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Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring

Rethinking Democratization

Edited by Larbi Sadiki

Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring

The self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia in December 2010 heralded the arrival of the 'Arab Spring,' a startling, yet not unprecedented, era of profound social and political upheaval.

The meme of the Arab Spring is characterized by bottom-up change, or the lack thereof, and its effects are still unfurling today. The *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring* seeks to provide a departure point for ongoing discussion of a fluid phenomenon on a plethora of topics, including:

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- the sweep of the Arab Spring;
- Egypt;
- women and the Arab Spring;
- agents of change and the technology of protest;
- the impact of the Arab Spring in the wider Middle East and further afield.

Collating a wide array of viewpoints, specialisms, biases, and degrees of proximity and distance from events that shook the Arab world to its core, the *Handbook* is written with the reader in mind to provide students, practitioners, diplomats, policy-makers and lay readers with contextualization and knowledge, and to set the stage for further discussion of the Arab Spring.

Larbi Sadiki is an Associate Professor (Arab Democratization, Political Science) in the Department of International Affairs, Qatar University.

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To all Qatar University students, past and present…

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Chronology

Malath Al-Agha

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
2010	December	17	Tunisia ignites the Spark	In Sidi Bouzid, Mohammed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in an act of protest against humiliation by local police for not having a permit to sell vegetables. The act is followed by mass young Tunisians protests.
		28	Ben Ali response	After 10 days of mass protests in streets, Ben Ali visits Bouazizi and makes first announcement promising actions on jobs and criticizing the protests (saying his famous word: *Fhem'tkoum*, 'I have understood you').
2011	January	14	Fall of Ben Ali	Ben Ali bows to the protesters' pressure and announces his resignation. He flees to Saudi Arabia, opening a new page in Tunisia and the region: the Arab Spring begins.
		25	Egypt: Day of Revolt	Egyptians take to the streets in the first coordinated mass protest called 'day of rage', demanding that Mubarak step down after three decades in power.
		27	The Spark moves to Yemen	Protests erupt in Yemen: call for Ali Abdullah Saleh to stand down after three decades in power.
		28	Friday of Anger and take over Tahrir Square	Mubarak appears on television refusing to step down as protesters demand.
		30	Sudan joins	Protesters demanding the government's resignation clash with Sudan police.
	February	11	New era in Egypt	Vice-President Omar Suleiman appears on TV announcing Mubarak's resignation.
		14	Protests erupt in Bahrain	Thousands take to the streets across Bahrain demanding deep reforms.
		15	Battle against Gaddafi starts	Protesters take to the streets in Benghazi in East Libya culminating in Bloody Thursday on 17 February.
		20	Benghazi free	Anti-Gaddafi rebels take control of Benghazi, the second largest city in Libya.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
		20	Morocco takes part	Thousands of protesters take to the streets demanding a new government and reforms, including the constitution.
	March	9	Ben Ali's ruling party dissolved	Tunisian court rules the dissolution of Ben Ali's former ruling party, Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD).
		14	The Peninsula Shield Force in Bahrain	At the request of the Bahraini government, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agree to send troops to Manama from Saudi Arabia and UAE.
		15	Revolt in Syria	Protesters demonstrate against the Country's hard-line and dictatorial Ba'ath regime.
		19	NATO intervention in Libya	UNSC passes a resolution allowing NATO to intervene militarily in the Libyan revolt.
		19	Egypt's first constitutional referendum	The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the ruling body after the ousting of Mubarak, holds the first constitutional referendum on amendment of the 1971 constitution; it receives 77% yes votes.
		27	Tunisia's new cabinet	Beji Caid Sebsi replaces PM Mohamed Ghannouchi after mass protests erupt against remnants of Ben Ali's associates in power.
	May	15	Misrata free	Rebels declare the battle for Misrata to be over and free from Gaddafi's forces.
	June	3	Saleh injured	President Saleh of Yemen survives a failed assassination attempt and receives treatment for second-degree burns in neighbouring Saudi Arabia.
	July	1	Morocco constitutional reform	Moroccans vote in a referendum to approve constitutional amendments and reforms that reduce monarchical power.
		25	Political reforms in Syria	The Syrian cabinet backs a draft law to allow rival political parties to the ruling Ba'ath party for the first time in decades.
	August	22	Rebels in Tripoli	The Libyan rebels enter the Green Square in the Libyan capital of Tripoli. The Green Square, a symbol of Gaddafi's power, is renamed Martyrs' Square.
	September	23	Saleh's return from Saudi Arabia	Saleh returns from Saudi Arabia provoking fresh protests. Heavy fighting begins and the 'Million-man march' takes place.
		25	Discovery of a mass grave in Tripoli	A mass grave containing nearly 1,300 bodies is discovered in Tripoli. It contains the remains of inmates killed by Gaddafi's regime in the 1996 Abu Slim prison massacre.
	October	2	Syrian National Council formed	Inaugural opposition body of the Syrian revolution is announced in Istanbul, with Burhan Ghalioun as its first president. The SNC draws together various opposition actors, old and new.
		9	Maspero massacre in Egypt	Scores of Coptic Christians are killed by the army during protests against the destruction of a church.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
		20	Gaddafi killed	Gaddafi is captured and killed by rebels in the city of Sirte; the first and only head of state killed during the Arab Spring.
		23	Tunisia votes	Tunisians vote in the first free election of the Arab Spring.
		23	Libya liberated	The head of the National Transitional Council (TNC), Mustafa Abdel Jalil, declares the liberation of Libya from Gaddafi's 42-year dictatorship.
	November	23	Saleh steps down	The Yemeni President, Saleh, is finally pressured to transfer power to his Vice-President, Abd Rabbu Mansour Al-Hadi, under an agreement brokered by the GCC states.
		28	Egypt votes	Egypt's first free parliamentary election takes place in post-Mubarak era: second election of the Arab Spring era.
	December	12	Nahda and Marzouki in power	The Tunisian constitutional assembly elect human rights activist Moncef Marzouki as president and Hammadi Jebali, secretary general of the Islamist Nahda party, as prime minister. Mustafa bin Ja'afar of Ettakatol becomes Speaker of the democratically elected National Constituent Assembly. So-called 'Troika' shared power begins in Tunisia.
2012	January	10	Assad appearance	President Assad makes his first televised appearance in months to promise reforms and to insist on staying in power.
	May	23	Egypt's first free presidential election	The first round of the presidential elections take place: Mohamed Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq come out on top, and proceed to the second round: the Arab Spring's first free and fair presidential elections.
		25	Houla massacre	Syrian pro-government forces massacre more than 100 civilians, beginning the militarization of the Syrian uprising.
	June	2	Egypt sentences Mubarak	Ousted President, Hosni Mubarak, sentenced to life in prison.
		14	The first free elected Parliament dissolved	Two days before the coming of Morsi to power, Egypt's supreme court dissolves the first freely elected parliament.
		16	Muslim Brotherhood in power	Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, wins the second round of the presidential elections against Ahmed Shafiq.
		7	Libya's first elections	The National Transitional Council supervises democratic elections for 200 members to form the first General National Assembly in more than 40 years.
	July	15	A Syrian civil war declared	The International Committee of the Red Cross issues an official declaration confirming the Syrian uprising to be a civil war.
		19	Ben Ali found guilty	A Tunisian court sentences Ben Ali in absentia to life.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
	September	12	US ambassador killed in Benghazi	Terrorists take advantage of protests targeted at the US Consulate in Benghazi to kill the US ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, a second US diplomat and two former navy SEALs: the biggest assassination of a Western diplomat during the Arab Spring.
	November	11	National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces formed	Seeking international recognition and support, this umbrella opposition body is announced in Doha, Qatar, absorbing the Syrian National Council into its ranks, and offering support for the Free Syrian Army. It includes representatives from the *tansiqiyat* (revolutionary Local Coordination Committees) inside Syria. Mouaz al-Khatib is elected as its first president, along with vice presidents Riad Saif and Suhair al-Attassi.
		22	Morsi's new powers	Egypt's elected president, Morsi, issues a new constitutional decree to give himself powers to fight the deep state. The announcement causes a political crisis and disapproval from a majority of secularist opponents.
	December	15 and 22	Egyptian constitutional referendum	A constitutional referendum is held in which 63.8% voters cast Yes ballots in two rounds.
2013	February	6	Assassination of Belaid in Tunisa	Chokri Belaid, a leftist opposition politician, is shot dead, sparking demonstrations in Tunisia.
		23	New Prime Minister in Tunisia	Nahda's Ali Laarayedh forms a new government after of Hammadi Jebali's resignation in response to the political crisis sparked by the killing of Belaid. Political standoff in Tunisia between Islamists and secularists: UGTT, the country's powerful Federated Union of Tunisia Workers returns to politics as an anti-Islamist power broker.
	June	30	Mass protests against Morsi	A year to the day after Morsi's inauguration as Egypt's first democratically elected president, mass protests erupt across Egypt calling for his resignation.
	July	3	Army ousts Egypt's president	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) member and Egypt's defence minister Field-Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi removes the country's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi. El-Sisi suspends the constitution and installs an interim government: Arab Spring's first military coup and first democratic breakdown of the Arab Spring.
		25	Brahimi assassinated	Second opposition leader is assassinated in Tunisia. The political crisis deepens.
		26	Mandate for a crackdown	El-Sisi requests a mandate to carry out a crackdown on Morsi supporters in Egypt. State of Emergency declared by SCAF.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
	August	14	Rabaa massacre	Thousands of Morsi supporters are killed by Egyptian police and army. There are no precise figures for those killed in Nahda Square and Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square.
		21	Syria chemical attack	Government forces carry out a chemical attack near Damascus, which kills hundreds of Syrians.
	September	14	US–Russia agreement on Syrian chemical weapons	In a move to stave off threatened US airstrikes after Assad's crossing of Obama's infamous 'red line', the US and Russia agree that the Syrian government would hand over or destroy its chemical weapons arsenal by the middle of 2014, or be referred to the UN Security Council.
		23	Egypt's Brotherhood banned	An obscure Egyptian court outlaws the Muslim Brotherhood.
		28	Nahda-led government stands down	Nahda's party and its 'Troika' partners agree a deal with political opponents to get the country out of political crisis, resulting in a technocrat government.
	December	18	Morsi charged with terrorism	Morsi appears in court to face charges of terrorism.
2014	January	14	Raqqah falls to ISIS	ISIS gains control over this northeastern Syrian city, one of the first to be 'liberated' from the regime by the Free Syrian Army. ISIS continues to expand, battling not only al-Qaeda offshoot al-Nusra Front but also various Syrian opposition forces, logistically and ideologically impeding the revolution.
		14 and 15	Egypt's third constitutional referendum	The new ruling power, after the overthrow of the first elected president, holds a constitutional referendum and gets 98.1% Yes votes. Anti-coup Alliance boycotts the vote.
		22	UN-sponsored Geneva II negotiations between Syrian regime and opposition begin	Talks between Syrian National Coalition representatives and regime delegates fail to produce any agreement. Violence continues to escalate inside the country, as the revolution's 'split personality' between on-the-ground developments and international diplomatic interventions becomes more entrenched.
		26	Tunisia's new democratic constitution	NCA promulgates new constitution. 29 January: technocrat government is approved.
	February	14	Libya's chaos starts	A retired major Gen Khalifa Haftar appears on Al-arabia TV announcing the suspension of the General National Assembly, the government and the constitutional declaration: Like in Egypt, Arab Spring setbacks for democratic transition are recorded in Libya.
	May	7	Fall of Homs	Opposition fighters hand over Homs, the 'capital of the revolution', to regime forces in a deal allowing the evacuation of residents after months of siege.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Events*	*Details*
		16	Krama military campaign	Haftar launches a military campaign in Benghazi that leads to an open military confrontation that spreads to Tripoli and other cities in west Libya.
		26, 27 and 28	El-Sisi in power	A presidential election in Egypt takes place between only two candidates in which el-Sisi wins 96.1% of the vote. Voter turnout: 38%, lower than the 52% voter turnout in the 2012 presidential election that brought Morsi to power. El-Sisi, youngest SCAF member, becomes Egypt's sixth president since independence.
	June	4	Assad re-elected	With two other candidates contesting, Syria's President attains 88.7% of the vote with 73% turnout, according to official numbers, in an election regarded as a 'farce' by the opposition inside and outside the country.
		25	Libya's second general election	A general election is held in Libya to elect a parliament for only the second time since the fall of Gaddafi.
	August	8	US-led war against Islamic State	The US leads partner states (Western and Arab) against Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), initiating airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and offering logistical support to Iraqi troops and Kurdistan fighters (Pershmerga special units): Religious extremism has marred Arab Spring gains across the Arab geography.
	October	18	Yemen turmoil starts	Houthi fighters, Shi'a insurgency, take over Sana'a and pressure the president to dismiss the government and form a new one.
		26	Tunisia parliament elected	Nidaa Tounes wins free multi-party elections (85 seats); Islamist Nahda comes second (69 seats). Voter turnout: 61%.
	November	6	Libya's supreme court dissolves June Parliament	Libya's supreme court rules that (a) June parliamentary elections were unconstitutional and (b) the country's parliament and government should be dissolved.
		7	A new government in Yemen	Khaled Bahhah announces the formation of a new government.
		23	Tunisia holds presidential elections	Leading candidates Beji Caid Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes), incumbent Moncef Marzouki, NCA Speaker, Mustafa bin Ja'afar, and former judge and anti-Ben Ali dissident Kalthoum Kannou, the only female to contest the presidential race.

