

# Youth, Revolt, Recognition

The Young Generation during and after the “Arab Spring”

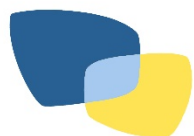
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## The Attractiveness of Political Islam for Youth in North Africa

by Charlotte Biegler-König

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## The Attractiveness of Political Islam for Youth in North Africa

*Charlotte Biegler-König*

### Introduction

Following the fall of the Mubarak regime in February 2011, mass protests took place for over two years in Egypt. The protests intensified with the prohibition of the Muslim Brotherhood in September 2013 and their subsequent labelling as a ‘terrorist organisation’ on 25 December<sup>13</sup>. A striking feature of the rallies was the large number of young demonstrators and protesters. In particular, young people and students took to the streets after 25 January 2011: for the overthrow of president Mubarak, for new elections, secularism, for fewer Islamic Sharia laws in the Constitution, both for and against the new government, and against the military coup. At the centre of the Egyptian riots were young people demanding a future. They argued particularly controversially about the religious orientation of the Egyptian Constitution. It is important to note that religion did not play a role in the initial protests, and that it only became an issue after Mubarak’s fall. The same can be observed in Tunisia. The protests here were less violent, and political reforms were able to advance more steadily, but in the process of negotiating the new constitution, Islamic activists did also play an important role. Since the successful overthrow of former dictator Ben Ali, new freedom has been found, and the number of young people joining Islamist groups, in particular Salafists, increased drastically after the Tunisian revolution.

It is interesting, therefore, to examine how the younger generation understands ‘Islam’ as a political and/or social-religious role model. Why are Islamic parties and movements so attractive to North African youth? The focus of this article is youth in Egypt. But for reasons of diversity, the young generation in Tunisia will be considered for a comparison in various points. First, the term ‘political Islam’, which Salafism<sup>14</sup> can also be assigned to (also referred to as Salafism?), needs to be clarified, as well as the meaning of ‘post-Islamism’. Following this, the situation of young people in Egypt and Tunisia will be explained in detail. The third part will provide a brief insight into the concept of identity formation. Based on the discussion of two political groups, the appeal of political Islam will be analysed as an identity-creating element and as a mobilising incentive.

### Political Islam and Post-Islamism

The protests in Egypt since Mubarak’s fall suggest a divided society. Whereas demonstrations against Sharia law in the Constitution took place during Mursi’s presidency, following the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood, many took to the streets demonstrating in favour of its claim to power. Here, two different conceptions clash over the role of religion in the state. While many young people want a liberal constitution and see religion as a private affair, others feel it is the state’s duty to enforce religious law. These two opposing ideas are represented by the concepts of political Islam and Post-Islamism.

Political Islam, also known as ‘Islamism’, defines Islam not only as a religion but also as a guide for a specific social order and political system. A separation of religion and state is not wanted. On the

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<sup>13</sup> Zeit Online (2013): Ägypten stuft Muslimbrüder als Terrororganisation ein. URL: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2013-12/aegypten-muslimbrueder-terror-organis-ation> (Stand 07.01.2014).

<sup>14</sup> Salafism (Arabic السلفية) means ancestors, the ‘ancients’ or predecessors.

contrary: politics should take place within a religious context<sup>15</sup>. The starting point is the seventh century, the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when he not only promoted Islam, but also worked as a legislator and military leader. The Quran and the Hadiths ('traditions') written down by the tenth century jointly form the basis for Sharia law, which regulates both prayers and fasting as well as defining marriage, and family, inheritance and penal law. Moreover, Sharia specifies the situation of non-Muslims and describes Jihad as a means for expansion. Political Islam dictates all areas of life and thus provides a return to 'original Islam'.

