

# Introduction

On June 30, 2017, the German parliament passed a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in the country. It was Germany's Catholic party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), that paved the way for this progressive reform as the party leader and German Chancellor Angela Merkel deemed the issue a "question of conscience," permitting individual members of her party to vote their personal preferences.<sup>1</sup> Roman Catholic bishops of Germany campaigned against the legislation on doctrinal grounds.<sup>2</sup> Same-sex marriage fundamentally differs from how the Catholic Church conceives marriage; the Church classifies same-sex relationships as a major sin. Many Catholics take their cue from the Church's official position and oppose it as they believe same-sex marriage to be "unnatural." Party officials, however, justified the legislation on the basis of citizenship. Frank Henseler, the CDU leader in Bonn, argued that the decision was overdue and that the party should "completely accept that there are also ways of life different from those that the CDU always promoted."<sup>3</sup> CDU's deputy finance minister Jens Spahn hailed the decision as a "logical" step for conservatives because it is "a value that we as Christian Democrats should cherish."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Germany Approves Same-Sex Marriage, Bringing It in Line with Much of Western Europe," *Washington Post*, June 30, 2017. Available at: [www.washingtonpost.com/world/germanys-parliament-legalizes-same-sex-marriage-bringing-it-in-line-with-most-neighbors/2017/06/30/55033686-5d09-11e7-aa69-3964a7d55207\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/germanys-parliament-legalizes-same-sex-marriage-bringing-it-in-line-with-most-neighbors/2017/06/30/55033686-5d09-11e7-aa69-3964a7d55207_story.html)

<sup>2</sup> Tom Heneghan, "In Germany, Catholic Church Grapples with Blessings for Gay Marriage," *National Catholic Reporter*, January 24, 2018. Available at: [www.ncronline.org/news/world/germany-catholic-church-grapples-blessings-gay-marriage](http://www.ncronline.org/news/world/germany-catholic-church-grapples-blessings-gay-marriage) (accessed August 9, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> "CDU Reconsiders Stance on Gay Marriage," *DW*, March 4, 2013. Available at: [www.dw.com/en/cdu-reconsiders-stance-on-gay-marriage/a-16642949](http://www.dw.com/en/cdu-reconsiders-stance-on-gay-marriage/a-16642949)

<sup>4</sup> "Christian Politicians Are Trying to Stop Same-Sex Weddings in Germany," *Newsweek*, March 7, 2017. Available at: [www.newsweek.com/same-sex-marriage-marriage-laws-angela-merkel-csu-germany-631258](http://www.newsweek.com/same-sex-marriage-marriage-laws-angela-merkel-csu-germany-631258)

For Merkel, the decision boiled down to introducing “more social cohesion and peace” in Germany.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, on August 26, 2018, Tunisia’s Ennahdha Party – deemed one of the most progressive and moderate Islamist parties in the Muslim world – opposed the proposal to change the Personal Status Code from the 1950s and grant women equal inheritance. Provisions of the traditional Islamic law allot women an unequal share of the inheritance, typically one half of men’s share.<sup>6</sup> The Tunisian Personal Status Code faithfully mirrors religious law and gives women half of men’s share in inheritance.<sup>7</sup> The Code is viewed as one of the major impediments to establishing gender equality in Tunisia.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, Ennahdha justified its opposition to the proposal on the grounds that the issue of inheritance is well established in the Qur’an.<sup>9</sup> Abdelkarim al-Harouni, Ennahdha Shura Council leader at the time, stated that Tunisia is a “civil state for Muslim people, committed to the constitution and the teachings of Islam” and that Ennahdha would reject “any law that goes against the Qur’an and the constitution,” which refers to Islam as the religion of the Tunisian state in Article 1.<sup>10</sup>

This contrast between the CDU and Ennahdha is not exceptional; rather, it exemplifies the differences between today’s Islamist parties in the Middle East and Catholic parties in Western Europe. Yet, this polarity was not a historically foregone conclusion. Christianity and Islam experienced remarkably similar phases of religiopolitical mobilization dating back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Political Catholicism and political Islam both emerged in reaction to increasing secularization in state policies and a perceived threat to the traditional influence of religion and religious institutions in public life. Both quickly gained significant traction in countries across Europe and the Middle East, respectively. When these religiopolitical movements did finally emerge, the similarity in political discourse and activism between the two was unmistakable. Both espoused anti-system discourses that emphasized religious education, a social and political order grounded in

<sup>5</sup> “German Lawmakers Approve Same-Sex Marriage in Landmark Vote,” *Reuters*, June 30, 2017. Available at: [www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-gay-marriage/german-lawmakers-approve-same-sex-marriage-in-landmark-vote-idUSKBN19LoPQ](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-gay-marriage/german-lawmakers-approve-same-sex-marriage-in-landmark-vote-idUSKBN19LoPQ)

<sup>6</sup> Esposito and DeLong-Bas 2001, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Sharan Grewal, “Can Tunisia Find a Compromise on Equal Inheritance?” *Brookings Institution* (September 25, 2018). Available at: [www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/09/25/can-tunisia-find-a-compromise-on-equal-inheritance/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/09/25/can-tunisia-find-a-compromise-on-equal-inheritance/)

<sup>8</sup> “Women’s Rights Reforms in Tunisia Offer Hope,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 4, 2017. Available at: [www.cfr.org/blog/womens-rights-reforms-tunisia-offer-hope](http://www.cfr.org/blog/womens-rights-reforms-tunisia-offer-hope)

<sup>9</sup> “The Closing Statement of the 21st Session of Ennahdha Movement Shura Council,” August 26, 2018. Available at: [www.ennahdha.tn/البيان-الختامي-للدورة-21-لمجلس-شورى-حركة-النهضة](http://www.ennahdha.tn/البيان-الختامي-للدورة-21-لمجلس-شورى-حركة-النهضة)

<sup>10</sup> “Tunisia’s Ennahdha Rejects Proposal to Enshrine Secular Inheritance into Law,” *Middle East Eye*, August 27, 2018. Available at: [www.middleeasteye.net/news/tunisias-ennahda-rejects-proposal-enshrine-secular-inheritance-law](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/tunisias-ennahda-rejects-proposal-enshrine-secular-inheritance-law)