Glossary

Ahadith sayings by the Prophet Muhammad

Al harakah al Islamiyyah Islamic movement

Al-Hirak the movement

Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun Muslim Brotherhood

Al-istimrar steadfastness

Al-Khityar the old man

Al-nasr victory

Al-nidham the order, the system

Al-Rabi Al-'Arabi the Arab Spring

Al-sharaf dignity, honour

Al Shari'ah Islamic law

Al Shura consultation

Baladiyya municipality

Bay'a oath of allegiance

Dhul humiliation

Eesh bread, living (Egyptian dialect)

Faragh void

Fiqh jurisprudence

Fiqh al-awlawiyyat jurisprudence of the priorities

Fiqh al-muwazanat jurisprudence of the balances

Fitnah discord, conflict

Ghadhab discontent

Hurriyyah freedom

Ibadat matters concerning worship in Islam

Ihitijajat protests

Iltizam commitment

Infitah open-door policy

Intifadhah (pl. *intifadhat*) uprising (Palestinian origin)

Iradah agency, will

Irhabi terrorist

Irhal go away

Islah reform

Islamiyyat Islamist female activists

Istibdad despotism

jumu'at al-ghadhab Friday of wrath

Karamah dignity

Kashf unearthing, uncovering

Lebled the homeland (Magrebi slang)

Majlis Al Shura advisory council

Malyouniyyah million-strong protest (Egyptian dialect)

Masalih mursalah unrestricted public interests

Mauvaise foi bad faith

Maydan square, field

Midan Tahrir Tahrir Square

Mihna ordeal

Mu'amalat profane transactions in Islam

Mukhabarat secret service

Qasas justice

Rahil departure

Rais president

Rij'iyyah backward attitude

Sha'ab people

Shabab youth

Shabiha regime-backed death squads (Syrian slang)

Shilla personalistic group

Shughul employment, labour

Shuhada martyrs

Sumud resistance

Ta'ah obedience

Taghyeer change

Tahrir liberation

Tawreeth policy favouring hereditary rule

Thawrah (pl. *thawrat*) revolution

Thuwwar revolutionaries

Umma nation

Zenga alley (Maghrebi slang)

Preface

The Meme of the Arab Spring

Larbi Sadiki

This *Handbook of the Arab Spring* is important for several reasons. It validates the foresight by Routledge to publish it four years after the eruption of the first protests in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, in December 2010. The Arab Spring obviously affected the inception of the idea of the handbook, and the handbook has in its turn been affected by the delay, allowing for thorough reflection on the direction, both positive and negative, of the various revolutionary trajectories and manifestations that make up the Arab Spring. The Arab cities whose public squares have seen sustained protests, and all kinds of contests of authoritarian forms of power, more than three years since the ousters of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, are today joined to the 'indignant' marginals everywhere, standing on a shared space of 'peoplehood'. Whether they are Arab *thuwwar* (revolutionaries) from the Muslim Brotherhood, 6 April Movement (Egypt), UGTT labour militants, 'EKBES' protesters in Al-Kasba (Tunisia), students and civil society activists (Bahrain, Yemen), or civic as well as unruly oppositional forces (Syria), their emancipatory mantra of freedom and dignity (*hurriyyah wa karamah*), and the normative vision that animate their activisms, do not differ much from those made popular by the movement of the Indignados (M-15), ATTAC, Democracia Real Ya (genuine democracy) and Juventud Sin Future (future-less youth) in Spain, and like-minded activists in Thailand, Greece, Portugal and, more recently, in Venezuela and Ukraine.

The cries of 'indignation' at corruption, brutality, uncertainty, food shortages and strategic commodity price hikes, unemployment and absence of freedom hailed equally from the most powerful and, arguably, richest nations on Earth and some of the poorest (e.g. Yemen), as well as middle-ranking countries. This represents a moment when the gap is truly bridged between the indignant voices of the world we live in, ranging from Occupy Wall Street to the *acampadas* in Spain. It is a kind of a concomitantly revolutionary and 'poetic synthesis'. The rebellious youths, students and other types of marginals, notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds, religions, levels of income, gender, colour, nationality and temporal and spatial distances, all dissolve into a singular, cohesive, and solidaristic complex of moral outrage acting in unison, raising the banner of 'occupy', 'degage' or '*irhal*' and 'game over'. This depicts at once polyphony (of languages and cultures) and harmony (of messages and activisms).

This is another reason why the handbook is important: seeking to capture the processes of mutual inclusion and attributes of commonality that bind Arab and non-Arab – in the global squares of protest and in terms of the triggers of discontent. Nothing debunks Orientalist narratives, which have historically relegated Africa and the Middle East (AME) to the sphere of irrelevance, a-historicity and exile, more than the global connectors that bind Arab and non-Arab youths: moral indignation at ill-governance (political exclusion, economic misdistribution and corruption), familiarity with the gadgetry of globalization (Internet, Facebook, etc.) and the technology of resistance (moral protest, transnational solidarities, language of rights). This, in one sense, marks the death of 'exceptionalism': first, before the Arab Spring, as an exilic and exclusionary device that situates the AME outside the 'box' of modernity, democracy, legal-rationality, civility, etc.; and, second, as an attitude after the Arab Spring (i.e. a mode of considering the Arab world, especially Arab Spring states, in order to represent a kind of moral beacon as moral protests engulf hundreds of cities in all corners of the globe).

Both within and without the AME, no factor perhaps surpasses the Arab Spring as a reproductive meme. This is not an affirmation of some kind of 'determinism'. Rather, on the ground, as a meme it seems to continue its 'travel' steadily, almost monthly popping up in diverse socio-political terrains, with host polities and societies deploying it in their locale according to their own needs. As a meme embodying anti-systemic protest, it has proven its worth positively (when despots flee, including most recently in the Ukraine in February 2014) and negatively (when the state itself weakens to the point of near absence, as in Libya). In the AME, regardless of how the meme of the Arab Spring travels, manifests itself, and mutates socially and politically, its success resides in the fact that its very absence, thus far, in some Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, gives it an eerie presence that spooks up the state's security apparatuses. This seems to propel policy-makers into irrational or draconian behaviour within and without their national borders. Note the billions poured by a few Gulf States to sustain the 3 July 2013 military takeover of power in Egypt. Specifically, this applies to Saudi intervention in Bahrain to prop up the rulers instead of facilitation of a dialogic process that redistributes power and welfare in a way that produces a win–win outcome for state and civil society.

Equally important is the fact that the explosion of protest and socio-political revolutions – as an ideational and ethical dynamic – is on display as a contributor to time–space collapse often attributed to high-tech revolutions. Thus not only spatial and temporal differences seem to shrink, but also, and more importantly, the gap between rich and poor, democratic and authoritarian states, in terms of how citizenry's approval of existing systems tends to elide under a variety of political systems. The rebellious citizen (in the North) and denizen (generally in the South) is the kind of individual who today populates polities marked by a time through which revolution travels fast in spaces noted by shared sentiments of disillusionment, protest and contest of power. In this time–space collapse there is an emerging tendency towards reclamation of rights of 'peoplehood', above all else, and interrogation of political organization not only of state–society relations, but also the way in which people relate to and seek to challenge authoritarian systems' conception of time and space in the bid to reconfigure power relations – as argued in Chapter 1 of the handbook, with special reference to the Arab Spring. There is a dissolution of practices of political thought where citizens delegate (in democracies) or surrender (defer) the management of their futures to traditional forms

of democratic representation. The essence of peoplehood is the tendency towards self-organization, speaking back, writing back and striking back at symbols of power – in all forms and shapes – by the hitherto silent majorities who have for so long chosen to check out of representative democracies. In the AME, similar reference can be made to those who have until early 2011 opted to boycott a variety of political species, including failed and rogue states, privatized polities such as the 'republican' dynasties that were the first to buckle under the juggernaut of anti-despotic popular defiance and resistance.

To an extent, the death of the passive Arab, often anonymized through all kinds of 'Orientalisms', is here. The rebellious (*tha'ir*) and visible Arab will not be voided by Al Jazeera, the Internet, Facebook and the like. These have been perhaps 'over-romanticized' as drivers of change. Indeed, the information and high-tech revolution has lent a helping hand to Arab uprisings. However, it is the agential – more than the structural – aspect that features large in the Arab revolutions of 2011. Arabs are not living islands – detached from the world around them and all it offers through the travel of ideas, goods and peoples. However, because agency is primary in these revolutions, the techniques and technologies of protest, resistance and communication would have been invented if they had not existed. At the time of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Xerox machines and cassettes were the technologies of the time. They were no match to Facebook or Twitter today. Nonetheless, defiance led them to be used to optimum effect in the bid to reach a wider audience, and mobilize it in order to triumph over injustice.

It is this very injustice that informed the revolutionary moment in 2011. It revealed how the entire AME, whether directly or indirectly touched by the Arab Spring, and despite diversity within and between Arab countries, is prone to influence by the protests led by youths from Casablanca to Sana'a. This is where the Arab Spring impresses: the Arab region remains a cohesive cultural sub-system powered up by the quest for freedom, individual and collective, connected by the proclivity to respond to, if not to actually learn from, neighbouring experiences and happenings. Indeed, the spill-over and demonstration effects of the Arab Spring have not been even across the vast Arab geography and demography. However, there appears to be a new dynamic everywhere in the AME: there is no winding back of the clock to pre-2011 ways of doing state–society relations. The margin carved out to speak back, write back and engage in dissidence by Arabs is not up for grabs by state-centric power-holders, not even in the states where vigilance against dissidence is high. That is the prosaic fact of life in the post-Arab Spring world.

Nomenclature

There is no fixed or single meaning given here to the term 'Arab Spring'. The kind of fluidity that informs the Arab Spring is mirrored in the handbook. It may be an exercise in futility to be attempting either to impose one meaning or try to disaggregate the phenomenon into its constitutive manifestations, whether 'uprisings' (*intifadhat*), 'protests' (*ihtijajat*) or revolutions (*thawrat*). While all these names indicate nuance, and signify specific dynamics, they owe their existence to the common symbolism of bottom-up change and the forces driving it. Moreover, they all capture the essence of an historical moment, still unfurling. Integral to the moment is the anomic condition that grips societies intent on overthrowing existing exclusionary and brutal orders.

What is more important is the normative content of anomie – revolving around re-imagining of community through focus on the 'should be' side of society, polity, economy, etc., making breakdown part and parcel – a condition almost – of future reconstruction of state and society and reconstitution of subjectivity. One differentiation, applicable to the Arab context, is that the forces that have been on the fringes of society, polity and economy – revolutionaries or *thuwwar* of sorts – and not traditional elites or professional politicians, emerge as the chief drivers of change. The 'subaltern' multitudes, often divested of the cultural, linguistic, political, social and economic resources, emerge in this moment as trend-setters, changing history itself. Mohamed Bouazizi, a pedlar from a marginal town in southern Tunisia, is emblematic of subalternity. He set himself and the world around him alight, rising from anonymity and shaking those of his ilk – Tunisia's 'wretched of the Earth' – out of their oft-assumed political 'stupor', into tsunami-like movement. Then there is the quasi-onomatopoeia of the spring with the liveliness of the sounds of the new-born, mutation, birth, rebirth, motion, blooming and blossoming that the youths of the Arab squares mimic when chanting, praying, dancing, singing, screaming and even crying. It is as a term evocative of similar movements which sprang to shine brightly upon the free in the 1980s in Manila and Prague, among other places, where people's power had the last laugh and say – over tyranny.

Content and organization

The *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring* must not be read with the wrong paradigm in mind. It does not claim to be a theoretical body of work. It is primarily intended to encompass the initial analyses of the events begun in 2011 up to the present (including the military takeover of power in Egypt in early July 2013). It is enriched by a variety of styles and even levels of experience. It is even kind of 'trans-generational' in terms of academic experience, combining the inputs of established scholars with the contributions of young researchers and academicians. The mix of voices in the handbook is equally trans-regional, seeking to enrich the discourse of the Arab Spring with wide-ranging representations of the phenomenon from within the Arab world, Africa, North America, Europe and India. The handbook comprises reflections on the Arab Spring from world-class scholars, leaders in their fields: Laurence Whitehead situates the Arab Spring within democratic transition, an area he helped to pioneer with the likes of the late Guillermo O'Donnell, among others. Michael Hudson views it through the prism of legitimacy, succinctly revisiting the theme of his 1979 magnum opus, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*. Khaled Abou El Fadl, one of the grandees of Islamic law and good government and Islam, unpins the logic of the military takeover of power and termination of Egypt's incipient democratic experiment in July 2013. The design of the discourse intended in the handbook is to be dispersed, keeping it multi-dimensional and multi-vocal. Similarly, the reflections by Abbas, Achy, Alam, Al-Sayyid, Behr, Bouandel, Boubakri, Ghabra, Hinnebusch, Jeppie, Khalil, LeVine, Manea, Salvatore, Schumacher, Solera, Ulrichsen, Willis and Zemni all add context and sharpness to topics ranging from agency to democratization, democracy promotion, economic misdistribution, technology of moral protest, revolution, and forces of change. The country chapters represent important voices by promising scholars, research scholars, and a few committed activists, attempting to capture at once the global travel and the local impact of the Arab Spring. The result is a set of insightful

interventions by Abdelmoula, Al-Anani, Alkifaey, Allende, Al-Om, Alshaer, Benothman, Blanco-Palencia, Buera, Craig, Daoud, El Gomati, Fares, Fayzullina, Göçer, Günay, Hattinger, Herzog, Holliday, Moussa, Mullin, Mustafa, Saleh, Schriwer, Weipert-Fenner, Worrall and Yousfi.

The handbook's scope is immense. This is deliberate, and the rationale is to allow for diverse styles, voices, backgrounds, and wide-ranging positions and perspectives to consider the Arab Spring phenomenon as well as arrive at a notion of the Arab uprisings that transcends neat labels, fixed interpretation and single understanding. There is no specific agenda superimposed on the authors, except to share their tentative analyses and readings of the Arab Spring from their own standpoints – specialisms, geographies, biases, and degrees of proximity and distance from the events that shook the Arab region to its foundation in 2011 and beyond. The handbook succeeds in meeting this objective and in so doing produces a kind of dialectic and dialogue between different angles, positions, viewpoints and assumptions. On the whole, what the authors of the handbook collectively articulate are lines of investigation, suggesting some clues, hinting at possible answers but without closing the discussion of a fluid phenomenon, still unfolding, refusing to stagnate, wane and fade into something that verges on the banal and dogmatic. The idea is that the handbook with its focus on the Arab Spring and bottom-up forces of change contributes to the scholarship of Middle East politics, democratization and Arab politics, and sets the stage for further investigation of the phenomenon.

