10/25/ak-parti-tunusta-secim-kazandirdi.

[62] "AK Parti'nin reklamını birebir kopyaladılar" [They copied the AK Party advertisement one-to-one], *Milliyet*, September 26, 2014, http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ak-parti-nin-reklamini-birebir-gundem-1946202.

[63] Ece Temelkuran, "From Turkey: Beware the Genie of Islamist Discourse," *Al-Akhbar English*, March 2, 2012, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/4755.

[64] Joe Parkinson, "Turkey's Leadership Watches Uneasily as Egypt's Brotherhood Stumbles," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 2013, http://blogs.wsj.com/middleeast/2013/07/03/turkeys-leadership-watches-uneasily-as- egypts-brotherhood-stumbles/.

[65] "Türk işadamlarına Tunus'tan yatırım daveti" [The invitation to Turkish businessmen from Tunisia], *Ekonomi Ajandası*, October 13, 2012, http://ekonomiajandasi.net/turk-isadamlarina-tunustan-yatirim-daveti/14236?lang=ru.

[66] "Türk iş adamlari rotayi Tunus ve Libya'ya çevirdi" [Turkish businessmen altered course to Tunisia and Libya], *Taraf*, January 8, 2012, accessed 12 July 2014, http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/turk-isadamlari-rotayi-tunus-ve-libya-ya-cevirdi.htm.

full of references to a common history.[67] Although the Mohamed Morsi regime continued negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), these negotiations were always a matter of internal contestation within the MB. Since many MB members dismissed IMF and WB projects as tools of American hegemony in the Middle East, the party prioritized more-secure alternatives, among which were relations with Qatar and Turkey.[68] To conclude, the Egyptian and Tunisian governments regarded the AKP government and Turkish businesses as safe partners from which to request economic cooperation.

3.2.4. Cultural dialogue

The MB, Ennahda, and AKP have shared a strong cultural network as well. First and foremost, the theology-based political readings of the MB have been one of the major sources of knowledge for the current AKP leadership. For instance, Hayrettin Karaman, a professor of Islamic law and highly respected by Erdoğan, often reads key MB sources, *inter alia*, around vital political issues that necessitate sketching the borders of Islamism.[69] In a similar vein, having described the MB as one of the most significant realities in the history of Islam, Yasin Aktay, the AKP's former vice chairman in charge of foreign affairs, complained about "the academic indifference" in Turkey towards the MB: "[As of] today, there should have been tens of doctoral dissertations submitted about the MB."[70] Similarly, Abdurrahman Dilipak, a seasoned writer on Islamism in Turkey, recently criticized members of AKP for not paying enough attention to top MB figures, such as Yusuf al-Qaradavi. Although it is difficult within the current AKP leadership to find explicit disagreement with the MB's readings of Islam, the history of Islamism in Turkey includes long-term controversy over the role that the MB plays for Turkish Islamists.[71]

The second example of this cultural sharing includes Ghannouchi's early political doctrine, which he wrote during his exile in London and which is often argued to have been one of the inspirations for the Islamist parties' re-interpretation of parliamentarian systems.[72] Similarly, the Ennahda and MB governments have welcomed technical support from Turkey in culturally sensitive areas. For instance, the High Egyptian Islamic Council concluded an agreement with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) to protect historical documents about Sufism, Islamic mysticism, Islamic jurisprudence, and the archives of Arabic literature in Egypt. The Egyptian authorities also asked TIKA to update the sound and electrical systems of several mosques in Cairo.

When both Morsi and Ghannouchi attended the AKP's fourth Party Congress, they touched upon commonalities. Morsi stated that "there are common goals […] and a common

[67] "Mısır başkonsolosu ile kahvalti tadinda toplanti düzenlendi" [We had a breakfast meeting with Egyptian Consul General], *GIV*, April 23, 2012, http://mobilajans.com/giv/misir-baskonsolosu-ile-kahvalti-tadinda-toplanti-duzenlendi/.

[68] Katerina Dalacoura, "Islamism and Neoliberalism in the Aftermath of the 2011 Arab Uprisings: The Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt and Nahda in Tunisia," in *Neoliberal Governmentality and the Future of the State in the Middle East and North Africa,* ed. Emel Akçali (Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 71.

[69] See on democracy and Islamism: Hayrettin Karaman, "İslamcılar ve demokrasi" [Islamists and democracy], February 25, 2011, http://www.hayrettinkaraman.net/makale/0700.htm.

[70] Yasin Aktay, "Hasan el-Benna ve İhvan kimliği" [Hasan al-Banna and the identity of Ikhvan [MB]], *Yenisafak*, May 7, 2012, http://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yasinaktay/hasan-el-benna-ve-ihvan-kimligi-32288.

[71] See the debate on page 15-16.