<sup>11</sup> Altinordu 2010.

moral and patriarchal principles, rejection of secularism and pluralism, and enforcement of social hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Democracy did not belong to either political agenda. Catholic mass movements emphasized the creation of a “Christian society” where supreme authority would be held by religious leaders: “By creating a distinct Catholic society (or subculture) within the secular society, a real country that is hostile and opposed to the legal country, it sought to build a *societas christiana* (Christian society) that was based on restrictions of individual freedom, organicist conceptions of representation, and fusion of state and church. Supreme authority would be wielded by spiritual leaders, and all ideological or religious projects contrary to Catholic dogma would be forbidden.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Islamist movements expressed their keen interest in creating an “Islamic” state and society that would be ruled on the grounds of religious law.<sup>14</sup> Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s founder Hassan Al-Banna, for example, encouraged legal reforms to conform to “Islamic legislation,” surveillance of all public employees’ personal conduct, harsh penalties for moral transgressions, gender segregation, extensive control over media and arts, a national dress code, and religious instruction.<sup>15</sup> Religious mobilization and mass religious movements defined the social and political activism of these actors while creating distinct Catholic and Islamic *political* identities and parties.<sup>16</sup> The core issue that religious political parties face deals with reconciling two conflicting imperatives. On one hand, they want to guide humanity toward “otherworldly salvation” in the sociopolitical arena as an extension of their “spiritual mission”; on the other hand, they must come to terms with the idea that modernity requires separation between the religious and political spheres and that the state cannot serve as an instrument for religious parties to fulfill their “spiritual mission.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite these striking similarities in origin, Catholic parties were able to make a definitive transition to adopt secular and democratic ideas, shed their anti-system character, and frame their political discourse accordingly early in their evolution. Unlike Catholic parties of Europe, Islamist parties of the Middle East never got over their “confessional dilemma” – the conflict between the unique political identity religious parties want to develop and the constraints imposed on them by their religious origins – and have largely been unable to transform themselves in the same manner.<sup>18</sup> This book asks, what explains the diverging trajectories of Catholic and Islamist parties? More broadly, when

<sup>12</sup> Brown 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Kalyvas 1998, 297.

<sup>14</sup> Hallaq 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Wendell 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Kalyvas 1996; Kirdiş 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Accetti 2019, 170.

<sup>18</sup> See Kalyvas (1996, 222) for a greater discussion of the implications of the notion of confessional dilemma in the Catholic context.

and why do religious parties become less anti-system? At a time when religious actors are gaining political significance across the world, religious party change away from an anti-system posture constitutes a critical component of stable and prospering democratic governance.<sup>19</sup>

My answer to the question of when and why religious parties<sup>20</sup> move away from anti-system positions rests on religious institutions. Informed by the historically divergent trajectories of confessional parties in Western Europe (the Zentrum Party in Germany, Popular Party in Italy, and Conservative Party in Belgium) and Islamist parties in the Middle East (the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahdha Party in Tunisia, and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey), I systematically analyze the institutional context in which religious parties operate. I argue that religious institutions and religious competition are central to the process of religious party change. Studying the creation of Catholic and Islamic political identities in the early modernization periods in Western Europe and the Middle East reveals how institutions shaped the divergent trajectories of religious parties in their respective contexts. While embracing virtually identical religious visions for the society and the state at the time of their emergence in the modern period – a *societas christiana* versus an Islamic state and society – Catholic and Islamist parties gradually carved out divergent paths as they faced distinct religious institutional contexts. As a result, only one was able to overcome its confessional dilemma.

Religious parties are embedded in distinct *religious* institutional structures that deeply influence their actions as they chart their paths in electoral politics. As part of these religious structures, religious parties compete with other religious actors for religious authority and political power. As such, religious party change is a story of competition over political and religious power. This religious competition is embedded within the existing religious institutional structure. The existing structure of religious authority affects emerging religious parties in two distinct ways. Externally, the level of institutionalization and hierarchical organization within a religious tradition conditions religious parties' ability to absorb authority and compete with other religious actors. Whether authority is centralized or decentralized shapes religious party

<sup>19</sup> Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011; Brocker and Künkler 2013; Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013; Driesen 2014.

<sup>20</sup> In this book, I adopt Brocker and Künkler's definition of what a religious party is: "We use the concept of 'religious parties' as encompassing parties that hold an ideology or a worldview based on religion (having, thus, a cross-class appeal) and mobilize support on the basis of the citizens' religious identity ... religious parties, it should be noted, can also become identity and preference shapers when religious identities are rather fluid than fixed" (2013, 175). These parties can utilize religious terminology, religious symbols, or religious rituals in their names or party programs. What sets apart religious parties from nonreligious parties is not the mere use of religious symbols. As Brocker and Künkler state, "Nonreligious parties may naturally also use or refer to religious ideas, terminology, goals, and symbols (as, for instance, the Republican Party in the United States does). For religious parties, however, these are *central* [emphasis added]" (2013, 176).

strategy on whether to contest religious authority and to what extent. In cases where a centralized, hierarchically organized, and autonomous religious institution – for example, the Vatican – defines the parameters of the religious sphere, religious parties have a harder time breaking free from the monopoly of this centralized religious institution, ultimately weakening their claim on religious and moral authority. This centralized religious institution typically controls the religious discourse and wields religious and moral authority.<sup>21</sup> In cases where a centralized religious institution does not exist – for example, Sunni Islam – religiopolitical movements seek to justify their political legitimacy by claiming religious authority and authenticity. Counterintuitively, I argue that the more centralized and hierarchical religious authority structure is, the less incentive and freedom a religious party has to function as anti-system. In turn, religious parties in this religious institutional context will move in a more pro-system, secular, and democratic direction. By contrast, the less institutionalized religious authority is, the more incentive and freedom a religious party has to operate as anti-system. Religious authority structure demarcates the limits of political discourse that religious parties can engage with.