The 49 chapters in the handbook marshal evidence on vast angles from a variety of sources, including primary material gathered by competent voices, many of whom are connected to the theatre of events and/or discursive fields they are adept at navigating. Change or lack thereof spawned by the Arab Spring is mapped out succinctly and lucidly in the chapters within this handbook. The forces driving or stalling change are equally recorded here, as are the contingent and contextual variables leading to divergent trajectories within the Arab Spring. Indeed, this is one characteristic emblematic of the Arab Spring: the variety and specificity of 'springs' (as Professor Lawrence Whitehead rightly observes) that add up to the totality of the phenomenon described, analysed and unpacked, tentatively, within the handbook's pages. Its hopes and challenges, specificity and commonality, fixity and fluidity, and continuity and discontinuity have guided lines of enquiry that frame the discussion within the handbook:

Part I: The departure point: reflective chapters that touch upon the question of democratization and its contests within the context of the Arab Spring. They speak to the nexus of theory and practice and relate this to questions of change, authoritarianism, legitimacy, and the demonstration effect, if any, of the Arab Spring.

Part II: In this section, the focus is on the catalysts and travel of the Arab Spring. It begins at the beginning: from Tunisia via Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. Qatar is the only non-Arab Spring state that has had a great deal to do with the phenomenon, literally from the word 'go' (*irhal*). It is here that the specificity and commonality, fixity and fluidity, and similarity and dissimilarity of the Arab Spring come to the fore.

Part III: Egypt's story of the Arab Spring deserves much wider scope than is provided here, and no doubt years of serious study. This section touches only the surface of a fascinating country's Arab Spring facets. Shafiq Ghabra's chapter opens up with an account of the rise of Egypt's revolution and Khaled Abou El Fadl closes it with an

analysis of its demise and, perhaps, reversal. The intervening chapters fill in gaps in overall knowledge about important dynamics and forces, pre- and post the 25 January revolution.

Part IV: Throughout the Arab Spring, women have sprung as serious contenders for power through civic engagement, discursive presence, and struggle from beginning to end. This is showcased here through examples from Syria and Tunisia. The discussion barely scratches the surface of an area in need of focused attention and a handbook of its own on women as agents of change in the Arab Spring.

Part V: In this section, the discussion turns to additional agents (e.g. trade unions, new social movements) of change that have helped to bring down the old order with its rigid and, as a result, tenuous authoritarian structures. These structures include the economic and social compacts that underpinned despotic rule in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

Part VI: This section almost stands as a logical consequence of the one before it, addressing the 'how' of revolution and protest deployed by diverse forces and agents of change during the Arab Spring. Music, graffiti, technology, social media, poetry, slogans all feature as potent media in the hands of Arab protesters.

Part VII: The wider Middle East has neither been immune to nor immured from the stirrings and reverberations of the Arab Spring. These are canvassed in this section, covering Arab countries from the immediate Arab Spring geography (Algeria, Morocco) and more remote ones (Oman and the West Bank and Gaza). The Arab Spring has affected non-Arab countries in a variety of ways – including protests in Israel, Iran and Turkey.

Part VIII: The book closes with an important discussion that assesses the Arab Spring's impact further afield: Africa, the European Union, India, North America, Russia and Scandinavia. This is a discussion that offers a great deal in evaluative and reflective terms, and there is plenty of food for thought in this section for policy-makers but also for students of international affairs and foreign policy specialists.

Working with the various authors is immensely demanding but rewarding. The result is a highly informative and readable book. The editors Joe Whiting and Kathryn Rylance and writers who have produced it have striven to provide diverse types of readers – students, lay publics and specialists – with insightful and reliable chapters, written from different angles and with different emphases. The references at the end of each chapter guide readers to sources that allow further exploration of related subjects. In particular, the handbook has given access to new researchers, and young scholars, combining this with the touch of highly experienced scholars. The finished product is the accumulated 'labour' and inputs of all the authors whose patience and forbearance with my 'nagging' emails over a long 12-month period deserve applause.

For me, what is particularly something of a feat where the handbook is concerned is relocation to the Arab region for the first time ever in my academic life. In my new institutional home, Qatar University (QU), I was pleasantly surprised by the intellectual curiosity of young Qataris, Arab and Asian students eager to engage with all kinds of themes and attendant red herrings that served to animate class discussions about the Arab Spring. In this I am deeply indebted to the enthusiasm, ambiance of interrogation, team presentations and even blogs produced by the students in my 'Special Topics' classes in my first year at QU. Similarly, I am grateful to both the Dean of the College of Science and Arts (Dr Eiman Mustafawi) and my Head of Department (Dr Youcef Bouandel – one of the authors in the handbook) – to accord me much

latitude in my first year, easing me into comfortable integration in my new Arab university setting and assigning me choice of research-based teaching. Colleagues in the department's Research Committee (Dr Farhan Chak, Dr Layla Saleh, Dr Afyare Elmi, Professor Ajmal Khan, Dr Hatoon al-Fassi, and Dr Brahim Saidy, and Professor Ahmed Ibrahim from the History Department, and Drs Ali Al-Shawi and Mohsen Bouazizi from Sociology) that I chair have been most engaging in my endeavour to get the handbook completed. Their support is greatly appreciated. I also thank Malath Al-Agha for the compilation of the chronology.

Whether in terms of free and dispersed classroom discussion or with regards to teaching international affairs, QU offers hidden and obvious comparative advantages and resources that have helped me work on this handbook. As a 'political animal' QU offers endless resources for those curious about the Arab Spring. Doha houses not only Al Jazeera Satellite TV, AJE and the Al Jazeera Studies Centre, but also plays host to international forums, a continuous expertly and scholarly visiting population, including collaborators with the Qatar Foundation, the Doha Institute, and a vibrant expatriate community with thousands of political refugees such as those fleeing Syria's 'killing fields', and activists of all ideological colour (Islamists, liberals, leftists, etc.). QU benefits from Doha, today a 'meeting place' plugged into all things global, ranging from the happenings of the Arab Spring to public diplomacy summits that give academia rare access to endless resource persons, interlocutors and other primary insights.

Above all else, it is the students whom I have engaged in classrooms over two years, thus far, who have kept me challenged, prompting me time and time again to revise and interrogate my own thinking about the Arab Spring. In every sense, their inquisitive and dialogic nature has made me feel like a 'teacher with class'. And in no small part, their abilities are owed to the hard work of higher education designers in Qatar at large, and to the input of QU's president (Professor Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad), who popularized among the student population the mantra of learning excellence (*tamayyaz*).

The handbook is neither the final word on the Arab Spring nor claims to be without limitations or imperfections. It is written with the reader in mind, to give students, practitioners, diplomats, policy-makers and lay readers contextualization, knowledge and undoubtedly a degree of joy by adding insight and engaging curiosity about the Arab Spring. It is a phenomenon that will continue to make waves, including of fearless humans, bound up in the intermesh between self and other, rich and poor, compliance and resistance, quietism and activism, fixity and fluidity, and subjection and peoplehood. With its embers slowly burning (despite the current focus on more ephemeral unruly and violent non-state actors such as the Islamic State), the Arab Spring's significant markers of revolutionary performativity and revolutionary hybridities are bound to provoke the human endeavour to carry on re-envisioning spatialities and identities devoid of fear from tyranny, be it ideational, material, corporal, moral, or political. The Arab Spring will forever evoke fond memories, powerful emotions and passions, and neglected solidarities that have edited back into accounts of the Arab people's stories of and struggles for freedom and dignity.

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Unruliness through Space and Time

Reconstructing 'Peoplehood' in the Arab Spring

Larbi Sadiki

Introduction

This chapter presents a critical account of the phenomenon of the 'Arab Spring'. This it does via an unorthodox interpretation of why the Arab Spring élan represents a departure point from many 20th-century revolutions. Many scholars seek to find correlation between the Arab Spring and democratization. There might be hints at democratization within the Arab Spring. The focus here is on the dynamic of unruliness, defiance against and resistance to authoritarian rule, the common denominator in all Arab uprisings, whether successful (producing ousters in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen in 2011) or incomplete and/or bloody (Bahrain and Syria). The chapter therefore refuses to reduce democratic politics to a form of rule cemented to conventional templates and practices, invariably assumed to culminate in law-based contestation, participation and supportive civic publics and non-personalist systems that are contracted to either run government or organize orderly opposition periodically and peacefully. The argument presented in this chapter assumes this matrix of democratic politics to be an artefact integral to established and consolidated democracies. The gist of the account attempted here is to draw attention to an important aspect of political activity within the Arab Spring: the spatio-temporal dimension of the unruliness informing anti-authoritarian protest and resistance. The crux of this unruliness is public mobilization and organization through self-configuration and reconstructions of space and time. Rebellion against these two instruments of authoritarianism does not necessarily have a democratizing effect in an institutional sense. Unruliness is simply 'occupation in reverse' of spatial, temporal and discursive fields, which have for so long been constructed, reproduced and occupied by the postcolonial power-holders. In the quest for dignity (*karamah*) and freedom (*hurriyyah*), unruliness is society's agential deployment against the 'occupiers' of the authoritarian state. Central to this unruliness, apart from informally engendering bottom-up notions of sovereign identities and participatory

citizenship in the public squares of protest, is the people's coming together to ephemerally substitute the authoritarian regimes' practice, thought and language of controlling power with their own conceptions of political practice, thought and terminology. Thus the regimes' routinized notions of stability, loyalty and deference, for instance, are traded for spontaneously conceived practices, thought and language. Stability cedes to fluidity, loyalty gives way to hostility and rebellion, and deference to resistance. To borrow a term from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 'critical consciousness' is thus forged and invented in the public squares of protest as a necessity to counter the hegemonic order with action, thought and all kinds of signifiers of opposition and resistance (Freire 2000b). While instantaneous and spontaneous, the critical consciousness summoned in the public squares of protest seems to generate (e.g. Egypt and Tunisia in 2011) the necessary democratic agency to unify the rebellious publics around a spirit beckoning new beginning. The stand as a united public with unified practice, thought (perhaps dreams) and terminology constitute initial steps towards reconstitution of democratic subjectivities, and rejection of subjection to authoritarian rule and rulers. There are three distinct arenas where the Arab masses proved their supremacy over the authoritarian state in their bid to subvert the existing authoritarian paradigms: space, time and language. Two, in particular, explain the Arab masses' triumph over their oppressors: the ability and creativity to occupy public space and refigure time itself. They are both the focus of the ensuing analysis. Space here means more than a geography or a public square; it is the ethos that derives from resisting authoritarianism, the thought-practice of emancipatory protest that engenders citizens in a state of flux, self-reconfiguring and in the process remapping the political. One caveat is in order: the chapter does not seek to explain the roots of the Arab Spring. Chomsky (2013), for instance, has a leftist take, implicating neoliberalism in the advent of the Arab Spring, which he describes as a 'triple revolt'. He even goes further by crediting the 'labour movement' with Tahrir Square's triumph in overthrowing the authoritarian regime (Chomsky 2013, 45–49). Negri concurs, showing his own leftist leaning in his interpretation of the Arab Spring. In his newly published *Factory of Strategy*, he links the origin of the Arab Spring with 'a new cycle of anticipated struggles for the emancipation of labour, social equality and common freedom' (Negri 2014, xi).

Briefly, two observations derived from Harold Joseph Laski's classic text, *Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, are pertinent to understanding the roots of the Arab Spring. Writing about another epoch during World War II, and in describing the nature of the fundamental change conditioned by a state of massively destructive conflict, Laski notes that the revolution of his time 'is not made by thinkers' (Laski 1968, 9). He adds that 'fear is the parent of revolution, for it inhibits that temper of accommodation which is the essence of successful politics' (1968, 18). This relates to what he calls failure to recognize 'necessary social change' (1968, 18). Laski's observations may have some relevance, nearly 70 years later, to the nature of Arab revolutions: they are not ideational revolutions led by thinkers, reformers and philosophers (such as during the radical reforms sought in the 19th century by leading Arab and Muslim scholars of the Nahda Period); and the failure of politics to create genuine openings for social change and inclusiveness partly explain the advent of the Arab Spring, which for the Arab region is a match for the profound change Laski addresses. From the perspective of remaking peoplehood, the Arab Spring equals in significance the revolution of Laski's time.

Space and politics for remaking the people

The Arab Spring: Enacting empowerment

To aver that the Arab Spring has dealt a blow to Orientalism and Western paradigms of transitology is no exaggeration. In looking at the civility of the Arab Spring – values of participation, organization, mobilization, expression and self-governance – one finds ample evidence of how the Arab Spring has forced contestation of how Africa and the Middle East (AME) have been studied by scholars of democratic transition. A look at the nexus of public space and politics in enacting people power in the revolutions of 2011 in Egypt and in Tunisia helps to illustrate this.

From Cairo through Libya to Tunis, the central squares developed by the post-colonial authoritarian states' urban planners – named after political icons or iconic historical events – were part and parcel of a form of socio-political engineering aimed at defining the territory of power and largely of state-holders. Tahrir (liberation) square and the *mugamma'* edifice[1] adjacent stood centrally as powerful reminders and symbols of centralized power, and of the Egyptian state's authoritarian–bureaucratic clout. Tahrir as liberation is a powerful idiom that conveys messages of historicity as well as legitimacy. The *mugamma'* was the one inevitability the majority of the Egyptian citizenry could not avoid: it housed the huge bureaucracy producing their legal personas and paperwork for the construction of their identities. Under the control of autocrats, the *mugamma'* had effectively – as its name in Arabic denotes – been the collective unifying repository through which Egyptian citizenry is filtered, as if the very conception of 'Egyptian-ness' could not be imagined outside the Interior Ministry's labyrinth of windows and clerks that formed the bureaucratic mill inside the *mugamma'*. That link to the Interior Ministry was a thread that 'shackled' the collective psyche to fear of both state power and the over-bureaucratization that served as an additional device of control over the citizenry and the construction of Egyptian identity since the Free Officers' takeover in 1952.