This idea of a radical political Islam including the application of Sharia law and the practice of Jihad, however, dates back to the 20th century<sup>16</sup>. The first major Islamist movement was the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928. The Muslim Brotherhood gained much ground. As a contrast to the poor governance of the authoritarian regime at the time, it advocated a political system focused closely on political Islam. The same applies to Islamic groups in Tunisia. The Ennahda party<sup>17</sup> is ideologically close to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Salafism, in turn, preaches an extreme form of political Islam. The Salafist groups themselves do not constitute a homogeneous group, but cover a wide spectrum ranging from Salafist parties to charitable organisations, but also to radical individuals<sup>18</sup>. However, other than the more pragmatically oriented Muslim Brothers eager to take over the government, they share the same fundamental conviction of striving for and returning to the religious ideals according to the example of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generation of his followers.<sup>19</sup>

An alternative to the conventional definition of 'political Islam' is the definition of 'post-Islamism'<sup>20</sup>. It is based on an understanding of Islam, which is compatible with modernity, i.e. the 7th century is no longer perceived as an element of a normative, or idealist model: "Post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic or secular; a post-Islamist movement dearly upholds religion but also highlights citizens' rights. It aspires to a pious society within a democratic state"<sup>21</sup>. In post-Islamism, Islam is associated with individualism, freedom and democracy. It describes a system in which all citizens, regardless of religion or gender, can find a home<sup>22</sup>. This system relegates religion to the private spheres of citizens. The state's laws should allow everyone to practise their faith without imposing a religious way of life.

<sup>15</sup> Bayat, Asef (2007): Making Islam Democratic – Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Political Islam adopts a highly critical attitude towards the concept of democracy. It conceives a fundamental dilemma in the relationship between man and God as denoted by the roots 'demos' and 'kratos': 'rule of the people', not 'reign of God'. Man writing his own law puts him in opposition to God. In: Murtaza, Muhammad Sameer (2011): Die ägyptische Muslimbruderschaft – Geschichte und Ideologie. Verlag rotation

<sup>16</sup> Schirmacher, Christine (2011): Geistesgeschichtliche Ursprünge des Politischen Islam/Islamismus. In: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Hsg.) 20.-22. Oktober 2011. Politischer Islam – Islamismus. Extremistische Islam-Varianten in der Diskussion. URL: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/akademie/berlin/09185.pdf> (Stand 07.01.2014).

<sup>17</sup> Ennahda (Arabic النهضة حركة) means 'rebirth'.

<sup>18</sup> Marks, Monica (2013): Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current. In: Mediterranean Politics 18, Heft 1, pp.104-111.

<sup>19</sup> The term 'umma' is of central importance. It describes the unity of the Muslim community. This means the unity of state and society, of state and religion, of religion and politics, of people and God. In Salafism and Islamism, the 'umma' is seen as an alternative model to the concept of the nation state as imported from the West. (Zapf/Klevesath 2012: 13-14)

<sup>20</sup> Bayat, Asef (2007): Making Islam Democratic – Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn. Stanford: Stanford University Press

<sup>21</sup> Bayat, Asef (2011): The Post-Islamist Revolutions. What the Revolts in the Arab World mean. In: The Council on Foreign Relations (Hg.), Foreign Affairs. URL: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67812/asef-bayat/the-post-islamist-revolutions> (Stand 07.01.2014).

<sup>22</sup> Bayat, Asef (2007): Making Islam Democratic – Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn. Stanford: Stanford University Press

The demands of many of the protesters from 25 January 2011 and subsequent rallies<sup>23</sup> can best be considered variants of post-Islamism since people wanted freedom of opinion and democracy – not the introduction of Sharia law.

### **The Situation of Youth**

The term ‘youth’ describes a particular population stratum with its own particular living conditions. The individuals meant here are people between 15 and 35 years of age.<sup>24</sup> Similar to many parts of the Arab world, in Egypt and Tunisia this group accounts for a large proportion of the total population. Approximately 60 % of the entire population are under 30 years old<sup>25</sup>. About 35 % of the Egyptian population are young adults between the ages of 15 and 35<sup>26</sup>. This stratum has a high level of education: Approximately 43% of Egypt’s young people hold a university degree. In sharp contrast to this high rate of literacy and education are the career prospects: each year, there is a ratio of only 200,000 new jobs for 700,000 university graduates. An additional factor aggravating the labour market situation is the often poor quality of university teaching meaning that graduates frequently enter the labour market as unskilled job seekers<sup>27</sup>.

This precarious education and labour market situation was also caused by restrictive and authoritarian policies. Young people were denied active participation in political decision-making processes, as well as the opportunity to express their concerns about the future. Accordingly, the amount of party affiliations and participation in the elections in 2005 and 2010 was very low among young Egyptian voters<sup>28</sup>. The situation was similar in Tunisia. Until the first protests in late 2010, it had been unusual for young people to openly voice their opinion in the streets, outside their private spheres.