Internally, the religious institutional structure shapes the organizational structure of religious parties and conflict between the religious and political elements of the party. Religious parties typically evolve out of mass religious movements.<sup>22</sup> The nature of the organizational relationship between the religious party and their parent religious movement adds another layer of institutional constraint to what the party can or cannot do in the political arena.<sup>23</sup> The conflict between religious and political factions of religious parties fundamentally alters the political landscape and the meaning of electoral politics for religious parties, with major ramifications for ideological rigidity.<sup>24</sup> Centralized religious institutional structures lead to a sharp separation between the religious and political factions, forcing religious movements to a choice between the centralized religious authority structure and the burgeoning religious party. By contrast, decentralized religious institutional structures do not force a choice, which empowers religious factions and allows religious parties to maintain their hybrid organizational structures.

<sup>21</sup> Lakoff 1995; Campbell 2007; Grzymala-Busse 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Wegner 2011, XXXVII; Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013.

<sup>23</sup> The significance of the relationship between the movement and the political party goes beyond religious parties. Communist, socialist, green, and populist right parties had similar relationships with social movements that gave rise to these parties at various points in time, particularly in Western Europe (Papadakis 1984, 13–17 & 174–86; Kuechler and Dalton 1990; Betz and Immerfall 1998; Kitschelt 1989). Importantly, new political parties in emerging or transitional democracies can also hail from a social movement (Zollner 2019, 3).

<sup>24</sup> A similar dynamic is at work in other types of parties that hail from social movements. For example, see Offe (1990) for an analysis of the German Green Party.

Religious parties prefer the party-movement hybrid organization structure for two primary reasons. First, this hybrid structure allows religiopolitical movements to operate as encompassing organizations with a wide range of goals that are religious, educational, missionary, political, social, and health-care-oriented in nature. This structure aligns well with the broad-based religious transformation they envision in the state and society. Religion, in this vision, cannot be excluded from specific spheres of life, thereby necessitating religiopolitical activism to encompass politics, welfare, education, and healthcare. Second, this hybrid structure enables religious parties to sustain anti-system discourse by claiming religious legitimacy and harnessing it for electoral advantage. It is in this organic relationship between the party and the movement that we find religious parties vying for religious and moral authority. While some argue that the blurred boundaries between a social movement and the political party that hails from the movement might lead to pluralism and an open political system,<sup>25</sup> this relationship between the party and the movement, in fact, facilitates the anti-system character of these parties by obfuscating the distinction between the movement's membership (to which the religious movement appeals to) and the broader electorate (to which the party aims to win over). The focus on religious institutional structures helps make a vital distinction between religiopolitical movements and organized religion, emphasizing that the two need not be the same.<sup>26</sup> Although the party-movement relationship constitutes one of the most vital institutional factors that religious parties operate within, it is striking to note that beyond occasional casual references to it,<sup>27</sup> little systematic research exists on this topic.

In order to establish a theoretical framework that can be applied in multiple contexts, a systematic and comparative inquiry into the question of religious party change from the perspective of religious institutions requires a set of cases that meet several criteria. The cases should display similarities in their origins as religiopolitical movements, possess similar anti-system ideological orientations at the time of their foundations (especially in regard to democracy, pluralism, secularism, and the role of religion in society), and yet have divergent trajectories over time. Catholic parties of Western Europe and Islamist parties of the Middle East meet these criteria and offer the optimal case of analytical equivalency in order to employ the most similar systems design.<sup>28</sup> Relying on the historically divergent trajectories of these two groups of religious parties in Western Europe and the Middle East, this book theorizes that the role of religious institutions on religious party change carries significant weight.

<sup>25</sup> Goldstone 2003, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Kalyvas 2003, 296.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenblum 2003; Mohseni and Wilcox 2009; Wegner 2011; Brown 2012; Clark 2012; White 2012; Ozzano 2013; Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013; Spiegel 2015; Wuthrich and Ciftci 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Nielsen 2016.

What religious institutions do is constrain religious parties in ways that other kinds of political parties do not experience. Religious parties in the Middle East and Western Europe, in this regard, were met with two distinct environments. On one hand, like other political parties, they were subject to the constraints and opportunities presented by the political environment. Politically, religious parties in both contexts encountered an environment ripe for their religiopolitical activism. On the other hand, religious parties faced constraints in a religious environment, unlike other political parties. This religious environment was permissive in the case of Islamist parties, while it worked against Catholic parties in Western Europe. Confronted with a centralized and hierarchical religious authority, Catholic parties constructed their political discourse and organizational structure around this religious institution. Catholic parties in Western Europe operated purely as political parties and universally transitioned to become mainstream, pro-system parties coexistent with democracy and secularism and often play critical roles in democratic consolidation.<sup>29</sup> By contrast, Islamist parties did not encounter a dominant religious actor that challenged them at their inception, allowing Islamist parties the freedom to shape and structure their discourse and organizations as they deemed fit. As a result, Islamist parties universally embraced hybrid party-movement organizations and operated as bulwarks of anti-system politics, impeding the progress of democracy in their respective societies.<sup>30</sup>

The question of religious party change remains relevant for both policy and scholarly audiences. In recent years, religion and religious actors have assumed an ever-more critical role on a global scale. These parties have taken on governmental roles in various parts of the world (PJD in Morocco, AKP in Turkey, BJP in India, Ennahdha in Tunisia, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, CDU in Germany, and The Jewish Home in Israel), drawing attention to heightened tensions surrounding the religion-democracy nexus. In contexts where democratic politics is still being negotiated and the religion-secularism conflict constitutes a key component of ongoing struggles, religious party change is a topic of critical importance. As such, this book is not solely a historical comparison or a scholarly exercise but also lends itself to current policy discussions.

All major religions have “the power to delegitimize a democratic government, and religious political movements have often played the part of regime destabilizer,” as Driessen notes.<sup>31</sup> The subject of this book thus deserves a great deal of scholarly attention because Islamist parties have become staples of the political space in one of the most democracy-resistant regions of the world. Religious parties’ move away from being anti-system parties underlies broader democratization processes worldwide despite the prevalence of the “secularization paradigm” utilized to understand – *and* to dismiss – religious parties until

<sup>29</sup> Driessen 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Jamal 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Driessen 2014, 7.

recently.<sup>32</sup> The focus on religious parties is vital because political parties tend to be “the most important carriers and shapers of normative attitudes toward democracy.”<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, this book seeks to understand the mechanisms through which religious parties evolve over time and the institutional arrangements that facilitate the best ways to engage religious parties. These concepts, I argue, are crucial elements in the design of a successful regional policy that could remedy the paucity of democracy in the contemporary Middle East.