In Tunisia, the capital's central boulevard, at the end of which stood the Interior Ministry's massive building, was named after the country's postcolonial leader and national mentor, the late Habib Bourguiba. Like him, the boulevard his urban planners named after him was an example of how the politics of space was never innocent. Bourguiba and the space – the squares, gardens, memorials, libraries and streets – all represented value-laden signifiers of power (Bachelard 1994). They stood for an Ataturk-like brand of nation and state-building inspired by the former colonial metropolis, Paris. Thus, following the bloodless coup of November 1987, the first thing his successor did was to rename the squares, often deleting 'Habib Bourguiba' to cede to the new administration's politico-social engineering label '7 November', supposedly a symbol and idiom of the ousted dictator's 'New Deal' – a deal that never was. The Habib Bourguiba Boulevard survived the architectural purge that saw the redesigning and relabelling of public space. Like in Cairo's Tahrir, the Interior Ministry stood as an eyesore in the Bourguiba Boulevard, a powerful reminder of the police state Bin Ali and his henchmen built over 23 years of authoritarian rule. Like the *mugamma'*, it evoked fear as well as indignation. It is this indignation that proved resourceful and momentous in both countries' protests in January and February 2011.

So what is the relevance of the dimension of space in the politics of civic resistance in Cairo and Tunis in 2011?

The Tunisian and Egyptian protesters contested regime monopoly over the control, use and manipulation of public space. When the Tunisian protesters began their build-up of a critical mass, they first had to reclaim the space the state claimed as its own, the hub of its centralized authority, as a physical edifice and politico-moral authority. A critical mass was needed to reoccupy the geography of the authoritarian state and the terrain from which it organized the lives of the citizenry. Just as the authoritarian state had purged the citizenry from the terrain on which it pitched, designed, diffused and sustained the reproduction of its authority, the citizenry had to recover that terrain and redesign it as its own in order to navigate it as a new topography of mass resistance against state hegemony. And just as the state had purged the citizenry from its geography of power, the protesters had to purge the state from that very space. That space was thus converted into forums for mass organization and mobilization. It is within the precincts of that space that a new imagining of community and democratic politics was made possible by the protesters in both Egypt and Tunisia. The space was literally transformed from authoritarian space into popular space, and reorganized into forums for democratic reticulation and display of solidarity. Universal messages of rejection of authoritarianism were designed and redesigned, and communicated through the use of all kinds of techniques, ranging from new national anthems to communal prayers and marches. The critical mass of protesters turned the central public spaces – squares, for instance – into 'gymnasiums' of civic activism in which the citizenry sharpened both its skills of anti-systemic protest and its appetite for democratic politics through sustained and creative mass protest. Thus the masses in Egypt and Tunisia were able to reinvent themselves by contesting the authoritarian state's politics and programmes openly. Ultimately, this is what led to the transformation of former spaces of reified state authority into public space for re-enacting popular sovereignty and collective re-ownership of the state. In these reclaimed spaces – Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the Habib Bourguiba Boulevard and the Kasbah in Tunis – the fight against authoritarianism was concretized, built into a critical mass, and defiantly sustained to eventually yield the tipping point that brought the authoritarian structure completely unstuck.

The transferable value of the exploration of the dimension of space as an angle on the 'Arab Spring' is today evident in Syria. Thus far, in neither Damascus nor Aleppo have protesters reclaimed public space such that they can directly display solidarity and resist hegemony through collective participatory action. This limits their ability to render the state unable to act or offer acceptable responses. Were public spaces to be reclaimed as they were in Tunisia and Egypt, the public resolve, now focused in a space it claims as its own, could shift from the former politics of accommodation with the state to total defiance and rejection of authoritarianism. In Libya also, the rebels felt the need to occupy Gaddafi's compounds and 'Green Square' – which they renamed 'Martyrs' Square' – in order to claim possession of their revolt and realize a kind of political closure in the wake of the overthrown political order.

One can see, then, that a critical dimension of the Arab Spring has been the protesters' claim over and creation of public space. Egyptians, Libyans, Tunisians and Syrians, less consistently, have sought to remake both the moral and the physical worlds in which they want to thrive as free citizens. They came together to dismantle the physical worlds framed by the powers that restrict their potential as free agents. Then they proceeded to populate those spatialities and 'worlds' with 'words' through which to speak back, write back, strike against the authoritarian state and re-envision

the madeena or 'polis' they aspire for (*al-sha'ab yureed*, as it were, 'the people's will'). In the protesters' agency to change their physical world lie hints at the spatial implications of the Arab Spring as a potential geography of dissent, free politics and good government.

Under authoritarianism, space and its architecture were geared towards reproduction of subjection and control. The Arab Spring challenged this order. By reclaiming public squares, the peoples in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia re-enacted peoplehood by reclaiming the spaces of tyrannical rule, breaking all barriers of fear, and redesigning space into a realm of *res publica* – where the public breathes life into ossified politics. More importantly, they reconciled[2] psychological space (feeling free again, reclaiming citizenship through protest and rejection of tyranny) with architectural space: thus, Gaddafi's Green Square ceded to 'Martyrs' Square' and Tunisians unofficially, then officially, renamed many public boulevards 'Bou'azizi Place'. In doing so, they have opened up endless possibilities for self-mastery and socio-political spheres of freedom and dignity. Ultimately, this is a matter of political organization: that is, democratic political organization in the age of the Arab Spring.

'Clock-wise' protest: Reimagining time in the Arab Spring

There is something striking about 'time' under the aegis of an oppressive and authoritarian political order. It is framed in a straight-line-type thinking: the march towards progress, new citizenry, modernity and the like. In the Arab setting there are endless examples of how linearity is engineered in the postcolonial moment to drive forward being, thinking and doing to erase the traces of colonialism. These range from the violence of subjection exacted by the colonizers to the results of its effects on the psyche and living conditions of the formerly colonized peoples. The postcolonial state's chief undertaking – and one that is integral to its mode of legitimation – is to de-colonize. Such an undertaking meant, among other things, some form of commitment to mimicking the former colonizer's bureaucratic decision-making, construction of newly independent national identities, and adoption of 'rational calculation' in all matters concerning modernization and development, including organization of public time. The postcolonial state envisaged this through socio-political engineering of individual and collective identity. The invention and formation of national identity could not be conceived within 'traditional' notions of time: a notion that made identity fluid rather than stable, and decentred rather than cemented to a centre or a single locus of power. In other words, the traditional notion of time did not fix identity to a centrally organized system for producing and reproducing meaning, power and commodity. Formalizing labour, bureaucracy, national identity, mass education and loyal citizenry all implied standardizing time as part and parcel of reordering lives in ways that can singly determine individual and collective identity. Introduction of a European calendar, including adoption of the Saturday–Sunday weekend (e.g. the Arab Maghreb), of business hours and national holidays (e.g. Day of Independence, Revolution Day, Republic Day, Labour Day, etc.), all served to either dilute the staying power of traditional seasons or cause them to assume a secondary role in the daily lives of the citizens of the newly founded Arab realms. Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell (2002) find that even neoliberalism itself has its own mechanisms for managing and shaping space, and by implication reformulation of polity, society and economy.

The reorganization of time – and inevitably its commodification as a regime's exclusive bastion – had from the outset suffered from a serious handicap. The

rationale was to 'rationalize' time in the bid to create rational polities and societies. However, the irrationality of all of this laid in the fact that the real intention was to control citizenries, rather than deliver them from either the heavy excesses of colonization or those oppressive aspects of traditional time (e.g. *khumus* or fifth of the produce in return for timeless labour by peasants in North African societies). As part and parcel of the new states' panopticon organization of time, power-holders and their cadres committed the mischievous act of seeking to 'centre' national identities. This meant engaging in subversion of existing paradigms of time and attendant notions of belonging, loyalty, autonomy and self-understanding. The cardinal sin of most newly independent states – namely, the new Arab republics – was to seek a demolition job on peripheral existence. The targets were legion: clans, tribes and all marginal spaces for acting out not necessarily potential rival identities, but merely existing as parallel forms of being, acting and thinking. Only fully centred identities, with a national mind-set and self that was fixed within centrally demarcated space and centrally organized time, were accorded a margin of existence as agents of reproduction of power – not agents of change or opposition to the newly constituted political orders.

This is one reason which explains the new states' hostility to sharing the management of identities with the supposedly 'backward' (*rij'iyyah*) or 'primitive' voices representative of tradition. Tradition devotes a great deal of effort and attention to affective aspects of human interaction that when released from centrally organized time can develop parallel forms of the self into potentially alternative solidarities and programmes that could challenge existing imaginings of political community. The national-secular state's reorganization of time in the postcolonial moment allowed a great degree of penetration into the lives of citizenry that rivalled the impact of the revolution of mass education, radio and national conscription – all of which were deployed to deepen national consciousness and recruitment into nationalism and the very idea of the state. Specifically, this penetration manifested itself in two interrelated areas. First, potentially free time that was once allocated to cultivate and pursue informal networks, relations and affective sentiments was now markedly reduced. Furthermore, it was under the newly formed national-secular orders converted into 'formal' time – public spacio-temporal control centred on the state and its support systems (e.g. institutions, ideology and agencies of regulation and distribution). As time passed, all potentially rival centres for recruiting individual and collective loyalty were either recruited as agents of state aggrandizement or had their command of loyalty, and by implication their own claim to their members' time and ability to manage it, diluted if not rendered ineffective. Only those primordial organizations with operational means of regulation and distribution could still call and rely on their members' time for *ad hoc* mobilization, organization and solidarity. The clan and tribal politics that accompanied the management of the state in Libya and Yemen were quintessential examples of the quasi-blurring of private and public time. By contrast, in Egypt and Tunisia, where clan identities were peripheral (i.e. the exception rather than the rule), a notion of 'linear' time was developed by the state in exchange and/or in the quest for new citizenship, self-actualization, social mobility, liberation of men and women, development, modernity, equality, stability and the like. The second manifestation of the conversion of time from an informal into a formal concept and resource was the distractive factor that derived from the burdensome entanglements and demands of territorial and modern lives. The pursuit of goods such as social mobility, stability and

modernity meant citizens were left with little or no private time to seek alternative futures or organize in sufficient numbers or manner to unhinge the existing orders. Given the modest means and resources in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, citizens – except intermittently when food prices went up resulting in short-lived protests – invested a great deal of their time focusing on the pursuit of opportunities to work, emigrate and make ends meet while deferentially co-existing with the state for as long as it acted as the provider. While the majority of society lived hand to mouth, in some cases literally, those in power lived in opulence and extravagance (Gaddafi's palaces, Bin Ali and Leila Bin Ali's fortune and the Mubarak family's wealth), where they exercised a quasi-monopoly on distributing 'leisure time' to themselves and their clients. Thus the 'formalization' of time more or less equalled a power relation of subjection and dependence that served authoritarian states well in bidding time to reproduce authority and longevity.

Both time and space must be understood within the context of the Arab authoritarian state as political constructs within and through which narratives of nation and state-building are produced and reproduced. Literally, they constitute the knowledge-power axis of the authoritarian state. Spatial order cannot be complete without temporal refocus (i.e. the way in which change over time is planned, paced and managed). Conquest of any people by either external or internal occupiers takes place within and through reorganization (physical and intellectual) of time and space. Spatial organization, as argued above, marks out the geography of the state's authority by stretching the imagination in the invention of (nationalist) names, myths and iconography that are operationalized as the keys for knowing and navigating public space. The aim is to surround the statist edifice with aura, awe and recognition. Similarly, time is set on a straight-line-type progression that is selective in the elements used in the delineation of the 'past' and the 'present', and strict demarcation between 'modernity' and 'tradition'. Peter Osborne's term 'temporalizations' of history applies here to the authoritarian state's organization and manipulation of time (Osborne 2011). Both are used not only in the narration of 'history', but are also made to collapse into a whole 'present' that refocuses public attention on a notion of 'change', which is deliberately constructed to decouple the 'present' and the 'past'. Thus the 'present' becomes the 'official transcript' used to feed specific (and ahistorical) knowledge into the public memory. What is noteworthy about the authoritarian state's manipulation of change in the reproduction of power is that the possession of time in the present implies the end of previous time or the 'end of history' (to borrow a phrase from Francis Fukuyama). It is within the newly re-conceptualized time of new leadership and novice ideology that the authoritarian regime masters its caprice and hunger for political singularity. And once control over time is the sole focus on the present (and its 'glory'), control of space itself is made possible. Public space is then coded and decoded by the public in the newly constructed terms that cement it to present symbols (liberation, independence, revolution) and icons (Bourguiba, etc. …).

Space and time in the context of the authoritarian state are closely connected with control, in practical terms, the exclusion of the 'people'. Little or no work has been undertaken to unravel the use of spatio-temporality as a weapon of subjection in the inventory of the authoritarian Arab state. Integral to this tentative line of enquiry developed in this chapter is not only the importance of time and space as resources for re-imagining community (Benedict 2006) in the hands of Arab protestors in the 2011 uprisings, but also the failure of the study of Middle East politics to grasp the full

gamut of dictatorial reality with its leaders, cadres, elites and publics, concentrating power within their hands through distribution and coercion as well as through more sophisticated and subtle means that hold the key to prolonged rule. Organization, management and control of time and space are interwoven into territorial supremacy of the ruling elites over the people. Through them dictators and their agents are able to map out the geography of power relations and match it with the brand of change calculated to maximize control over spatially monitored publics and temporally programmed public memories living in a 'time capsule' not of their invention. Therefore, exiting the dictatorial regime's time capsule – with its straitjacket-like constraints – inevitably demanded urgent attention, a challenge to which the spreading demonstrations *en masse* in Egypt were able to measure up to. Their creative precedent was soon to spread further afield, inspiring fellow Arab protesters in the public squares of Sana'a, Manama, Tripoli, Aleppo and Damascus.