Egyptian and Tunisian youth had been a politically and socially (particularly concerning job prospects) marginalised group for a long time<sup>29</sup>. They acquired their political socialisation through digital networking; as a consequence they learnt and understood a new and different kind of citizenship. This distinguishes them from the older generation, which obtained information mainly from domestic sources or a few private international contacts<sup>30</sup>. This was also one of the key reasons why, in media coverage, we have chiefly seen young Egyptians and Tunisians expressing displeasure.

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<sup>23</sup> Nowaira, Amira (2011): Egypt's Day of Rage goes on. Is the world watching? In: The Guardian. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/27/egypt-protests-regime-citizens> (Stand 30.05.2014).

<sup>24</sup> Of course, there is not only one youth but many different groups summarised here under the term ‘youth’.

<sup>25</sup> Ali, Fatuma Ahmed/Hannah Muthoni Macharia (2013): Women, Youth, and the Egyptian Arab Spring. In: Peace Review - A Journal of Social Justice 25, Heft 3, pp. 359-366.

<sup>26</sup> Martini, J./D. Kaye/E. York (2012): The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

<sup>27</sup> Ali, Fatuma Ahmed/Hannah Muthoni Macharia (2013): Women, Youth, and the Egyptian Arab Spring. In: Peace Review - A Journal of Social Justice 25, Heft 3, pp. 359-366

<sup>28</sup> In a 2008 survey, only 7.1% of the young Egyptians stated that they were members of a political party (Sika 2012: 193). The overall participation in the elections of 2005 was 23%, and in 2010 only 15%.

Sika, Nadine (2012): Youth Political Engagement in Egypt: From Abstention to Uprising. In: British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 39, Heft 2, pp. 181-199

<sup>29</sup> Ali, Fatuma Ahmed/Hannah Muthoni Macharia (2013): Women, Youth, and the Egyptian Arab Spring. In: Peace Review - A Journal of Social Justice 25, Heft 3, pp. 359-366

<sup>30</sup> Herrera, Linda (2012): Youth and Citizenship in the Digital Age: A View from Egypt. In: Harvard Educational Review 82, Heft 3, pp. 333-352.

### Political Islam as an Identification Model

Why do religious or political concepts seem so attractive? In the centre of this attraction is the question of identity<sup>31</sup>. The term identity includes identifying oneself with something. Identification with something happens on a mental or spiritual level. Here, models are accepted or rejected, religious or similar intellectual beliefs are adopted, and values and impressions checked in order to create one's own identity within a collective<sup>32</sup>. The concept of identity consists of two levels of meaning: "Who am I?" and "What am I?".<sup>33</sup>

The first question analyses the mental structure of individuals with their individual characteristics and capabilities. The individual person forms their social identities in the interaction process with their social surroundings and so develop an understanding of their own positions within social structures and in relation to others. They assign features to themselves and their social environment and thus create reference groups to identify with. Thus they develop a social identity which places an emphasis on the question "What am I?"

The question "What am I?" is aimed at the individual aspects of a qualitative partial identity, with which human collectives can identify. It is in the collective processing of these partial identities that group identities can define themselves in contrast to other groups. The definition of the 'other' is essential to the creation of one's own collective identity, as it determines who is a member of the group and who is not. Due to the self-definition of the collective and its external borders, supposed similarities are emotionalised and become obligations within the group while other groups can be identified as threats on the basis of social comparison processes<sup>34</sup>. Against this background, the 'other' of political Islam in terms of its political, moral and religious views can be defined as other religions and *Weltanschauungen*.

In the following sections, youthful commitment before and after the upheavals of 2011 will be examined and set into the context of the previously discussed concepts of political Islam and Post-Islamism. Here, the concept of identity is used as an analytical approach on the basis of which the motivation of young people for religious involvement will be explained.

### Young People in the Muslim Brotherhood

An important factor of young people's involvement in religious organisations is the authoritarian leadership style of previous decades. This experience helped the Egyptian Muslim Brothers to become the largest opposition movement. Founded in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood was from a very early stage in opposition to the military regime in Egypt, established since the 1950s. Therefore,

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<sup>31</sup> An alternative approach which is mainly used in migration research involves the division into 'push factors' detaching young people from their familiar social environments (economic, social and political marginalisation), and 'pull factors' attracting young people to Salafist groups (charity work, financial aid, social recognition) In: Lee, Everett S. (1966): A Theory of Migration. In: Demography 5, Heft 1, pp. 47-57.