#### WHAT ARE ANTI-SYSTEM PARTIES?

I want to explain and define my usage of the term anti-system because it is so central to my argument. Studying religious parties in comparative perspective necessitates value-neutral language, particularly when examining changes in these parties. In this regard, I avoid referring to religious parties with the frequently used term “moderation” for several reasons. First, the notion of moderation carries an inherently subjective connotation. “Moderation” of religious parties implies a preference for the direction of change in religious parties. While there may be numerous reasons why religious parties might prefer a more moderate platform, I am not interested in allowing any of these considerations to compromise the scholarly objectivity of this book.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the concept of moderation does not easily lend itself to comparative analysis; any attempt to conceptualize it is bound to feel incomplete. What is included in the definition of moderation and what is left out varies from one particular political context to the other. This potential issue with the poor traveling of the concept is true not only in cross-regional or cross-religious contexts but even within the same region or religion. For example, a review of the literature on Islamist parties’ moderation reveals a myriad of ways in which such parties’ moderation is conceived by scholars.<sup>35</sup> A further complication in this book involves temporal differences between Catholic and Islamist parties’ emergence and the policy issues that were prominent in each period. Such issues are likely to show great variation across countries and, as such, do not lend themselves to a sound comparative analysis.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Künkler and Leininger 2009; Ozzano and Cavatorta 2013. See Jeremy Menchik’s (2016) insightful analysis of Indonesian Islamic organizations for how these groups negotiate the relationship between democracy and Islam. Similarly, Amr Hamzawy and Nathan Brown (2008) examine Islamist movements’ relationship to the democratization processes in the Arab world.

<sup>33</sup> Mainwaring and Anibal Perez-Linan 2013, 57.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Sheline (2020) examines how the label “moderate” remains far from reflecting the true nature of certain political systems in the Middle East; instead, the label is used as a “reputational strategy.”

<sup>35</sup> Karakaya and Yildirim 2013.

<sup>36</sup> I encountered this difficulty in my own work (Yildirim 2016). In analyzing the effects of distinct economic liberalization processes over Islamist party platforms and their societal base, I examined platforms of Islamist parties in three different Middle Eastern countries in order to

Instead, this book will focus on the evolution of religious parties from being anti-system to pro-system. I use anti-system to describe any political party that fundamentally challenges the “values of the political order within which it operates” and seeks to change not the government “but the very system of government.”<sup>37</sup> The underlying assumption here is that the current system of government is neutral and constitutes the yardstick with which to evaluate alternative positions and ideologies – that is, anti-system parties.<sup>38</sup> This conception of the political system typically entails an implicit recognition of democracy as the baseline from which to evaluate a party’s anti-systemness. In the case of religious parties, secularism accompanies democracy to form the core tenets of the political system. However, the inherent attributes of a political system need not always be self-evident; they may be contested.<sup>39</sup> A key advantage of the term anti-system, in this regard, lies in the fact that it is relative and does not require an assumption about the nature of the government system – that is, democratic or authoritarian – that the anti-system parties challenge. Islamist and Catholic parties accordingly faced different political systems at the time of their formations, yet both sets of parties were united in their oppositions to the existing systems of government.

This approach to religious parties concerns itself with ideology less by focusing on the “content” of party ideology and more on the party’s “ideological difference.” In particular, anti-systemness is relational in two distinct ways. On one hand, it refers to the party’s ideological distance from the regime’s parameters. A large distance between the two suggests that the party will be more likely to be categorized as anti-system. This makes sense – anti-system parties consider the entire political system illegitimate and seek to replace it. The further away a political party is from the ideological center, the higher the tension with the regime is. On the other hand, it indicates the party’s ideological distance from other parties in the political system.<sup>40</sup> Such distance from other political parties in the system typically creates additional challenges for the anti-system party, including exclusion from coalition governments and inability to affect policy. This relational conception of anti-systemness also implies that other actors’ perception of anti-system parties (in this case religious parties) as a threat to the existing political system can lead to their stigmatization and encounter with obstacles in their political participation.<sup>41</sup>

chronicle the change in their ideologies and how their platforms transformed over time. One of the challenges in this exercise was establishing the conceptual distinction between an Islamist and a Muslim democratic platform in regard to the public role of Islam as envisioned by these two sets of different parties in three different countries.

<sup>37</sup> Sartori 1976, 132–33.

<sup>38</sup> Zulianello 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Altinordu 2016, 153.

<sup>40</sup> Capoccia 2002, 14.

<sup>41</sup> Altinordu 2016, 149–50.

The roots of the anti-system nature of religious parties lie in their extensive opposition to modernity, secular society, and the idea of secular governance. For these parties, their very existence stems from the religious vision they conceive for the state and society. Anti-system religious parties regard democratic politics as a means of seizing power to transform societies and states to allow religion to dictate all aspects of life.<sup>42</sup> Their opposition to the system of government is deeply steeped in this normative stance. I am therefore interested in understanding what causes religious parties to change their normative stance against the system; their position on specific policy issues is not of primary concern.

My focus is on the evolution of these parties. The reference to the evolution of religious parties aims to capture the process that leads to the foundation of such parties in the first place and their early histories. This process begins with an anti-system platform in the embryonic phase when Catholic and Islamic political identities were first created and evolves to take different shapes in response to institutional constraints. While the main parameters of such an evolution are outlined and discussed by reference to the religious institutional structures, I do not lay down a particular timeline regarding how long such an evolutionary process might take. Likewise, I do not focus on the particulars of these parties' platforms. Such an exercise runs counter to the reasoning behind the focus on anti-system characters of religious parties in this book.

#### CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

I do not aim to fully account for the question of religious party evolution or change in different religious contexts. Such a tall task is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, my aim is more modest. I examine how religious institutions and authority structures affect the evolution of such parties across different religious contexts, focusing particularly on their anti-system characters.