[72] These ties were reinforced in May 2015 in Malatya, Turkey, at a signing for Ghannouchi's new book with the participation of then-Prime Minister Davutoğlu and Ghannouchi.

history among the common denominators."[73] Ghannouchi was even clearer about the content of these commonalities:

> Turkey represents a soft power in the Islamic World […]. In the nineteenth century [in] Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt, there was a search […] for ways to rise in the civilization by adhering to Islamic values. Our dreams were postponed by colonial powers, [but we] say from Tunisia now [...] that all revolutions can take Turkey as a guide. They have made a very pleasant marriage between modernity and tradition.[74]

These statements demonstrated, on the part of MB and Ennahda leaderships, selectivity regarding identity issues; for a long time, Islamists elsewhere explained the AKP's electoral success through "its founders' overtly religious posturing rather than hard socioeconomic facts."[75]

3.3. Nativism under contestation: "the others inside us"

In this part, I question whether the results of the nativist discourse have met its stated aim, which was to facilitate dialogue within each society through common assumptions and theories. In reality, nativism's characteristics meant certain limitations to the participation of opposing views into the constitution-making processes in Tunisia and Egypt. Here, I do not claim that Turkey's norm-promotion *per se* has led to as strong a nativist discourse in Egypt and Tunisia as it appeared in the constitution-making processes. My starting point is rather that nativism's abovementioned features were shared by the three movements in a manner that generated controversies over true nativity in the two constitution-making processes. Nativist claims were almost always operationalized in domestic politics as markers of exclusion, marginalization, and cultural-moral monism. This argument relies on the period before the Egyptian coup and the historic compromise on the new constitution in Tunisia. Given the aim of this article, I make an outcome-oriented analysis of the process rather than presenting an ethnographic account of how nativism's characteristics were created, sustained, spread, and contested.

The constitution-making processes witnessed thorny controversies with respect to the guiding principles of Islam, freedom of expression and belief, and women's rights. The debates on the content of Egypt's 2012 constitution were concentrated on certain issues: the definition of Islam as the official religion of the state, as well as one article that guaranteed freedom of belief while another prohibited "the abuse of all religious messengers and prophets."[76] Similarly, in the draft constitutions of Tunisia, the most-contested issues were the constitutional place of Islam, the extent of freedom of expression, anti-blasphemy laws, and the 'principle of complementarity' between men and women, as opposed to 'gender equality.'

The absence of an environment of dialogue was apparent in many ways, from secularists' withdrawal from Egypt's constituent assembly to the mismanagement of the chaos in Tunisia after the assassination of opposition leaders, Mohamed Brahmi and Chokri Belaid.

[73] "Morsi, Ak Parti kongresinde konuştu" [Morsi spoke at AKP Congress], *Zaman*, September 30, 2012, accessed January 12, 2014, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_Morsi-ak-parti-kongresinde-konustu_1352401.html.

[74] "AK Parti 4. olağan büyük kongresi" [AKP's fourth great congress], *Haberler*, September 30, 2012, http://www.haberler.com/ak-parti-4-olagan-buyuk-kongresi-3978474-haberi.

[75] Francis Ghiles, "Still a Long Way for Tunisian Democracy," *Berfrois*, May 30, 2013, www.berfrois.com/2013/05/francis-ghiles-still-a-long-way-for-tunisian-democracy.

[76] See a note on this debate in "An Appraisal of the New Egyptian Constitution," *The International News*, January 14, 2013, https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/407354-an-appraisal-of-the-new-egyptian-constitution.

Consequently, the processes triggered bloody street fights simultaneously in Tunisia and Egypt. These events resulted in a *coup d'etat* in Egypt and were a turning point for Tunisia and the Ennahda. Amidst this chaos, nativism was often operationalized as exclusion, marginalization, and cultural-moral monism.

Exclusion was twofold. One aspect was against the West (both as historical narrative and as contemporary Western organizations) with its insistence on certain norms; the second was against parts of the Egyptian and Tunisian societies that were claimed, by the governments, to espouse Western, hence alien, ideas. When the former was to be excluded, the principle of non-intervention was invoked.[77] When opposition was raised from within, leading figures of the MB and Ennahda often tended to exclude these voices from the range of legitimate arguments.