<sup>32</sup> Körner, Katharina (2009): Identitätsstiftung durch den Europäischen Verfassungsvertrag (Schriften zum Europäischen Recht; 146). Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, p.34

<sup>33</sup> Kretschmann, Carsten/Liermann, Christiane (2007): Identitäten in Europa – Europäische Identität. Anmerkungen zu einem kontroversen Begriff. In: Belafi, Matthias/Krienke, Markus (Hg.). Identitäten in Europa – Europäische Identität. Wiesbaden: Deutsche Universitätsverlag, pp. 9-16.

<sup>34</sup> Körner, Katharina (2009): Identitätsstiftung durch den Europäischen Verfassungsvertrag (Schriften zum Europäischen Recht; 146). Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt.

it soon became the target of state repression<sup>35</sup>. Accordingly, the elder, still active leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood (some elected for life) were socialised by decades of persecution, imprisonment, torture and oppression. As a result, these generations saw in the military regime the identity-constituent 'other'. More and more, they came to identify with a traditional, conservative Islam and to define political Islam as a guideline for organised action<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, the long persecution led to a legitimisation boost for the Muslim Brothers among young people: "Imprisonment thus enhanced the moral authority of the former prisoners"<sup>37</sup>. The political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood was thus a symbol of the resistance of many years; it was deemed legitimate, against an illegitimate and brutal system offering no future prospects to young people.

The situation is different with the Salafist groups in Tunisia. They equally draw their legitimacy from long-term opposition to the former regime, but also from their opposition to the religious Ennahda party after the protests. Ennahda, according to one teenager's reproach, "is negotiating with people who tortured our fathers"<sup>38</sup>. In addition, many religious youngsters believe Ennahda to be cooperating with Western forces and therefore not able to integrate Sharia law into the new Tunisian constitution. A 24-year old Salafist laments: "I don't see what makes them so Islamic. They use lies to manipulate the people just like any party"<sup>39</sup>.

Another item contributing to the attractiveness of the Muslim Brotherhood as a long-standing, long-suffering and relevant opposition is the fact that they make young people feel supported and appreciated. Today, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has about 600,000 - 700,000 members. On the assumption that the Muslim Brothers represent a cross-section of the total population, the proportion of the young people can be estimated at about 35%<sup>40</sup>. The Muslim Brotherhood is very well interconnected and organised. A special importance lies in the universities as places of recruitment. The Muslim Brothers approach young people at an age when they are open to new ideas, when they strive for independence and to define their personalities. In short, they are in a phase of their lives in which they intensely tackle the important issues of identity: who and what they are. Belonging to the collective identity of a religious group takes on a central importance in a partial identity of the youngsters. In this situation, the Muslim Brotherhood succeeds in presenting itself as an open and flexible welfare association providing opportunities for participation and a sense of belonging. It also provides various social services: from religious study groups and social activities, through affordable study materials and excursions, to financial support. At the universities, the Muslim Brotherhood is seen as an organisation that encouraged active participation and mobilised opposition against government control even before 2011. This includes the allocation of active tasks at rallies and elections. Young people assume such tasks as distributing food, safeguarding large

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<sup>35</sup> Pioppi, Daniela (2013): *Playing with Fire - The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Leviathan*. In: *The International Spectator - Italian Journal of International Affairs* 48, Heft 4, pp. 51-68.

<sup>36</sup> Martini, J./D. Kaye/E. York (2012): *The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

<sup>37</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1991): *How Countries Democratize*. In: *Political Science Quarterly* 106, Heft 4, pp. 614.

<sup>38</sup> Wolf, Anne (2013): *Salafists challenge Ennahda for allegiance of youth in Tunisia*. In: *The National*, May 12. URL: <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/salafists-challenge-ennahda-for-allegiance-of-youth-in-tunisia> (Stand 01.11.2014).

<sup>39</sup> Marks, Monica (2013): *Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current*. In: *Mediterranean Politics* 18, Heft 1, pp.108.

<sup>40</sup> Martini, J./D. Kaye/E. York (2012): *The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, pp.9.



crowds, cleaning up public places, in short: welfare tasks. This way, it does not only appeal to conservative-religious students, but it also targets those of different ideological backgrounds<sup>41</sup>. Many students therefore identify with the organisation.