This book makes an original and important contribution to the study of religious parties by bringing together literatures that developed largely independent of each other and failed to engage in a meaningful and fruitful conversation. Their engagement here works to further enhance our understanding of religious parties in different religious and regional contexts. Such a contribution is critical to conceptualizing both the formation of religious parties from a cross-religious perspective and how religion and religious institutions can mold the process of religious party formation and ideological development. In this regard, the remarkable similarity in the emergence and early phases of Catholic and Islamist parties' existence challenges conventional wisdom that these two sets of political parties are fundamentally different.

Despite these similarities, however, the religious institutional structures pose constraints that religious parties – irrespective of the faith tradition they identify

<sup>42</sup> Ozzano 2013, 11.

with – must navigate, ultimately pushing them in divergent trajectories. In this regard, the primary goal of this book is to examine the underlying dynamics of these divergent paths that religious parties take once I establish key similarities among religious parties across different religions. Religious parties are subject to constraints that other parties do not face; religious parties strive to serve two distinct constituencies, they have access to religious discourse, and can utilize religious authority as a political resource. Organizationally, religious parties can – and oftentimes do – serve multiple functions with a complicated organizational structure that goes beyond being merely a political party.

In doing so, however, this book does not suggest that religion is the only factor shaping the actions and ideology of religious parties. Religious parties do, in fact, respond to the political environment around them in the same way that nonreligious political parties do. Shifts in the electorate or constraints imposed by the state factor into religious parties' organizational and ideological policies. This is a particularly critical observation for Islamist parties. Looking ahead, organizational reform, i.e., separation between the religious and political activism, has been gaining greater prominence as the key dynamic to impel Islamist parties toward more democratic platforms and leave behind anti-system postures. This book's close examination of how organizational reform comprised a vital element of the Tunisian Ennahdha's and Turkish AKP's paths to ideological change carries important policy implications, especially in the context of recent efforts to steer Islamist parties in a more pro-democracy direction.

The comparative framework for the study of religious parties in this book speaks to literatures such as religion and politics, political parties, and regional studies. Its primary original contribution, in this regard, is not so much in its individual case studies and analyses; many other scholars examined various religious parties or groups of parties in their own right. Such contributions are invaluable and constitute the foundation of my understanding of religious parties. Instead, this book brings together such disparate works in different contexts and presents a coherent and systematic analysis of religious parties and how they are influenced by religious institutional structures. While a wealth of detailed information on various cases will be lost in the comparative analysis I present here, I am convinced that analytical gains make up for, if not outweigh, such losses.

## METHODS AND DATA

The primary method of analysis in this book is process tracing. Following Collier, I define process tracing as “an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena.” Careful and thorough description of “trajectories of change and causation” underlie this method. What sets process tracing apart from other methods is the centrality of “sequences of independent, dependent, and intervening variables” in the

analysis,<sup>43</sup> in the absence of which it is merely a collection of descriptive facts. In order to present a full account of the causal mechanism at work and the sequence of events, my analysis will offer a detailed descriptive narrative of the unfolding events and change over time.

I use process tracing to gain new insight into the causal role of religious institutions over religious parties and identify the causal mechanisms at play. It is not merely the exact moment of change in religious parties where my interest lies; instead, I examine and describe how religious institutions affect the evolution of religious parties step-by-step and subsequently the change in these parties at decisive junctures. As such, there are no “logical holes” in associating the cause to an effect in the “causal story.” In doing so, I employ a systems understanding of process tracing, whereby I “unpack” the causal process at work and track down the relationship between religious institutions and religious party change away from anti-system postures.<sup>44</sup> By describing in detail the activities that the actors engage in through specific religious institutional structures, I account for the causal mechanisms at work.

The choice of the process tracing method reflects the comparative advantage it offers in drawing causal mechanisms using “detailed, within-case empirical analysis.” Process tracing can be instrumental in obtaining a thorough understanding of “causal dynamics” at play that produce a particular outcome of interest in one single case. It can also help within a group of cases that operate on the basis of the same causal dynamics that link the causes and the outcomes under identical contextual conditions.<sup>45</sup> Process tracing is a particularly powerful tool when combined with the most similar systems design, which I do here. Process tracing can help minimize the limitations of the most similar systems design by providing the latter with a sharp focus on the factors that might have causal impact.<sup>46</sup> More specifically, the most important advantage of combining process tracing with the most similar case analysis is that “rather than contending with all potential alternative causes through process tracing, the analyst must only contend with those not addressed at the matching style.”<sup>47</sup> The most similar systems design, in other words, allows me to eliminate a series of potential causes through matching cases in the design stage by selecting cases that have similar characteristics but vary on a potential causal factor. While the most similar systems design can control for various possible causal factors, it does not eliminate all. Process tracing complements the matching design and enables me to consider a very small number of potential alternative causes throughout the analysis that have not been accounted for in the matching stage. In this regard, this book is an attempt at theory-building;

<sup>43</sup> Collier 2011, 823–24.

<sup>44</sup> Beach 2017, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Beach 2017, 4.

<sup>46</sup> George and Bennett 2005, 215.

<sup>47</sup> Nielsen 2016, 574–75.

defining key concepts in the potential causal mechanism at work is followed by an extensive descriptive narrative of how the causal dynamics lead to the outcome of interest. While this approach falls short of offering a complete and satisfying test of the theoretical argument developed in this book, it nonetheless serves as a “smoking-gun” test where the evidence offers strong support for the causal argument but does not entirely dismiss competing hypotheses.<sup>48</sup>

The key religious institution I focus on has clear observable implications as to which direction a religious party should lean when faced with these institutional constraints. Greater levels of centralization of religious authority push religious parties toward pro-system positions while decentralized religious authority structures trap these parties in anti-system postures. Ideally, therefore, the theoretical argument developed here should apply to religious parties irrespective of region or religion. Yet, in order to more clearly trace the effect of religious institutions, I choose to focus on religious parties from opposing ends of the religious institutionalization spectrum. On one end, Catholicism represents the most centralized and hierarchical institutional framework; Catholic parties operate within the limits of this religious structure. On the other end, Sunni Islam offers one of the most deregulated, noncentralized, and nonhierarchical institutional structures. Islamist parties feel minimal constraints as they forge their paths in electoral politics.<sup>49</sup>