Egyptian protesters not only massed in the millions (hence the term '*malyouniyyah*' in Egyptian dialect), but also did so by orienting Arab protestors towards mapping out new conceptions of time. Their aim was to give the people 'positionality' as drivers of change, define a revolutionary sense of direction and purpose, and, last but not least, endow their unruliness with a missionary zeal and a collective sense of history-making. The choice of Friday was not arbitrary. It was an apt choice not devoid of spiritual significance but one which signalled that the authoritarian state's political project could no longer suppress alternative voices and visions, much less carry on with the pretension of a unified public around the regime's official 'articles of faith'. The regime's rhetorical references to 'growth', '*uboor*' (transit) and development were all conceived in linear terms. Egyptian protestors' re-demarcation of time disrupted, interrupted and disorientated the authoritarian regime's universalized time scale when they declared Friday 28 January the 'Friday of Wrath' (*jumu'at al-ghadhab*). It administered a severe blow to such linearity. Moreover, the conjugation of space and time is interesting in this respect. Historically, the authoritarian regime's management of public space disallowed public displays of discontent, much less anti-regime defiance. The significance of the periodization using consecutive Fridays as points in time for focusing public unruliness on specific themes, issues and aims gave the otherwise unstructured and fluid demonstrations a degree of substance. More importantly, the temporal constructs of dignity (*karamah*) or departure (*rahil*) are meaningless without their physical experience and mapping out in relation to the spatial reordering of peoplehood in different sites of struggle in Egypt, including the famous Tahrir. The spatial and the temporal are inextricably linked as dynamics of the reconstitution of peoplehood and newly freed 'borders' of unruliness. The authoritarian space that has for so long served the purpose of concealing public sentiments, except for those orchestrated by the dictatorial regimes, and occluding the people, is in the Arab Spring moment restored as a theatre for openly staging discontent, resistance or solidarity through creative conceptions of time. Discontent, for instance, is thus vented collectively and openly in a space–time dynamic that is constructed and experienced by the people, unshackled by state control. Syrians own performativities through remapping of time and spatialities were stunning. They constructed a virtual 'demo' through Facebook to vote democratically on the naming of their Fridays of protest. There were dissenters, however (see, for example, Al Jazeera 2012). Temporality is thus used to focus spatial performance through the morality of 'Marching till the Regime's Downfall' and the cry of 'Your Silence Assassinates Us'.

Peoplehood: Self-configuration and spatio-temporality

It is the double-edged act of reinventing space and time that is vital for the reconstitution of identity and peoplehood that enables unruliness: that is, erasure of the state as a regulator (authority) of space and time. In doing so, the very 'myth' of the state as a territorial given and a locus of power are overthrown within before physical overthrow actually ensues without. It is the aura of the authoritarian ruler and the awe commanded by the dictatorial state that are the prime targets of refiguring space and time. Arab protesters generally, namely in Egypt and Tunisia, did not use physical force to oust authoritarian rulers. It is here that the dimensions of space and time make sense. Jonathan Boyarin's (1994) idea of self-configuration comes to mind. In *Remapping Memory…*, Boyarin and his co-authors situate self-configuration within contexts of cascading change, including life-changing political events such as conflict. The 'Arab Spring' has such a stature in terms of heralding profound change. However, it is not just the 'contested memories' that Boyarin and his co-authors list as targets of re-mapping in the context of self-configuration during times of monumental change. It is also contested identities, and visions of politics. Thus the processes of self-configuration and identity-remapping entail reconstruction of space and time suited to reshaping 'insider-hood' itself, the way people self-define – rather than being defined by others. Broadly speaking, the key point to be taken from Boyarin (1994, 4–18) is that control of space and time occurs in the process of self-configuration. This is the kind of remapping that is noticeable in the reconfiguration of space and time, and within it politics itself, realized by Arab protesters. Ernest Laclau's (1990) idea of articulation of identity and object formation, even if read from a Marxian angle, has merit in consolidating the ideas put forth by Boyarin and his co-authors. Articulation of peoplehood as a collective identity and a site, entailing remapping of memory, where identity reconstructions are configured and tested, does not only happen within contexts of profound political change, but also in dialectical contexts of identity location and dislocation and where surviving the contradictions of the 'forces of dislocation' (Laclau, 1990) is part and parcel of the process of identity formation.

Hence when 'Friday' is invoked and entered as a people's rendezvous with history-making, the enterprise at hand concerns self-configuration, entailing remapping of identity, memory and even morality since emancipation is the aim. There are strong processes of exchange between the Egyptian and Yemeni revolutions, as can be evidenced from the designation of Fridays as times of focused resistance. The names given to Fridays again prove the point made earlier of how time, like space, can easily cease to be an 'objective' category. In this instance, it is specifically rendered 'emotively' to suit both a creative/constitutive moment of self-reconfiguration as well as a destructive moment of undoing the authoritarian order. Time is measured unconventionally, as agency (*iradah*), discontent (*ghadhab*), departure (*rahil*), resistance (*sumud*), freedom (*huriyyah*), justice (*qasas*), victory (*al-nasr*), purification or purging (*al-tathir*), steadfastness (*al-istimrar*), reclaiming dignity (*radd al-sharaf*). The consequence of this for the onset of self-reconfiguration as a collective, a peoplehood sharing the past, present and the future, cannot be emphasized enough. Within the space occupied and now experienced through a type of timeless temporalization, aesthetics not metrics is the actual measure of what actually counts in the quest for dignity. Four important features capture the essence of the spatio-temporality geared towards self-reconfiguration:

1 Reconstructed space and time as spheres of public enactment – suited and dedicated to collective resistance and moral protest – are noted for their immaterial quality. Space is not place, and time is not hours and minutes. Space is de-territorialized since the devices by which the sovereign state regulates people's lives are no longer in use, and this includes attributes such as loyalty to a single centre. Boyarin (1994, 4) criticizes the notion of space as statist territory as well as the idea of delinked space and time. He refers to 'close genealogical links between the "Cartesian coordinates" of space and time and the discrete, sovereign state … . These links include relations of mapping, boundary setting, inclusion and exclusion.' Space and time form a symbiosis with major implications for the reformulation of the political, including identity formation (Massey 1993).
2 Rendition of time is affective/subjective not objective – aesthetic not metric. The upshot is a levelling of the playing field in the public squares of Arab protest such as Tahrir, Kasbah, etc. There is a post-ideological and even a quasi-post-national fervour. Citizens re-emerge equally as agents of resistance, steadfastness, discontent, victory, freedom and justice, (the various names given to Friday) with their contradictions dissolving into the collective whole, peoplehood. This is the chief function of the aesthetic content of temporalization through, for example, Fridays of resistance and freedom. The polarities between secularist and Islamist fade, between rich and poor, between men and women, and between ethnicities and religions – at least during the time of protest. They collectively experience self-reconfiguration, reconstituted as '*thuwwar*', an overarching identity for rebels with a common cause: freedom and dignity. However, to invoke Laclau's (1990) idea of the 'constitutive outside', reconstitution into this subjectivity is articulated in contradistinction to the guardians of the authoritarian state, their clients, discourses and loyal forces in addition to the notion of space and time upholding the dying regime. Hence the terms '*folool*' or remnants of the ousted regime and '*azlam*', having a similar meaning, are used respectively in Egypt and Tunisia, showing dynamism in the language of power that accompanies revolutionary change and reconstitution of democratic identities.
3 There is a quasi-post-modernizing effect with reconstructed time and occupied space forming a free domain not only for initiation of self-reconfiguration, but also for reconfiguring power relations and polity outside the conventional template of a delineated territory, and a single centre tasked with law-giving or authority-wielding. Fixity in every sense cedes to fluidity, singularity to plurality, and the state to society. Note how leader-less *thuwwar* assume a will of their own in regulating the occupied space and reconstructed time through vigils for the protection of people and property, cleaning streets, protecting congregational prayers, provision of food and medical first aid. This may be termed 'civic self-reconfiguration' in all of its didactic realizations as a learning curve.
4 Within the reconstructed spatio-temporality of resistance against the authoritarian state, fluidity is the name of the game. The reconstitution of agential identity is a 'work-in-progress' and open-ended. Its reconfiguration is both relational and partial – relational in the sense that it does not necessarily or always assume an antithetical posture towards 'otherness'. Rather, it releases an agency that does not preclude interactive and communicative *modus operandi* among the melee of subjectivities standing as one within shared reconstituted space and time. The result is an inter-subjectivity that generates mutuality and equality not only in terms of political positionality against a common 'other', the authoritarian regime, but also in terms

of rediscovering the passion of collective optimism over the arch of possibilities looming on the political horizon and reimagining new beginnings through reconstituted identities and remapped memories. The old markers of identity – ideological and state-centric dissipate – that the authoritarian regimes have for so long deployed to atomize the public gradually become less relevant. Similarly, the reformulations of identities are only partial since there is a sense of what Freire calls the 'incompleteness' of those dreaming of or striving for democracy and freedom (Freire 2000a). Inter-subjectivity as part and parcel of self-reconfiguration and remapping entails many a metamorphosis as the new agents of change negotiate the travails of conversion from subjects to citizens. Reaching towards that untapped new possibility of free and equal citizenship must first embrace the task of unlearning authoritarianism.

Tentative conclusions: Spatio-temporality and unruliness

Unhinging authoritarianism in the Arab Spring required putting an end to regime 'possession' and manipulation of time and space. This is the most significant manifestation of unruliness displayed by the Arab masses in 2011. In Tunisia, it was exclusively the creative use of spatial occupation by protesters that eventually led to regime collapse. This is a common feature shared with revolutions such as in the 1989 Velvet Revolution (or November Events) during the 25–27 November mass demonstrations concentrated in Letna Park in Prague. Arab uprisings elevated spatial occupation into a revolutionary art form – what I call the 'public square ethos' (Sadiki 2011). The bid to wrestle time from the sole possession of the authoritarian state was a distinctive initiative of Egypt's 25 January Revolution. Soon after, this practice of unruliness travelled to other Arab cities in Bahrain, Libya, Syria and Yemen, and even in the Moroccan protests of 2011 one finds similar temporal significations. The conception of peoplehood necessitated revolutionary awareness of and anti-systemic unruliness through the spatial and temporal. Arab uprisings were unequivocally leaderless. They had neither 'Vaclav Havels' nor 'Lech Walesas'. Geography and time, instead, decided the fate of regimes who unconventionally ruled through deployment of a brand of spatio-temporality that physically disallowed locating the 'people' and cognitively contrived to occlude and conceal the people and delink from the past – that is, 'time out' the people, banishing them to the periphery of power and history. Enacting peoplehood, very creatively, in the context of the Arab Spring made a difference through defiance of authoritarian space and time. Centralization and centrality of dictatorship were defeated when the people came together to occupy centre-stage and mark out new 'centres' in a geography from where to de-territorialize the postcolonial territorial political order with its singular agents, coercive apparatuses and legitimating discourse of power. Thus were the borderlands of unruliness formed and framed as countervailing moral foci committed to de-centring the hegemonic centre. To borrow an idea from Boyarin (1994), neither time nor space is an 'objective' category. In the hands of an authoritarian regime, they are both constructs and products used and abused for the purpose of control and re-production of exclusionary power. Spatial control is depicted by Urry (1985, 26) in terms of daily intrusive state management of people's lives. In the same vein, state control of public space and culture produces a civil society suited to continuous state management of daily life, socially and politically (Urry 1985, 32–35).

Just as the spatial featured high in the Arab Spring's repositioning of the people as unruly dissenters in various cities' public squares, the temporal dimension of

reconstituting a peoplehood endowed with self-mastery meant re-periodization of such a reconstitution and of the acts and activisms associated with the course of mass protest. Specifically, re-periodization was executed cognitively. Suddenly the rhythm of time was paced with 'subjective' – and even affective – beats in which 'dignity', 'wrath', 'departure', martyrs' and 'solidarity' were programmed to record and strike new time on the clock of Arab revolution. This new time constituted a cognitive re-planning which caused disorientation to the authoritarian order. This temporal stroke of genius in unruliness was not something that the coercive machineries of the dictatorial Arab states had either anticipated or planned for. What were particularly creative and subversive at the same time were the battle lines drawn geographically and cognitively. Spatially, the authoritarian state's imposition of a universalized zone of authority ceased to apply as unruly publics were able to delineate geographies of moral protest. The longstanding authoritarian practice of 'divide and rule' was reversed and suddenly the mass protests ruled by dividing geography, ending dictatorships' spatial monopoly. Temporally, what most evidently and remarkably distinguished the 2011 Arab uprisings from previous people's power revolutions was the fact that the single standard (state-centric) time applied by the authoritarian regime – as part of its linear quest for modernization and modernity – was itself rivalled by an alternative chronology. In temporality, for the first time in postcolonial history, the authoritarian regime and the unruly society become visible contemporaries, and co-temporaries, since neither the state of unruliness nor the dictatorial order under siege can sustain themselves indefinitely. One must exit history – and time for good – and the other will have to occupy power through democratic means. Cognitively, the Arab protestors whose forebears recorded time by reference to spiritual (e.g. the Prophet Muhammad's emigration; pilgrimage), seasonal (e.g. harvest), natural (e.g. floods; droughts; locusts) or historical (e.g. conquests; wars) horizons were in the course of the 2011 uprisings empowered to restore the standing of Friday as a focal point in time of communal solidarity. Fridays punctuated the calendar of unruliness – through gradually more systematic organization and mobilization – with collective action all intended to further the Arab Spring famous cries of 'freedom' and 'dignity'. There was no winding back of the clock for the dictators whose time was up throughout an eventful year during the 2011 Arab uprisings. Through counter-spatial and temporal constructions, Arab protesters largely succeeded in producing a type of unruliness that redefined power relations in ways that introduced fluidity as an antidote to authoritarian fixity, and eventually decentred politics, for the first time in modern Arab political history privileging the periphery. The rest – especially the authoritarian postcolonial centre that occupied power – is more or less history.

Notes

1 Part of the interior ministry apparatus in central Cairo.
2 I borrow the idea of 'reconciliation' from the work of the French Marxist intellectual Henri Lefebvre, who discusses reconciliation of mental and geographical spaces in *La Production de l'espace* [*The Production of Space*] (1974).