Similarly small reservations with regard to the Salafist movements can also be detected among Tunisian youth. Apart from online networks and mosques, the neighbourhood cafes mainly provide young people with the opportunity of an informal first encounter with the ideologies of the Salafists. A young Salafist described such a meeting: "We always do our preaching in the local dialect, far from the language of politicians. We are simple people and we address simple people in our sermons [...] During our sermons, people also had fun"<sup>42</sup>. The Islamic organisations give young people the feeling of being part of a collective identity and belonging to a community of shared values and solidarity, which they often miss in their social, economic and political environment.

However, this strength of the Muslim Brotherhood is also its weakness. During their university years, students get to know the organisation in a very open and inviting way. Yet, outside the university, the Muslim Brotherhood has the same problems as many other organisations and political parties: obsolescence. Until 2010, all its presidents were from the 1920s cohort<sup>43</sup>. A strict hierarchy based on leadership and obedience prevents young people from actively participating in decision-making<sup>44</sup>.

The situation is different with the Tunisian Salafists. Young people are an important part of Salafist groups and networks. Through their many contacts, who also attract new members, they distribute leaflets and Salafi literature, support the charities of the Salafists and protest publicly against infringements of religious taboos<sup>45</sup>. The youngsters also distance themselves visibly from the secular Tunisian society and so become the flagship of the Salafist movement. Men grow beards and often wear a kamis (long shirt from Afghanistan), young women usually wear a jilbab (full body garment) and / or niqab (black face veil)<sup>46</sup>. Wearing these religious symbols can also be understood as a conscious rebellion against the autocratic regime. Since these symbols were frowned upon or banned under Ben Ali, they are now important items of the young Salafists' identity<sup>47</sup>.

The generation conflict in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had led to the separation of the Al-Wasat political party in the 1990s and in 2011 it caused the elimination of the Egyptian Current Party. Both parties spoke out against mixing religious missions and political objectives. Al-Wasat brought about a controversy within the Muslim Brotherhood, with the result that the Muslim Brotherhood has slightly liberalised in recent years (e.g. in admission of female staff). The Egyptian Current Party, however, was founded by disillusioned young Muslim Brothers feeling deprived of their revolutionary victory. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood remained together until Mubarak's fall. The Egyptian

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Merone, Fabio (2013): Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with a Member of Ansar al-Sharia. In: *Jadaliyya*, April 11. URL: [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia\\_an-interview-with-a-member-of-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia_an-interview-with-a-member-of-) (Stand 01.11.2014).

<sup>43</sup> Murtaza, Muhammad Sameer (2011): *Die ägyptische Muslimbruderschaft – Geschichte und Ideologie*. Verlag rotation.

<sup>44</sup> Pioppi, Daniela (2013): *Playing with Fire - The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Leviathan*. In: *The International Spectator - Italian Journal of International Affairs* 48, Heft 4, pp. 51-68.

<sup>45</sup> Marks, Monica (2013): *Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current*. In: *Mediterranean Politics* 18, Heft 1, pp.104-111.

<sup>46</sup> Malka, Haim / William Lawrence (2013): *Jihadi-Salafism's Next Generation*. In: *CSOS Analysis Paper*, October 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Marks, Monica (2013): *Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current*. In: *Mediterranean Politics* 18, Heft 1, pp.104-111.

Current Party focuses on a rather post-Islamist agenda. This means that they advocate more equality between the sexes, freedom of religion, emancipation of the young generation (the average age being 31), and democratic processes inside and outside the party<sup>48</sup>. Thus, Islam is still a factor creating identity, but is not considered an integral part of the public and political arenas.

This results in different impressions of why young people perceive Islam and political Islam as attractive<sup>49</sup>. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists hold several advantages. On the one hand, they have collected a wealth of experience and expertise over the years, resulting in impressive mobilisation options. Secondly, their definition of the identity-constituent 'other' is a simple one: it provides an identity beyond Western notions. Thus, they offer identity references concerning the political mainstream which young Egyptians and Tunisians can call their 'own' without fear of being subjected to an imperial or hegemonic foreign power. Political Islam - in all its characteristics - can therefore be attractive to a youth striving for independence.