I draw empirical evidence from various sources. For Catholic parties, I rely on secondary sources that analyze Catholic mass movements and confessional parties of Western Europe in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The rich literature on Catholicism and politics in the modern period offers the best opportunity to examine the history of the institutional relationships between the Catholic Church, Catholic mass movements, and Catholic parties. My analysis of Islamist parties relies on a more diverse set of resources. While I employ primary and secondary sources to study the early history of Islamist movements, I turn to personal interviews with party and movement officials to discuss the recent organizational and ideological changes taking place within these parties. I conducted extensive fieldwork on the Islamist parties examined in this book primarily in the form of face-to-face interviews with party and movement officials. The

<sup>48</sup> Bennett 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Yet, it is crucial to note that the dynamics of religious party change do not neatly cut across religious lines, which might have raised the specter of essentialism. It is not always the case that the existence of a hierarchical structure ensures the rise of a pro-system Catholic party, as the failure of such a party to rise in France illustrates. Likewise, the conflict between the Qum-based ulama and the Islamist movement in Iran (Roy 1998; Kurzman 2003) and the ability of some Islamist parties to dominate their movements, such as in Morocco (Spiegel 2015) and Turkey, are noteworthy examples of the significance of agency and the strategic calculations by religious parties. Endogeneity of religious institutions and the agency of actors such as religious parties play critical roles in determining these outcomes. To reiterate, religious institutions offer only part of the variation as to why religious parties change and embrace a pro-system character, and my goal in this book is to demonstrate how such effect comes about.

interviews are the main instruments for exploring the motivations of key decisionmakers in these religious parties and movements, as well as understanding the religious and moral authority they claim. These interviews offer complementary evidence for the conceptualization of the party-movement relationships and the claims on religious authority by religious parties. By conducting a comparative analysis of religious parties in different contexts, I demonstrate the shared theoretical basis for explaining change in both Catholic and Islamist parties. This book goes beyond region- or religion-specific analyses of religious parties by focusing on the common dynamics that exist across different cases, regions, and religious contexts and avoids getting bogged down in minute differences.<sup>50</sup>

## CASES

I examine three Islamist parties in the Middle East and three Catholic parties from Western Europe: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahdha in Tunisia, the AKP in Turkey, the Center Party in Germany, Popular Party in Italy, and Conservative Party in Belgium. Because my goal is not to explain religious party formation, I select cases that are successful instances of religious party formation.<sup>51</sup> The case selection reflects a number of important methodological considerations. First, the cases offer variation on the main independent variable of interest – the structure of religious institutions and the nature of religious authority – across Catholic and Sunni Islamic contexts. Moreover, Catholic and Islamist cases also show variation within themselves. In the case of Catholic parties, the extent to which they were beset by the Church's opposition varies significantly across the three parties, where the influence is greatest in Italy and the least in Germany. The Italian Popular Party, as a result, was quick to distinguish itself from the Church and underscore its independence even before it was formally established. By comparison, German and Belgian Catholic parties forged their independent paths as they gradually made their way into the political system. While the same variation cannot be established for the Islamist parties due to the decentralized nature of religious authority, the level of competition in the religious field, alternatively, exhibits variation. In Turkey, and to some degree in Egypt, religiopolitical activism had a large presence at the time of Islamist parties' rise. In both cases, burgeoning movements carefully distinguished themselves from other religious actors to ensure the legitimacy of their organizations and discourse. In Tunisia, Ennahdha encountered a relative void of religious activism; therefore, the movement spent less time engaging other religious actors and devoted its energies to taking on the secular regime.

<sup>50</sup> Schwedler (2011) chronicles such differences in various works on Islamist parties in extraordinary detail in a review article.

<sup>51</sup> For thorough studies of religious party formation in the Catholic and Islamic contexts, see Kalyvas' (1996) and Kirdiş' (2019) excellent analyses.

Second, among a large group of religious parties in both contexts, I elected to focus on the largest and electorally most important ones. For any theory of religious party change to have validity, the larger religious parties must be part of the theory-building exercise. If the argument developed here does not apply to the most crucial cases,<sup>52</sup> then there is reason to suspect how far the theory can travel, ultimately weakening it considerably. In addition, the larger parties can also act as pioneers and set examples for how other religious parties might determine their course of action in the political arena. Indeed, the leadership of many of these parties interact and follow closely what other parties do. Lastly, the Islamist parties studied here vary in their relationships with Islamist movements. This provides an extraordinary opportunity to analyze in real time the motivation behind some Islamist parties' decisions to de-couple the movement and the party, such as in the case of Ennahdha in Tunisia and the AKP in Turkey. This focus on how some Islamist parties respond to shifting political conditions carries crucial policy implications as Islamist parties continue to constitute a major element of democratization prospects in the Muslim Middle East.

Established in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood is one of the oldest religious mass movements in the Muslim world. Despite its humble origins, the movement took Egypt by storm and grew into a religious and political powerhouse in the 1930s and the 1940s. Although the Brotherhood did not establish a formal political party until after the 2011 Revolution, political activism has been a staple of the movement. The Brotherhood's hybrid model of religiopolitical activism served as the pivotal pillar of its organizational existence and ensured the religious faction's dominance over the political one, even after the formation of the Brotherhood's political party – the Freedom and Justice Party – as a separate entity. This hybrid religiopolitical model quickly became the norm among Islamist activists and diffused throughout the Middle East, either as a branch of the Brotherhood or inspiring other nonaffiliated Islamist groups.