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Part I

Introducing the Arab Spring

Reflections on Contexts and Contests of Democratization

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2

On the 'Arab Spring': Democratization and Related Political Seasons

Laurence Whitehead

On 'springs' and 'winters' …

By general consent, the 'Arab Spring' can be dated to January 2011, when mass protests produced the unexpected flight of Tunisia's longstanding dictator, Zine Abedine Bin Ali, thus triggering a region-wide demonstration effect that soon brought down the Mubarak regime in Egypt, and destabilized authoritarian rulers in Libya, Syria and the Yemen, as well as producing wider political repercussions throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The phrase 'Arab Spring' gained widespread currency as a result of an article posted by Marc Lynch (2011) a week before Bin Ali agreed to step down, in which he noted the spread of 'seemingly unrelated protests through a diverse array of Arab states', and asked whether this might be 'the beginning of the Obama administration equivalent of the 2005 "Arab Spring" when protests in Beirut captured popular attention'.[1] So the turmoil of 2011 was not viewed as unprecedented. More importantly, Lynch himself did not expect the protests to bring down any regimes, even though they seemed more hard-edged than before.

Indeed, the spring terminology has an extended political genealogy. The 'Arab Spring' is a throwback to the events following the assassination of premier Hariri in Beirut in February 2005, which led to the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the Lebanon, but not to political reconciliation thereafter. The 1848 revolutions in Europe were once labelled 'the springtime of the nations' or 'of the people', and in 1968 the reform communism inaugurated by premier Dubcek of Czechoslovakia was known as the Prague Spring.[2]

All these and other 'spring' episodes had in common the abrupt lifting of a climate of fear. For a limited period – often really just a few months – habitually repressive police or security forces ceased to exercise control over the expression of popular demands, and a wide spectrum of hitherto suppressed or intimidated viewpoints erupted into the political arena; a range of emancipatory projects was publicly aired, and some previously unthinkable proposals gained traction; long repressed parties and opposition

groups became free to recruit supporters and to organize activities legally, while former power-holders and their associates faced sudden demotion, or even the prospect of retaliation for their excesses.

Although the previously generalized climate of fear was replaced by new hopes, and even by some utopian proposals, not all sectors of society were equally relieved. For privileged beneficiaries of the old order the spring was a moment of loss, or of threatened displacement; and for a broader conservative stratum the predictability and relative security associated with a repressive order gave way to a new atmosphere of experimentation that they likely viewed as risky and uncertain.

Indeed, all these springs were followed within a year or two by autumns or even winters. The 1848 revolutions were mostly put down by reactionary invasions. Only Switzerland achieved a real breakthrough. In France, Louis Napoleon filled a political void, then went on to erect his Second Empire. In 1968, tanks from the Warsaw Pact crushed the illusions of reform communism, and restored an inflexible regime that lasted for another two decades. There were major regressions even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, including in the Russian Federation itself, not to mention the tragic outcome in most of Yugoslavia. In the Lebanon the withdrawal of Syrian troops was followed not by national reconciliation but by an Israeli invasion that eventually empowered Hezbollah, the most pro-Syrian force in a fragmented and polarized polity.

Divergent trajectories

The aftermath of 2011 are still unfolding, with divergent trajectories in the different countries involved, and with the eventual balance still far from decided. In Egypt, the most central case, it now seems clear that the emancipatory projects aired with such enthusiasm in Tahrir Square have been superseded by a restoration of many of the repressive and fearful features associated with the Mubarak regime, including the re-empowering of much of what has long been designated as the country's 'deep state'. In Libya, the oppressive Gaddafi regime was definitively eliminated, although this was not achieved through domestic protest but rather by civil war and external military intervention, and the post-war settlement so far is extremely problematic and insecure. In Syria, the results are still in dispute, but whatever the final outcome, the human costs of the intervening upheavals are overwhelming and tragic. In Bahrain, the third anniversary of the arrival of spring was marked by further confrontation and deadlock between the ruling monarchy and an apparent majority of its subjects. In Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia spring never blossomed. Only in Tunisia, and perhaps more tentatively in Yemen, can we identify substantial steps towards the meeting of initial hopes and aspirations.

Whether through its achievements or its frustrations the Arab Spring shook the region and the world. It provides the analyst with an abundance of new insights into the dynamics of democratization in the 21st century, and into the regional and the global forces shaping and limiting the prospects for more consensual, tolerant and inclusionary political processes. This volume sheds new light on the varied and cross-cutting outcomes of the upheavals that took place in 2011, and this introduction offers some observations and suggestions drawn from a comparative historical perspective on these events and their aftermath. Each Arab state receives separate national attention, but the spring of 2011 was a region-wide phenomenon so it requires comparative treatment. It would be possible to extend the scope of comparative enquiry across the

whole of the MENA region, but a more manageable strategy is to limit the field to its predominantly Arab language states.[3]

On this basis, although highly diverse in many respects, the springs that preceded the Arab sequence of 2011 can be examined as a set. All shared one evident defining common characteristic: the contrast between a preceding long period of stasis and fear, and an ensuing episode of rapid political opening fuelled by an at least temporary suspension of repression. Several further commonalities can be singled out.

First, language and the evocation of emotive imagery make a difference to the practice and study of politics. The universal currency of the spring metaphor provides one telling illustration of how our understanding of unfamiliar phenomena can be reshaped by powerful analogies and stirring terminology. In fact, the upheavals of the past three years are barely intelligible absent the imaginative appeal and passionate engagement aroused by such symbolic images as the liberating of Tahrir Square, the flight of Bin Ali or the public trial of Mubarak.

Second, the energies unleashed by popular mobilization flow well beyond the borders of any single nation state or political regime. They arouse both enthusiasm and repulsion across a vast spectrum of regional and even global opinion. This 'contagion' effect subverts frames of analysis that rely on standardized national reporting units and stable indexes of autocracy, or fixities of institutional design.

Third, the major causal chains are long and loose rather than tightly mechanistic. A single shock can produce diverse and multiple reverberations, more like a burst of stormy weather attributable to a change in the seasons than the calculable reactions of a billiard ball. Fourth, history matters and multiple temporalities need consideration. Different actors evoke diverse precedents and justifications for their choices, and may operate on highly incongruent time scales.

Fifth, despite all the confusion, contingency and myopia that may characterize such upheavals, there remains a set of underlying principles and comparative schemas that limit and channel directions of movement.[4] These five points have been reconfirmed by the startling events of the past three years.

In every case, a long historical background of previous challenges and attempted openings can be rediscovered. The forces that burst out into public view brought with them memories, justificatory narratives and warnings from the past that helped to structure their proposals. For example, 1848 was understood both by its supporters and its opponents partly as a tribute to or revival of the spirit of 1789; the Prague Spring drew inspiration from Czechoslovakia's interwar democracy, and from the immediate post-war years before the 1948 Stalinist coup; the revolt in Tunisia contained bitter echoes of the original 'Revolution of 1988', when, to Western accolades, the incoming Bin Ali abolished the life presidency and the state security court and amnestied thousands of political prisoners, in a brief episode of reform, before gaining enough confidence to dispense with such niceties.

Thus, earlier experiences of abrupt political openings can provide lesson and guidance for a new generation of activists to draw from. But not all the Arab states affected by 2011 had such constructive memory banks. In Libya and Syria (as in Iraq at an earlier period), for example, the operative historical background taught that even the most mild and peaceful of protests could be met with charges of stirring up external intervention, or even seeking the restoration of Western colonialism. In such cases, the most incipient beginnings of an Arab Spring could elicit denunciations of treason, and the most ferocious crackdowns. Nobody in the Maghreb was likely to forget the way

the Algerian regime had reacted after the Islamist successes of 1989, or how the democracies of the West chose to look the other way as all hopes of liberalization were crushed.

These were not highly organized insurrections. Nor was there a 'pact' between established opposition parties (as in a re-democratization), nor any unifying figures of emancipation and reconciliation, or any other universally trusted source of orientation. So the emerging claims were cacophonous, with many inexperienced and untested contenders vying for popular support, most of them much clearer about what they were rejecting than about what could be put in its place. During the excitement of this springtime all these hopeful voices gained a hitherto unheard of level of attention, while the old established commentators were largely discredited or drowned out, and the lurking doubts and fears of more conservative sectors of public opinion were at least temporarily marginalized.

Interventionist reactions and comparative lessons

Even so, although domestic scepticism might not be much in evidence for a while, external hostility and resistance could always be relied on virtually from the outset. Neighbouring regimes, fearful of the 'demonstration effects', would not just wait for the turmoil to subside. In almost every case they became engaged in stiffening the resolve of internal hardliners, channelling support to potential defenders of the status quo, and even preparing themselves for some kind of intervention if necessary (whether political, financial or even military). In 1848 and 1968 the harshest forms of international suppression eventually determined the outcome; since the end of the Cold War the interplay between domestic liberalization and international reaction may have become more complex and indeterminate, but external backlash is always a substantial factor in the equation, not just because of what it may accomplish, but also due to its radicalizing and disuniting impact upon emerging pro-spring constellation of forces (Whitehead 2001).

Moreover, internationalization flows in both directions, and tends to accentuate the overall climate of uncertainty. Thus, the Saudis reacted to the fall of Bin Ali by offering shelter to the ousted ruler and his clique. Egyptians reacted by ousting their own dictator and submitting him to a domestic trial. The Saudis and other Mubarak allies organized to resist (or ideally reverse) the dangerous precedent set by Egypt and followed closer to home in Yemen. Between Egypt and Tunisia, the Gaddafi regime drew its own conclusions and prepared a counter-attack, with consequences that fed back into neighbouring jurisdictions. Further afield, the repercussions in Syria went on to destabilize Lebanon. Similarly complex and unpredictable geopolitical sequences ricocheted around Europe in 1848.

The capture and control of public spaces was another distinguishing feature of this type of undirected political mobilization (Sadiki 2011). The role of technical progress also captured the attention of observers (in 1848 the railways were seen as new channels for the rapid transmission of emancipatory examples; in 2011, social network internet sites, satellite television broadcasts and mobile phones were similarly highlighted). Such topics receive close attention in this volume.

But the most crucial parallels have been sought elsewhere. As the springtime phraseology indicates, these were time-limited episodes of hopefulness and experimentation. The near-term political outcome was nothing like as progressive or successful as

envisioned by early participants. Within the year, spring was followed by autumn and, in most cases, by an exceptionally harsh winter. This may contrast with some more structured political transitions (in Portugal and Spain in the 1970s; in the southern cone of South America in the 1980s; in South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia in the 1990s; as well as in Turkey and even Mexico more recently), although it may be too soon to pass a firm judgment on the eventual outcome of the Arab Spring only three years after its inception. In fact, determination of the eventual outcome is a problematical exercise for at least three reasons: near-term and long-term consequences must be separated; national outcomes are likely to prove increasingly divergent across a large region; and factors that have little to do with springtime politics may go far to determine the ensuing results.

In the view of Eric Hobsbawm (1975, 10), 1848 'was very far from being "the turning point when Europe failed to turn." What Europe failed to do was to turn in a revolutionary manner. Because it did not, the year of revolution stands by itself, an overture but not the main opera.' Instead, '1848 appears as the one revolution in the modern history of Europe, which combines the greatest promise, the widest scope, and the most immediate initial success, with the most unqualified and rapid failure.' However, the term 'failure' refers to the dreams of its authors, not the nature of its eventual impact. On the contrary, 'Its specific objects were eventually achieved – but not by revolution or in a revolutionary context. Its wider aspirations were not lost either, but the movements which were to take them up and carry them forward were to be entirely different from those of 1848' (Hobsbawm 1975, 15). In such a case it is not the activists in the new dawn who get their way – indeed, they are more likely to become casualties in a long struggle. But note that both the early idealists and the die-hard defenders of the old order lose out. It is the more adaptable/flexible/opportunist participants who are most likely to come to the fore, and to craft the eventual post-upheaval settlement. It is by this means that subsequent generations may acquire freedoms without incurring such high costs (or claiming such personal ownership). In a similar vein, although the Czech reformers of 1968 went on to experience a full generation of one party repressive control, they also left a legacy that proved ineradicable, and in that sense the old order was conclusively defeated. So, two decades later, in 1990 their aspirations were realized for the next generation. Their sacrifices proved productive after all. On this basis it is far too early to classify the Arab Spring as a lost cause.

The comparative lesson (Whitehead 2002) seems to be that popular uprisings against oppressive regimes produce two linked but opposite short-term responses. Early on they can elicit demonstration effects that raise hopes of freedom and dispel the fears of repression underpinning authoritarian systems of rule across a large region. But within months they can also induce backlash and intervention from those regimes that are least immediately vulnerable to domestic challenge, but whose rulers decide to 'stop the rot' before it destabilizes them too. In 1848, the autocracies of Austria, Prussia and Russia led the 'anti-spring' offensive. In 2011, the Arab Spring provoked a complex chain reaction of geopolitical responses from the various regional and global powers most affected.[5] So far these interventionist geopolitical responses (financial, military and strategic) have largely over-ridden the initial emancipatory effects of the Arab Spring. But another comparative lesson is that over the medium to long term the generation galvanized by the spring will make itself heard.

Second, even in the near term, and certainly over the longer run, previous springs have generated contrasting effects across the multiple political systems where their

impact was felt. As already noted, although 1848 promptly turned wintry for most, this was not the case for Switzerland; nor were the consequences uniformly regressive across the fragments that were soon to become Germany and Italy. Arguably, the cause of moderate political reform in the UK was also strengthened by the spectacle of more radical alternatives across the channel. Likewise, although Czechoslovakia paid a heavy price for the Prague spring, reform communism may have gained more leeway in Hungary and Poland as a result, and Stalinist legacies were more widely discredited.

As for the MENA region today, the fall of Bin Ali and the ousting of Gaddafi removed two formidable obstacles to eventual constitutional settlements. These may take time and prove uncertain, but they only need to pass a very low threshold in order to count as significant advances towards greater freedom and more citizenship. Even in Egypt and Yemen the elimination of dynastic pretensions can be counted as a long-term positive outcome, with most of the springtime agenda still to play for. The darkest results are currently to be found in Syria, but a case can be made that these are more attributable to other causes (including the invasion of Iraq) than to events in the Maghreb. In any case, if the impact of the Arab Spring is to be traced to its furthest recesses, unfolding developments in Morocco, Kuwait and Bahrain and, indeed, Saudi and Qatari repercussions also need consideration. The wider the net of these effects is cast the more divergent (and diluted) must be their impact.