Next came marginalization, which is closely tied to exclusion. Opposition ideas were denigrated on accusations of supporting norms irreconcilably in contradiction with the dominant values of society. Marginalized critics were often depicted as nothing more than an inconsiderable minority. For instance, in Tunisia, anti-blasphemy laws were initially proposed in the name of public security. The Ennahda's Human Rights Minister Samir Dilou explicitly stated that the party was initially reluctant to introduce this law, but "secularist-driven provocations" compelled them to protect "the dominant values of the majority."[78] In the same vein, the MB's General Secretary Mahmoud Hussein called on the opposition to persuade people to join the majority instead of behaving like "thugs."[79] The Egyptian National Women's Council was one of the MB's ideological targets due to its allegedly un-Islamic nature. Criticisms by Egypt's National Salvation Front, consisting of more than 30 liberal and leftist political movements, were not deemed legitimate by the MB. In a party statement, the MB declared that the National Women's Council should be redesigned so as not to reproduce "the Western plans for which it was established."[80]

This monopoly over the content of culture led to staunch cultural-moral monism. The given relativist discourse, on the one hand, defended inter-cultural relativity on value judgements; on the other, it assumed intra-cultural monism. However, this assumption is problematic even between these three movements. To begin with a historical view (ignoring for the moment the Salafist strands in both countries), it would be a mistake to regard the Ennahda and MB as monolithically defined within themselves and in relation to each other. Although the Ghannouchi-led Ennahda movement was historically inspired by the Egyptian MB, Ennahda cadres were reportedly more eager to make "democratizing moves" compared to the MB after the regime changes.[81] More recently, the Ennahda's self-declared departure from political Islam was not welcome in all MB and AKP circles—some claim that the Ennahda left the MB, and some argue that the Ennahda lost the battle to the elites of the former regime. Some also claimed that Ghannouchi refused to implement AKP advice to "stay stronger against secularists" in Tunisia.[82] This turn in the Ennahda's discourse was partly the reason for a

[77] Imad Khalil, "US Report on Religious Freedom in Egypt Riles Muslims and Copts," *Al-Monitor*, August 1, 2012.

[78] Monica Marks, "Tunisia's Ban on Criticizing Religion could Bring Social Repression," *The Daily Star*, September 17, 2012.

[79] Olga Khazan, "'Lying and Disinformation': What the Muslim Brotherhood thinks of Egypt's opposition," *Washington Post*, January 25, 2013.

[80] Bisan Kassab, "Muslim Brotherhood Opposed Women's Council Reform," *Al-Akhbar*, February 17, 2012.

[81] Olivier Roy, "The Transformation of the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (2012): 5-18.

[82] According to Yüksel Taşkın, Ghannouchi told AKP leadership that Ennahda no more needs AKP's advice. See, "AKP, Kürtler ve cemaate karşı kullanılıyor, 'tepelenme' sırası kendisine de gelecek," *T24*, July 12, 2016, http://t24.com.tr/haber/akp-kurtler-ve-cemaate-karsi-kullaniliyor-tepelenme-sirasi-kendisine-de-gelecek,349508.

widely supported constitution in Tunisia. Sayida Ounissi of the Ennahda declared the driving force behind the party's change: "Exclusion could not be the solution if we wanted to sustain the health and stability of the transitional process."[83] In terms of the politics of culture in Tunisia, the consequences of this current rebranding of the Ennahda have yet to be seen. However, Ghannouchi argued that the monopoly of the state over religion is done, and the Ennahda does not want to create another monopoly over morality.

Furthermore, the AKP and the MB do not necessarily share a common culture in all aspects of their organizational structures. For instance, the two organizations have very different ways of following their members: whereas MB leadership gives high importance to the 'Islamic-ness' of its cadres' private lives, the AKP, following the Refah tradition, has been more easygoing about different lifestyles among its members—and it is not uncommon for party members to openly express these differences.[84] The two movements' policies have also differed in some key respects: when Erdoğan suggested secularism for Egypt, Turkey's positive image was replaced in the MB with fears of "Turkish interventionism"—at this critical juncture, MB leaders mentioned how different the Turkish experience of democracy has been.[85] It is also not clear whether the two parties attach the same meanings to their shared political symbols, such as "R4bia." Whereas the symbol was originally used by the MB in Egypt in the wake of Morsi's overthrow, it has been frequently used in Turkey by Erdoğan. However, the meanings of its four pillars have been re-invented by Erdoğan: "one nation, one flag, one homeland, and one state." It may be argued that Erdoğan has made the shared symbol more meaningful for the highly ethnocentric Turkish public opinion, however, this interpretation questions whether this sharing of meanings extends beyond the leaderships into the parties' social bases. This simple example reflects a long-term debate among leading Turkish scholars of Islam, some of whom reject the MB's symbols on account that they are "foreign" to Turkey.[86]

Still, among some historical commonalities, for a time the three movements embraced a popularly asserted but vaguely operationalized terms, such as 'Islamic Democracy'[87]. The term often meant confidence that divine rule would never be threatened by the people,[88] however, its content was hardly disputable without falling into the borders of immorality. Those who contested the term often found themselves outside the moral borders of public culture. The MB's Freedom and Justice Party program defined Egyptian public culture as follows: "The culture of a society is based on its moral identity, to which the people belong. Islamic culture is the main factor in shaping the human mind and conscience in Egypt."[89] Sobhi Saleh, who was among the top leaders in the MB, made a comparison between the notions of Western and Islamic democracies: "Islam is against spreading unethical behaviour

[83] Monica Marks and Sayida Ounissi, "Ennahda from within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'? A Conversation," The Brookings Institution, March 23, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/research/ennahda-from-within-islamists-or-muslim-democrats-a-conversation/.