Ennahdha is Tunisia's premier Islamist movement, taking on a nebulous form in the late 1960s. Like the Egyptian Brotherhood, Ennahdha sought to combat secular modernity and secularization of the state and society; its eventual goal was restoring Islam to its rightful place among Tunisians. Ennahdha embraced the hybrid movement-party structure and embarked on religiopolitical activism within a singular organizational entity. While there were some attempts in the 1980s to formally establish a separate political party, those efforts did not come to fruition. In the postrevolutionary period, Ennahdha's political faction successfully reignited discussions about the relationship between the religious movement and the political party. In a remarkable move, Ennahdha adopted the Specialization Policy in 2016, which set up Ennahdha to officially cease its religious activism and operate solely as a political party.

<sup>52</sup> Gerring 2007.

This unusual act to relinquish its claim to religious authority sets Ennahdha apart from most other Islamist parties and deserves closer examination.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey has captured the imagination of many inside and outside the country since its formation in 2001. Underlying this interest are the party's ideological transformation and success in economic policymaking and democratization reforms in its early years in government. However, intrigue quickly turned into shock as the party switched gears and embarked on a path of authoritarian politics, repression, and widespread corruption. The AKP grew out of the National Outlook Movement, Turkey's primary Islamist group. Established in the late 1960s, the movement aimed to undo the policies of the secular Turkish Republic and rectify the ills of the modern age through a return to religion. Like other religious parties, they embraced the hybrid model that envisions overlapping spheres of activity across religious and political fields. Unlike the Egyptian Brotherhood and Tunisian Ennahdha, the National Outlook Movement created a separate entity to function as the movement's political party that remained subordinate to the movement. Fighting the Turkish state's wrath over the years, a group of younger, reform-minded members of the movement's political faction decided to break away and establish the AKP in 2001. The case of the AKP offers noteworthy insights into the utility of religion, religious discourse, and religious legitimacy for political parties.

Stuck between an anti-Catholic German state and an overbearing and ultramontane Catholic Church, the origins of the Center Party lie in the mid-nineteenth century waves of anticlericalism. Despite the insistence of middle-class German Catholics to embody more decisive political activism by way of a separate political party, the Catholic Church resisted these efforts for fear of losing its control and power over the Catholic laity. When the Center Party finally emerged during the 1870s in response to the *Kültürkampf*, it was only as a secular party that took inspiration from Catholicism rather than a political outfit of the Church. In fact, the Catholic Church opposed the party and discouraged the clergy and laymen from supporting it. While the Center Party stood against the suppression of the Catholic Church and its faithful, the party did so independent of the Church. Indeed, party leaders fiercely defended their independence from the Church and resisted pressure from the Church hierarchy to fall in line with the Church's position on important policy decisions.

Among all fledgling Catholic parties of Western Europe, the Popular Party (PPI) in Italy faced the most pressure from the Catholic Church due to its geographical proximity to the Vatican. The PPI emerged from the Catholic mass movement in Italy under Don Luigi Sturzo's leadership in 1919. Italian Catholics first organized into the Opera dei Congressi and subsequently Catholic Action to fight against the forces of modernity and the secular state, with the goal of bringing Catholicism and the Church back into its rightful place in the modern era. The Italian Catholic mass movement operated largely under the Catholic Church's control, mirroring its ecclesiastical structure.

The Church hierarchy was careful to limit the freedom of movement leaders because of potential competition for its power over the Catholic faithful. When Sturzo failed to convince the Catholic Church that a separate Catholic party under the Church's supervision could improve the Church's interests vis-à-vis the Italian state and socialist threat, he ultimately decided to form the PPI as a secular party independent of the Church.

Compared to other Catholic parties, the Belgian Catholic Party took a different route in its formation. The party morphed into existence on the heels of the 1884 electoral victory of Conservative Catholic politicians in the Belgian parliament. Belgian Catholics began organizing in response to the anticlerical policies of the Belgian government starting in the 1850s, particularly in education. The Catholic mass movement grew in various directions in Belgium, appealing to different socioeconomic segments of Catholics in the country. The Federation, Boerenbond, and Belgian Democratic League spoke to the middle class, farmers, and workers, respectively. The Catholic Party was originally dominated by the Federation and the ultramontanes in its early years, hewing the Church's line. However, the Belgian Democratic League gradually took over the party leadership and solidified its position with the expansion of suffrage in the 1890s.

## ORGANIZATION

In Chapter 1, I lay the theoretical groundwork for the empirical analyses in the rest of the book. I begin with a review of the existing literature on the difference between Catholic and Islamist parties and dynamics of religious party change. Previous research on the topic underscored the role of religious doctrine in explaining the difference between Catholic and Islamist parties, how inclusive political structures can encourage ideological change of religious parties through the inclusion-moderation mechanism, and the way institutional structures can facilitate credible commitment to ideological change among religious parties. I show that the existing literature, while contributing to our understanding of religious party politics, falls short in some important ways. It is highly context-specific (that is, lacking comparative perspective), fails to incorporate the dynamic nature of religion into the analysis of religious institutional structures, and omits the agency of religious actors and their ability to alter the institutional structure that constrains their actions. Next, I lay out my alternative theory to account for religious party change by examining the distinct religious institutional structures in which religious parties are embedded. How do these institutions constrain and mediate religious parties' actions, as well as provide new opportunities? These religious institutions shape religious party organizational structures and discourse as they chart their paths in electoral politics. In discussing the key actors, their interests, and strategies, I adhere to a political economic approach and discuss how religious party change reflects the competition between religious actors over religious authority and political power.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough historical account of how religious institutional structures evolved in Catholicism and Sunni Islam. This discussion is instrumental in setting the stage for the subsequent analysis of the political implications of the conflict over religious authority in the modern period. The nature of religious authority takes many forms. On one extreme, such authority can be highly centralized. Religious authority is conferred upon religious actors according to its place within this hierarchy. The Catholic Church is the epitome of this ideal type. In Catholicism, the early development and ensuing institutionalization of the church structure enabled a centralized and hierarchical institutional framework to oversee religious doctrine and practice among Catholics worldwide. This strict hierarchy affords the Church an advantage that other religious actors lack: the legitimate authority to speak on behalf of the religion and the concomitant legitimacy in representing the religion and its adherents in various platforms, including the political arena. The Church, consequently, has been averse to competition in its religiopolitical authority and fiercely territorial in protecting its hegemony; it challenges all actors who lay claim on the Church's religious authority. All political, social, and religious activism in the name of Catholicism is deemed illegitimate unless graced by the Church. The Church is the ultimate authority on whether an action, organization, or attitude is in line with religious doctrine. The case of Islamic religious authority sits on the other extreme. The low level of institutionalization entails no hierarchical religious entity, with the corollary that religious authority is utterly decentralized, creating a free market of religion and religious authority. At times, states attempted to control religion within their polity by establishing religious agencies; such attempts fell short of being encompassing or long-lasting and typically did not enjoy broad legitimacy. At other times, the *ulama* (the class of religious scholars) functioned as the main religious body. Widespread recognition of the *ulama*'s religious authority notwithstanding, it lacked hierarchy and a centralized structure, paving the way for fierce competition among religious actors. Following the demise of the *ulama* class in the early twentieth century, this competition intensified. By thoroughly analyzing the constraints that religious institutions present for political action, Chapter 2 lays the foundation for examining the distinct ways that religious authority shapes religious party politics. This examination carries through following chapters and analyzes why and how the notion of religious authority is deeply infused within the political activism of religious political actors. The creation of a *religious* political identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a hitherto nonexistent phenomenon, interacts with the prevailing structure of religious institutions and religious authority to usher religious parties on distinct paths.