Protesters' hopes and dreams and 'non-spring' factors

So, third, on a view of consequences that includes both the long-term and the far-flung repercussions, it becomes impossible to disregard the non-spring factors that are also in play, as these may play a significant role in shaping outcomes. For example, if the international community had proved more effective at delivering on the commitments of the Oslo Peace Process, would the various Arab regimes that foundered after 2011 have been so vulnerable to challenge? If the price of oil had not risen so spectacularly over the previous decade, would the oil-rich monarchies have proved so much more resilient than the oil-poor republics? If the Western 'war on terror' had not taken the anti-Islamist tilt that followed 11 September 2001, would there have been so little international interest in the protection of human rights and the promotion of political dialogue across the MENA region prior to January 2011? Would Sunni–Shia sectarian conflict have drowned out all other issues and lines of cleavage, but for the invasion of Iraq?

The point of these counter-factual speculations is not to deny the huge significance of what happened once Bin Ali fled, but only to place it in historical and geopolitical context. When assessed from within this highly specific setting, it must be evident that causes other than the direct effects or libertarian intentions of Arab Spring participants continue to act powerfully on the politics of the MENA region. The price of oil, the cause of Palestine, fear of Islamism, the sectarian power shifts promoted by the Iranian revolution are examples of issues that are deeply embedded in the consciousness of key actors across this large region. They continue to intermingle and compete with the multiple legacies of that diffuse entity, the Arab Spring, and to shape the course of events and the way in which political alternatives are operationalized there. In consequence, great care must be taken when sorting out which outcomes can be attributed to January 2011 and its direct sequels. To put the same point a different way, the eventual fate of the Arab Spring will depend on many variables that are partially, or even mostly, exogenous to it.

In view of the apparent breadth of the consensus and the strength of the momentum displayed by these insurgent movements at their peak, some explanation is needed to account for the scale of the subsequent retreat, and the fleeting and limited nature of their mastery of the political agenda. Their spontaneity, openness to all comers, and lack of prior organization and structure gave them their strategic edge in challenging longstanding authoritarian controls. These were not movements that the old rulers could decapitate, for they had no heads. Repression only generalized the collective sense of insecurity and injustice, thus recruiting more protesters. Nor were there structured counterparts who might be co-opted, or with whom the security forces could cut any kind of deal. Demands were about voice and principles of justice, and were therefore non-negotiable. These were the initial strengths of the Arab Spring, but also the source of its brevity, and of its subsequent reflux.

At the same time it would be short sighted to reduce these movements to their publicly visible expressions. Behind the scenes there were nuclei of organizations and larger, more structured, opposition elements that monitored the balance of forces to assess how the security forces were likely to react, and whether it had become expedient to join in and attempt to direct the action. Thus, in Tunisia the UGTT was a stable presence from within, and the Nahdha Party was also relevant, albeit with much of its leadership either in exile or in jail. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood saw itself (and was seen by the regime) as the true alternative to Mubarak, and so took care not to invite retaliation until later in the cycle of protests. When these more substantial players intervened they may have tipped the balance decisively towards regime change, but they were too late and too well known to achieve hegemonic control.

Others have attempted to trace the precise story of how these actors sought to construct workable coalitions with viable projects of political management in the post-transitional period (e.g. Stepan 2012). Here it must suffice to note that, so far, in no case have the various pre-existing opposition interests proved capable of controlling the anarchic energies unleashed by the mobilizations, nor of subsuming diverse demands for change into a stable and controlling strategy of government. Disagreements between secularists and Sharia supporters have played an important part here. In particular, it is remarkable that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood managed to so alienate its former allies in Tahrir Square that many of the latter came to view the Brotherhood as a bigger menace than a restored army-led regime. There are other cleavages that matter, including between business interests and jobseekers; state employees (including the security forces) and taxpayers; Saudi-financed mosques and Coptic churchgoers; and residents of the capital city and those living in the disempowered interior.

The pattern is that the unity and hopefulness of the initial protests have given way to a disunity and fearfulness that weaken the authority of the dissident forces and encourage supporters of the ancient regime to seek a comeback. A 'silent majority' provides the target audience for this confused and often unedifying competition. But understanding why even the best near-term outcome of the Arab Spring has so far proved quite unstable requires examination of the domestic strategic interactions that have been affected by the region-wide upheavals of 2011. Further, as the current patterns of instability also have substantial external sources, regional and international levels of analysis are necessary.

Reactions to the Arab Spring from governments within the Arab MENA states were almost universally defensive, mostly hostile and even hysterical. Once the panorama became clearer, reactions became more discriminating. In particular, all MENA

governments drew back from preserving the Gaddafi regime. In Yemen, efforts were eventually made by neighbouring governments to encourage a negotiated solution. Tunisia's relatively consensual regime change was not actively destabilized by the uneasy adjoining Arab powers.

But if we compare the MENA region to earlier transitions elsewhere, the persistent absence of support for emerging liberalizing and inclusionary tendencies is notable. The European Union had orchestrated some encouraging policies of democracy promotion in southern and eastern Europe. In South America from the late 1970s onwards there was significant support for democratization from Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela, then from Argentina, and in due course a nearly region-wide consensus, eventually enshrined in the Organization of American States (OAS) Democratic Charter. In Africa, South Africa became a beacon after 1994. In South-East Asia, the Philippines set a modest early example, soon followed by South Korea and Taiwan, among others.

By contrast, in the MENA region only Lebanon offered fragile encouragement before 2011, and thereafter the precarious new Tunisian regime was too preoccupied with its internal problems to project any significant influence beyond its borders. Likewise other potential Arab bearers of emancipatory values, such as post-invasion Iraq or post-2006 Palestine, were in no position to exert regional influence in support of springs.

Support from outside the region was equally conspicuous by its absence. This seems counter-intuitive, since democracy was securely established throughout almost all of Europe and the Americas by 2011, and had made considerable inroads in all other large world regions. For over a decade the European Union had been trumpeting its encouragement of liberalizing tendencies in the Maghreb through the Barcelona Process; and President Obama made his celebrated pro-democracy speech in Cairo only 18 months before Tahrir Square. But Washington was far from directing events in the first phase of the Arab Spring, and remained off-balance subsequently. Brussels had almost nothing useful to offer, and Paris even volunteered to help Bin Ali with its specialized riot police in the final days of his collapse. In due course London and Paris swung into action by enlisting US consent to eliminate Gaddafi's air defences and bombard his tanks. But whether that should really be counted as support for the Arab Spring is debatable. It certainly enabled foreign oil companies to regain access to long lost mineral concessions, but (as in Iraq) the democracy promotion rationale for these interventions wore thin as the actual political fallout from military operations became impossible to overlook. In view of this poor record it was not that surprising when Western public opinion baulked at the proposals to re-enact much of this sequence in Syria in the autumn of 2013.

Why were the Western democracies so unprepared, and why did they do so little to uphold their ostensible democratic convictions when faced with the Arab Spring? To actively support the liberalizing coalitions of the Arab Spring the West's democracies would have needed to disengage from their strongly established contrary commitments across the region; and they would have had to gamble their prestige and influence on untried emerging forces that they could not control, or even fully evaluate. This was not the first time that such dilemmas had emerged: late in the day they had managed to disengage from such protégés as Marcos, Pinochet and Suharto, successfully repositioning themselves as allies of the (moderate) democrats who displaced them. But there have been few opportunities to execute such a pirouette in the Arab world, and those that have arisen were not well taken. Competitive elections in Algeria in 1988, or in

Palestine in 2006, produced unwelcome results, and in both cases the Western democracies chose to stick with the outgoing status quo. The long history of openings and closings in Turkey since 1950 betray the same pattern of western ambivalence, at least until the end of the last century, and recent Lebanese elections also elicited mixed responses.

The West's key opportunities to endorse political pluralism and popular participation in the Arab world arose in Tunisia and Egypt in 2012. But voters opted for Islamist parties that could not be relied upon either to uphold approved standards of liberal constitutionalism or consistently to align themselves with Western economic and security interests; and still less to endorse their mandatory attitudes towards Israel. As a result neither Washington nor the European capitals managed to build strong relations with these post-spring electoral regimes, so they also lacked the means to steer and stabilize them. Instead, they were exposed as both unprincipled and ineffective. They also lost traction with their longstanding traditional partners, who saw them as too conciliatory towards the spring's popular mobilizations.

Where else in the international system might support for the post-spring republics be found if not from the Arab states or the democratic West? Until 2012 Turkey was viewed as a promising option, but as the Syrian civil conflict has deepened, and domestic political tensions have intensified, that prospect has faded. The failure of the Morsi administration in Egypt has proved a major setback to Ankara's expectations for the region. Iran and Israel both have a real stake in these issues, but neither can be expected to play a stabilizing role. China and Russia can both exercise leverage through trade, investment, arms provision and their involvement in world energy markets. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, they gave the go ahead for Western military intervention in Libya. But when that mandate was used to produce regime change they drew back, refusing to authorize a similar approach to Syria. Minor players such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and South Africa could offer a modest degree of sympathy and goodwill, but they are not in a position to exert much influence. Thus, the international stabilizing forces that reinforced political liberalization in other parts of the world have been absent in this case. Those favouring political liberalization in the post-spring Arab world will have to rely essentially on their own resources, at least for the near to medium term.

Before 2011 Western analysts of comparative politics were often drawn towards the idea of an 'Arab exceptionalism'. If future prospects for political opening in this large region must depend upon its internal dynamics, rather than on support and encouragement from outside, then this argument requires consideration. Some have supported this argument by pointing out that whereas all other large world regions – including such Muslim majority states as Bangladesh and Indonesia – have experienced some creditable episodes of democracy construction, there are no such examples in the Arab world. But this is a weak foundation for such a bold inference (especially considering the orientalist antecedents it tends to evoke). Its unreliability was made manifest by the breadth and intensity of the demands for democracy that emerged in January 2011, and that remain in evidence three years later, despite all the intervening setbacks.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Arab Human Development Reports* between 2002 and 2005 made the exceptionalist thesis more credible. These used standardized international surveys to place countries of the region in their global rankings using 'objective' indicators (on educational attainment, women's rights, income inequality, among others). The reports also considered institutional, historical and even ethnographic factors, and thus provided a rather broad-based and quite

nuanced analysis of the many conflicting domestic elements that could both support and impede the progress of democratization in different parts of the region. But it was the reports' summary evaluations that had the main impact upon outside opinion. The 2002 report, issued before the invasion of Iraq, stated categorically that: 'political participation is less advanced in the Arab world than in other developing regions', and that there could be 'no real prospects for reforming the system of governance, or for truly liberating human capabilities, in the absence of comprehensive political representation in effective legislatures based on free, honest, efficient and regular elections' (UNDP 2002, 108, 114). The 2003 report attributed the fundamental political problems of the region to 'clannism' (the UNDP's translation of '*asabiyya*'); in 2004 to a rentier mode of production in which the social contract between citizens and government is masked by state patronage; and in 2005 on the exceptional scale and demobilizing implications of the gender gap.

Assertions of this kind are not demonstrably false, but they are one-sided and liable to be misused. In fact, all the observations just summarized would meet with widespread agreement in contemporary Tunisia. The challenge there is to find a consensual path towards a better equilibrium, in the face of acute socio-economic stress at home and relative disinterest (and some active hostility) from the obvious external sources. There is nothing uniquely Arab about this Tunisian predicament, but the prevalence of unreflective assumptions about Arab exceptionalism makes the challenge that much harsher.

There are many reasons for maintaining an open verdict on the Arab Spring: the unorganized character of the challengers; the absence of bridging institutions or unifying leaders capable of turning initial energies into durable projects; the persistence of repressive security structures with powerful domestic backers; deep divisions of principle between rival power contenders; an adverse regional political economy; and an unsupportive international community. Two additional negatives deserve a mention: the Saudi monarchy (the spring's greatest nemesis) has emerged strengthened from the challenges of 2011; and it is no longer self-evident that the Arab state system that emerged from decolonization can be taken as a given. At least in Iraq and Syria, and possibly also in Lebanon, Libya and the Yemen, the established territorial demarcations could prove at risk from current armed conflicts. However, the longer-term outcome could be brighter. Tunisia shows that inclusionary politics can be constructively advanced in the Arab world even if precariously. Old taboos have been broken, new claims have been tabled, and the bar of popular expectations has been raised. Springtime may be followed by autumn and then winter, but once spring has been experienced it will be expected again. The systemic shocks of 2011 will reverberate throughout the Arab world for many years to come. Instead of producing quick and clear progressive change the effects are likely to be muffled, dispersed, delayed and often unexpected. But the old order cannot be simply restored, and the energies unleashed during those first weeks of springtime will remain a transformative resource to be tapped, if not by the original protesters then by sadder and wiser successors, schooled through adversity in the arts of adaptation.

Notes

1 Lynch's answer was that the Obama discourse was not really the trigger.
2 Although my concern here differs, Weyland's comparison between earlier historical and more recent transitions such as the Arab Spring complements my own arguments, highlighting how

the imagery of revolution from below spread so rapidly, often adopted in settings where it was bound to fail (Weyland 2014).

3 Demonstration effects may have extended further, but the focus here ranges from Morocco to Oman, but does not treat Iran, Israel or Turkey as falling inside the core region under consideration.

4 Elsewhere (Whitehead 2011) I have discussed the relevance of such analogies drawn from biology as contagion (including inoculation), evolutionary adaptation and even autopoiesis, as guidelines for reconciling such complexity with a high degree of underlying order.

5 The 14 January 2014 edition of *Le Monde* provides a useful chronology of the first three years, and an extended analysis of successive interventionist reactions, notably from Qatar, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which were all relatively sheltered from immediate demonstration effects. See 'Les trois leçons du "printemps arabe"', *Le Monde* (Paris), 14 January 2014, 1–6. There was a follow-up article in the same paper about Tunisia, published 15 January 2014.