[84] "Milletvekili Açba: Ak Parti'de içen de var içmeyen de" [AKP MP Açba: There are people who take alcohol in the AKP…], *DHA*, July 26, 2013, http://www.dha.com.tr/milletvekili-acba-ak-partide-icen-de-var-icmeyen-de_504238.html.

[85] "Islamic Politics Next Phase in Egypt," *Press TV*, September 15, 2011, http://edition.presstv.ir/detail.fa/199214.html.

[86] İsmail Kara, "Müslüman Kardeşler Türkçe'ye tercüme edildi mi?" [Has the Muslim Brethren been translated into Turkish?], *Dergâh* 2, no. 21 (1991): 14-5.

[87] The AKP leadership rejected this specific term by departing from the Refah tradition in 2002, and the Ennahda leadership dismissed it right after the new constitution. However, the claims over morality continued through alternative terms with similar implications.

[88] "Following Gaddafi's Demise, MB Warns Arab Dictators: People Always Prevail," *Ikhwanweb,* November 21, 2011.

[89] "Election Program: The Freedom and Justice Party-2011," Freedom and Justice Party, accessed May 12, 2013, http://www.fjponline.com/uploads/FJPprogram.pdf, 37.

and this is the difference […Westerners] selectively ban behavior. We are only against those who are against religion and try to diminish it."[90] When during the same interview he was asked about possible contestations of these particular visions of democracy and Islam, Saleh was straightforward: "I do not care about the opinions of secularists who are against their own religion." This frequently reproduced monist discourse contributed to the dismissal of opponents' views in constitution-making processes. Opponents did not always feel a need to tie the validity of their arguments to some kind of nativism. And when they were pushed to test the nativity, they came up with very different understandings of *native*, one being references to pre-Islamic Egypt.

4. Conclusion

This article has two broad aims. The first is to examine the conceptual means through which we analyze the depth of cultural commonalities between social groups. In connection, the second aim is to question the extent to which strong references to a shared culture can render an institution-building building process smoother.

More specifically, as the title of the paper suggests, I touch upon several concepts that may be of theoretical or practical relevance. I argue that in the ES, analyses of culture as a concept, and analyses of cultures as objects of study must be further scrutinized in two ways. First, I argue that we must distinguish more analytically between cultures at different levels of abstraction. Culture at one level does not necessarily represent culture at another, although we often use the same markers of, for example, religion or identity to describe them. I try to illustrate that the relatively new concept of interhuman society is useful for scrutinizing sub-state agency and its connections with higher structures.

The second major point of the article is its call for a conceptual revision of culture, specifically in the ES, but also more broadly in IR. Here, I refer to a revision in favor of the development of more-nuanced approaches towards the interaction between different ideational and behavioral attributes under this umbrella concept. In the literature, the identity aspect of culture is often prioritized; but sometimes the concept means religiosity, sometimes habitual practices, and sometimes it is construed as ideology. For each of these attributes, the concept of culture is used as though they necessarily complement each other. The main problem with that thinking, in my opinion, is that it results in an arbitrary jumping between the different processes of culture. Within that context, the article aims to initiate further discussion on the conditions that compel us to begin examining each of these attributes, or the interactions between them.

Last, I argue that this revision can help us go beyond the monolithic notion of cultural zones to question assumed cultural commonalities and challenge our understanding of opposition. With this aim, I have tried to explore the limitations of a dominant form of nativism. In this case, an Islamist ideological perception of the true native faced opposing narratives within the region, the totality of which mutually constituted the formation of the regional cultural system. Whereas the nativist discourse was underpinned by the shared identity of the AKP, MB, and Ennahda governments, this thinking not only hides the groups' own cultural mismatches, but also undermines their relations with other narratives that do not share their nativist discourse. The discourse promoted relativism in the global arena: the

[90] Matthew Kaminski, "Among the Muslim Brothers: The contradictory faces of political Islam in post-Mubarak Egypt," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 2011.

connotation of the West often came into play as a synonym of the other, with alien norms. However, this discourse not only alienates Western geography from the Middle East, but also excludes any perspective that is associated with the West—regardless of their locality, they are not Middle Eastern. One fundamental feature of this particular nativism is its rejection of the moral agency behind opposing narratives. Eventually, the attempt to institutionalize 'a native democracy' must claim ideological hegemony, which often marks exclusion, marginalization, and cultural-moral monism at the sub-state level.

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