However, a large proportion of the young people equally aspire to freedom and participation rights that political Islam, such as it is practiced by the Muslim Brotherhood, cannot offer. Parties such as the Egyptian Current, therefore, are gaining a lot of sympathy (although their influence should not be overestimated). However, they must also deal with the constant suspicion of being influenced by the West. A weakness is that the identity-constituent 'other' is based on Western religious ideas and refuses the lack of freedom, in a Western sense, such as the way of living according to religious doctrines that is prescribed by the state. Another practical weakness lies in the few available resources and the limited mobility potential due to its small membership. Especially the latter may prevent people from leaving the Muslim Brotherhood and joining smaller, more liberal groups. All in all, it is worth noting that the proportion of young people in the Muslim Brotherhood, as mentioned above, only amounts to approximately 35 % (about 200,000 - 300,000 members) out of a total young population of about 30 million (35% of the total population). Both the Egyptian Current and Al-Wasat parties have small memberships<sup>50</sup>. The influence of Islamic parties on Egyptian youth should not be generalised.

## Conclusion

'Islam' serves as an identity-creating element for self-confident youth. It is possible to differentiate between the attraction posed by political Islam (including Salafism) and that of post-Islamism. The former provides a lot of expertise by the Muslim Brotherhood and several Salafist groups, as well as functioning structures and a large mobilisation potential. In Egypt and Tunisia, the latter offers participation and representation options on the basis of a modern understanding of religion and politics. Both have in common that they constitute an opposition to the values of the old regime,

<sup>48</sup> Martini, J./D. Kaye/E. York (2012): *The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation

<sup>49</sup> Martini, J./D. Kaye/E. York (2012): *The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.; Pioppi, Daniela (2013): *Playing with Fire - The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Leviathan*. In: *The International Spectator - Italian Journal of International Affairs* 48, Heft 4, pp. 51-68.; Kucinskas, Jaime (2010): *A Research Note on Islam and Gender Egalitarianism: An Examination of Egyptian and Saudi Arabian Youth Attitudes*. In: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, Heft 4, pp. 761-770.; Popa, Eugenia Laura (2011): *Knowing the Other. Cultural and Religious Identity in Islam - "Knowing the Other. Cultural and Religious Identity in Islam"*. In: *Scientific Annals of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași* 2011, Heft 6, pp. 120-129.

<sup>50</sup> On 01 October 2014, the Egyptian Current Party merged with the party Strong Egypt. The amount of members is at approximately 500. Al-Wasat Party has about 5,000 members.

either by the long years of resistance or by the demand for civil rights in Tahrir Square. Islam itself serves both movements in different ways as a basis of legitimation and identification beyond western ideals, and is therefore attractive to the young. This trend is expected to continue in the future because the military coup against the Mursi government in Egypt in 2013 and the adoption of a very secular constitution by referendum with an impressive 98.1 % of voters suggest a return to the old status quo<sup>51</sup>. Although the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has various organisational problems, it may now be strengthened as a symbol of resistance against the new regime after the military coup of 2013. Through the renewed oppression, their attractiveness to marginalised youth may still increase, whilst more moderate parties, such as Egyptian Current, could lose their legitimacy through cooperation with the new regime. The attractiveness of a radicalised political Islam could thus grow among Egyptian youth.

In another way, this also applies to a minority of youth in Tunisia. The Salafists offer these young people the opportunity to be heard and become part of a large Muslim collective identity. This is becoming more important by the fact that political forces – especially the Ennahda party, which had been actively involved in the overthrow of Ben Ali – have so far barely been able to revoke the economic, social and political marginalisation of the young. The Salafist groups with their clear rules and strict ideology give young people security in a chaotic world.

Political-religious groups win their appeal by the economic, social and political marginalisation of youth. In both countries, the political-religious groups are divided into different lines: moderate and radical ones, those adapted to the political and social rules and those that are in radical opposition. It is noteworthy that all groups benefit from the fact that the previous authoritarian regime represented a radical secularism. This enforced the need for legitimisation upon secular parties. Young people in both countries believe that political Islam provides the possibility of an alternative lifestyle

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<sup>51</sup> ZEIT Online (2011): Die islamische Demokratie. Online verfügbar: <http://www.zeit.de/2011/09/P-Scharia> (Stand 07.01.2014).

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