Chapter 3 builds on the historical analysis in Chapter 2 and analyzes the origins of the Catholic and Islamist political identities. By utilizing Katznelson's theory of political identity formation, this chapter examines how the Catholic Church and Islamist actors have created respective religious political identities

in response to the rise of modernity, secularism, and the brewing anti-religion sentiment in Western Europe and the Middle East. In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, anticlerical attacks, secularization of public education, and adoption of secularism as a principle of government generated a strong reaction from the Church in Western Europe and religious leaders throughout the Middle East. Chapter 3 shows how religious actors mobilized around the idea that no part of human existence lays outside the scope of religion. This chapter also examines the ways religious authority might offer religious actors a valuable *political* resource that is not available to other actors. Religious authority offers credibility and legitimacy for religious actors' political discourse; likewise, it affords religious actors the ability to mobilize the electorate around a religious identity.

Chapters 4 and 5 lay out the strategies adopted by religious mass movements as they embark upon establishing new religious parties. It explains how the distinctive institutional environments and corresponding ramifications on religious authority drive religious movements to adopt different strategies in creating religious parties. In addition to chronicling the conflict over religious authority and the distinct trajectories of Catholic and Islamist parties, these chapters focus on the implications of distinct organizational paths for the electorate. If organizational structures truly matter *and* religious authority plays a decisive role in how religious parties craft their discourse, then we should observe that Catholic and Islamist parties target different audiences in their respective political discourses. Indeed, while Catholic parties sought to forge broad-based electoral coalitions and were not constrained by the demands of a particular religious movement, Islamist parties had to simultaneously maintain their core support base in Islamist movements *and* appeal to the general electorate. Chapter 4 examines the dynamics that gave rise to the emergence of a religiopolitical identity in the modern period. The chapter analyzes the rise of religious movements in the six cases as a novel phenomenon and sheds light on the discussions behind the formation of religious movements, their organizational structures, their relationship to religious authority structures, and ideological and power conflicts within these movements. As such, it builds on the analysis of the emerging religious political identity in Chapter 3. The emergence of Islamist movements during this period represents the materialization of the religious pushback against anti-ulama and anti-religion attacks. In the twentieth century, Islamist movements found themselves competing with other religious and nonreligious actors for power. They relied heavily on religious authority for leverage in the absence of a significant challenge to their claim for moral authority. These movements actively undermined existing holders of religious authority and effectively utilized religious terminology that was previously the exclusive purview of the ulama class. The rise of Catholic mass movements as independent actors who could claim religious authority put them on a collision course with the Catholic Church, the traditional wielder of this same authority. This chapter illustrates the strategies that the Catholic Church

utilized in its opposition to the Catholic mass movements' political activism and their use of the Church's authority to this end.

Chapter 5 reviews the eventual emergence of religious parties from within religious movements, focusing on the conflict between the religious and political factions within the religious movements. Each faction's relationship to the religious authority structure shapes the specific organizational structure that the party takes and its relationship to the movement. Islamist movements, unopposed by a hierarchical religious authority, found the liberty to pursue hybrid organizational structures. This *carte blanche* to assume religious authority enabled Islamist movements to operate both as a religious movement that serves in religious, social, and educational areas *and* as a religious party in the political arena. Unlike Catholic parties, contemporary Islamist parties' evolutionary trajectories are very much still in flux. Evidence shows that the Church hierarchy forced Catholic mass movement leaders to choose between expulsion and avoiding political activism in the name of Catholicism. Catholic political activists largely responded to this challenge by formally parting ways with mass movements and creating their own Catholic parties without the blessing of the Church, ultimately depriving them of the ability to rely on religious authority in their political ventures. This chapter examines the other constraints that Islamist parties face today, particularly shifts in the electoral landscape and state repression of Islamist parties. I overview the strategies that contemporary Islamist parties utilize to meet the challenges posed by these factors and reconfigure the hybrid movement-party structure. In regard to the movement-party relationship, the sharp contrast between Tunisia's Ennahdha and Turkey's AKP, on one hand, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood on the other, illustrates the extent of the agency possessed by Islamist parties. This chapter provides evidence for these parties' internal deliberations on the advantages and disadvantages of changing organizational structures in response to shifts in the political landscape. Of particular interest in this chapter is the recent specialization policy adopted by Ennahdha that deals with separating the political and missionary facets of the party organization.

The Conclusion summarizes the theoretical argument of this book and reviews the empirical analysis in Chapters 1–5. One critical implication of the research in this book pertains to the role of institutions and institutional design in shaping religious parties' democratization. Looking forward, this chapter evaluates whether Islamist parties can pursue a trajectory similar to that of Christian parties in Western Europe by creating the requisite institutional structures through internal or external incentives. The role of Islamist parties continues to be one of the most pressing issues in the post-Arab Uprisings period. The Conclusion, therefore, helps examine the prospects of change for Islamist parties in the near future and relevant policy implications.