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3

Arab Politics after the Uprisings

Still Searching for Legitimacy

Michael C. Hudson

Reprising *Arab politics*: A personal reflection

Lebanon might appear to be an odd place to begin contemplating the problem of legitimacy in Arab politics. After all, it seems idiosyncratic in the Arab world – a country with a highly contested identity and a weak state. But arriving there as a graduate student in the 1960s, I quickly discovered that it was a splendid spot to view the political dramas unfolding in the surrounding neighbourhood. Lebanon was a magnet, or maybe a honey-pot, for politicians from all over the Arab world. It was a forum where activists and intellectuals could express themselves freely, organize and perhaps plot to reshape politics in their authoritarian home countries. Lebanon itself was a mirror for competing formulas of legitimacy, from the Nasserist socialist–nationalist, anti-imperialist left to the capitalist, pro-Western conservative right. Lebanon tried with mixed results to steer a course between competing models – a pluralist consociation with a spectrum including Maronite ethno-nationalists, cosmopolitan merchant bankers and landlords, communists, Arab nationalists, Muslim social movements. It was clear as well that the struggle for legitimacy and stability in this little country was not a matter for the Lebanese alone – outside powers, near and far, projected significant influence. As a young scholar in Beirut I had a front-row seat to witness what Malcolm Kerr called 'the Arab cold war,' in which global and regional powers and their local clients manoeuvred for position in a turbulent region. Lebanon was a uniquely valuable site for future comparative analysis.

As a graduate student at Yale I shared in the intellectual excitement that the cutting-edge theorists of the time – scholars such as Karl W. Deutsch, Gabriel Almond, Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom – were generating. Employing the new approaches of modernization and political development theory, and buttressing them with the empirical, quantitative methods championed by the 'behavioural revolution' in political science, we thought it possible to plot the trajectory of politics in the countries of the newly liberated 'developing areas'. Perhaps we were naive. What I would call the 'optimistic' early version of modernization theory proposed that socio-economic modernization – measured by indices of urbanization, economic growth, educational

development and media exposure – could lead to legitimate, stable democratic orders. A subtext, which may have driven the government funders of research along these lines, was that these new states would also be pro-Western and anti-Communist. The classic works of Daniel Lerner and Manfred Halpern applied these notions to the Middle East.

By my recollection, two concepts that dominate the scholarly debate today – democracy and Islam – did not feature prominently in the debates of the 1960s. Reflecting perhaps some of the priorities of the leading revolutionary leaders of the time – such as Nasser, Nehru, Sukarno, Nkrumah and Chou en-Lai – political scientists emphasized growth, development, and equality. (They downplayed those leaders' anti-Western rhetoric.) If, as David Apter had observed in his studies of Africa, the 'mobilization system' was the instrument for achieving these ends, then so be it (Apter 1965). Politics might become more 'participant' and a culture of empathy and tolerance might emerge, but democracy as such was not often presented as an outcome front and centre. As for political Islam, it did not appear to be on the horizon; rather, the main competitors were revolutionary 'socialist' nationalism versus 'traditional' patrimonial leadership in tandem with a feudal-bourgeois, pro-Western elite. Not that Islam was completely overlooked: Halpern warned of 'neo-Islamic totalitarianism' as a deviant offshoot of modernization.

But a more 'pessimistic' version of modernization theory soon emerged. I came upon this in Samuel P. Huntington's powerful book *Political Order in Changing Societies*. I am an admirer of this book, though I cannot say the same for his subsequent excursion into the 'clash of civilizations'. When he invited me to Harvard to revise my dissertation on Lebanon for publication, I came to appreciate the 'darker' side of modernization. The social upheavals associated with modernization, he argued, could just as well lead to instability. Instead of inculcating a consensus on tolerance and moderation, in the absence of accepted institutions, these forces could unleash parochialism and extremism. The essential ingredient for an orderly development would be institutions and procedures that carried broad legitimacy. Huntington's playful example: the local high school in Cambridge was just a 'structure' while Harvard was an 'institution'. The trick, of course, then and now, was how to build such institutions. The lesson has served me well as I survey the chaotic unfolding of politics in several of the post-uprising Arab states.

Finally, looking back on these formative influences, I must mention the classic work of my former colleague at the City University of New York, Dankwart Rustow, whose early formulation of the prerequisites of democratic development in what we used to call the Third World insisted on the need for the political community to be in agreement on the question of national unity. 'The vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to' (Rustow 1970). In addition, I would add, there needs to be a similar consensus on the form of legitimate authority. Somehow there has to emerge some consensually accepted legitimacy formula. But how to do it? As the post-uprising Arab states struggle to establish a new order this, in my view, is the crucial question. And surely now the emphasis has to be on consensus. In our earlier analyses we implicitly assumed that an effective 'legitimacy formula' was something that the incumbent regime could construct. Influenced perhaps by our colleagues who studied the Soviet system – I think of Nathan Leites's study of the 'operational code' of the Politburo – we took a 'top down' approach (Leites 1951). Clearly, today this will not do. Of Rustow's three prerequisites, today the most important and contentious is *authority*.

Enter Max Weber. In my 1977 study of *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, Weber was my starting point. His tripartite typology seemed quite tailor-made for the Arab Middle East. The monarchies embodied his *traditional* form of legitimating authority. I may be the only political scientist who has learned from Gilbert and Sullivan as well as Weber, among others; and as *The Mikado* so trenchantly put it: 'In a fatherly kind of way I govern each tribe and sect.' Weber's *charismatic* type was also on display. My coming of age, as it were, as a political scientist of the Middle East, was the age of Gamal Abdel Nasser. I remember a warm 23 July, the anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, sitting on a balcony in Beirut listening to Nasser's speech. But we didn't need to turn on the radio because the whole neighbourhood was also listening on their radios. Weber's third category was *legal–rational*. Having recently spent four years in Singapore, I think I know what a legal–rational political order is. There weren't many of those in the Arab world in the 1960s, nor are there today. Israel perhaps stands out as the best, maybe the only case, where rules matter. Egypt, one might have thought, had an embedded bureaucratic order but it was subservient to the whims of the *ra'is*, the president. Lebanon, weak state notwithstanding, operated according to a consociational logic that was substantially autonomous from individual politicians. Strange as it may seem, another case, now disappeared, that seemed to me to lean in that direction was the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. I happened to go there around 1973 (one of the few Americans to do so) and was impressed by the way its Marxist one-party system had tried to create a rules-based system rationally (if imperfectly) harnessed to a developmental program. Hardly democratic, of course, but committed to pulverizing traditional *wasta* and tribal–religious authorities.

In my *Arab Politics* I adopted David Easton's neo-Weberian typology of legitimizing strategies (Easton 1979). One type was *personal*. I argued that successful personal (charismatic) leaders in the Arab world were actually few and far between, notwithstanding the tendency of its authoritarian systems to privilege the top man (no women were in sight). Throughout the larger Middle East in modern times my 'A' list would have included only Nasser, 'Abdel-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, Kamal Ataturk, King Hussein of Jordan, David Ben Gurion and Yasser Arafat. You might have thought that Arafat was the antithesis of the charismatic hero, but in his 'resistance' phase *Al-Khityar* ('the old man' as he was affectionately known) elicited broad and deep support. My 'B' list is a mixed bag: Saddam Hussein and Hafez Al-Asad (in the Stalinist mode), and Muammar Gaddafi, who pretty much defies classification.

States and regimes enjoying *ideological* legitimacy (Easton's second category) in times gone by would have included the Nasserist and Ba'thist projects in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, the two Yemens (with qualifications) and, again with qualifications, Algeria – where the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) made that country the poster child of the Third World developmental state. Nationalism(s) proved to be powerful political glue. An interesting question here, which I may not have addressed adequately in *Arab Politics*, is whether or to what extent 'tradition' is an ideology. Back in the 1970s we might have assumed that tradition was an obstacle to be overcome; possibly even certain progressive monarchs themselves, such as Faisal in Iraq, Faisal in Saudi Arabia, and Qaboos in Oman, might have thought the same thing. But Arab monarchs more recently, even if they are not progressive, have discovered that tradition can be an important ideological resource. Witness the assiduous construction of tradition in the Gulf states today. To today's kings, museums matter.

Institutional legitimacy, after Weber's legal–rational category, existed but in what liberal-democratic analysts (I count myself as one) might have described as deformed. These were and are the *mukhabarat* states. Their power is indicated by their euphemisms: '*Le Pouvoir*' in Algeria; '*al-nidham*', the order, in most of the other Arab 'republics' – notably Iraq, Syria, Libya and Tunisia. Certainly the nationalist officers and middle-class intellectuals who drove the 'republican-revolutionary' movement across the Arab world in the 1960s were keen to develop legitimate institutions to implant the shallow and perhaps fleeting legitimacy accorded to 'revolutionary command councils'. Efforts to create 'democratic' electoral and parliamentary systems were largely cosmetic and recognized as such by all concerned. More attention was given to legitimizing the single-party bureaucracy as the institutionalization of the regime. Along with the other big bureaucracies they constituted a public environment which ordinary citizens were encouraged to become habituated to if not respected, let alone revered. What, then, of the monarchies? It would be incomplete simply to classify them as running on formulas of personal legitimacy. For here too, behind the Emir, King or Sultan, is the institution of the *mukhabarat*. More euphemisms: in Jordan young men sent to the downtown prison in Amman would wryly refer to it as 'the hotel', where the service left something to be desired.

This, then, was the state of my thinking about the puzzle of Arab political legitimacy three or four decades ago. The attentive reader today will note at least two glaring omissions: political economy and international relations. Perhaps they are a function of the disciplinary barriers in American academia. Economics was and remains, in the academy at least, a discipline unto itself with little regard for the more practical side of economic life. Why were we allergic, or at least inattentive to class-based analyses? The answer lies to some extent in the boundary markers around scholarship smacking of Marxism in American political life. To a lesser extent academic international relations too is tone-deaf to regional peculiarities in the search for universal generalizations. Yet, one thing my work on Lebanon should have taught me is that the Arab region is highly permeable to exogenous influences. Models that are essentially country-bound will miss the explanatory power of the outsiders, regional and global, who seek to enhance or diminish the legitimacy of incumbent regimes in this volatile area.

The uprisings that began at the end of 2010 have forced us to reconsider the question of legitimacy in Arab politics. One lesson is clear: we need to broaden our focus from state and regime toward society, economy, culture and regional/global pressures. If it even makes sense to talk about legitimacy formulas in the post-uprising phase, it is incumbent on us to include society and the global environment as well.

Lessons from the uprisings after three years

After three years the Arab uprising phenomenon continues to surprise analysts. The first surprise was that they happened at all. That surprise, as far as academic political science is concerned, was largely due, I believe, to a fixation on 'persistent authoritarianism' and a neglect of understanding societal change. The second surprise was the 'spill-over effect' from one Arab country to another within the space of a mere month or so. Nobody expected that the self-immolation of a street vendor in Tunisia would seemingly precipitate a wave of protest that has shaken the whole Arab world – and not just those six countries that have experienced full-fledged rebellions. The third surprise was that the uprisings were not captured by political Islam. Not that Islamists have not

tried, as we can see from the post-uprising history in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, in particular. Some analysts had thought that Islamists, being the best organized force outside the state, would carry the day. The jury is still out, of course, but three years onward it appears that Islam is not the solution. But the fourth surprise was that 'transitions to democracy' are very slow in coming, if at all, notwithstanding a substantial body of analysis – not to mention US policy assumptions – that has supported this proposition.

Fixation on 'persistent authoritarianism'

Quite a lot has now been written on why political scientists working on the Middle East were taken by surprise. Gregory Gause, who wrote an important essay in *Foreign Policy*, was not alone in noticing that much of the most interesting recent work has been focused on trying to explain why the Arab world has exhibited persistent authoritarianism while other parts of the world underwent what some called a 'third wave' of democratization. It was not difficult to over-explain persistent authoritarianism. Most obvious was the *mukhabarat* state argument: incumbent regimes had devoted vast resources to developing the security and military apparatus to such an extent that popular opposition was impossible to sustain. Others pointed to the role of the US and other outside powers in strengthening and protecting friendly Arab dictators. Another argument dwelt upon the nature of the post-colonial 'deep' state, with its entrenched elites and autonomy from society. The wealthy oil-exporting states of the Gulf and their dependencies exemplified the rentier model, according to which a tacit bargain was struck between rulers benefiting from large streams of exogenous income traded generous welfare policies for societal abdication from political participation. And Steven Heydemann made an interesting case for 'authoritarian upgrading', observing that these regimes demonstrate astuteness and agility in capitalizing on new technologies and claiming democratic legitimacy with practices that are cosmetic rather than genuine. All well and good, but this preoccupation with authoritarian robustness diverted analytical attention and resources from societal and economic conditions. It was left to political anthropologists, sociologists and economists to try and draw attention to the behaviour of ordinary people, whose presumed passivity apparently had limits after all.

The 'Arab Spring': Singular or plural?

A few months into the uprisings I wrote an article for the online site Jadaliyya subtitled 'An awakening, cataclysm, or just a series of events?' I confess that I was partial to the 'awakening' school and still am, even though the evidence of an Arab political renaissance so far is very thin indeed. Those of us who argued that the uprisings are an historical event with long-term consequences rather than just a collection of random protests were, I think, correct. I did not and do not subscribe to the 'cataclysm' school, which seems to be much favoured in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, to such an extent that they have mounted a veritable counter-revolution and employed a variety of carrots and sticks to immunize their regimes from further popular 'contagion'. I never believed that the sudden explosion of massive popular protests were just coincidental. This is not to say, obviously, that there was a foreign conspiracy behind them, as some people in the Arab world believe. But what

was the nature of this 'epidemic'? A political epidemiologist might look to channels of new media and social communication and the salience of key legitimacy demands to explain how the uprisings spread.

Is Islam the solution? Maybe not

During the first wave of protests observers noted that Islamists were conspicuous by their absence. The crowds who shook regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria were not demanding the imposition of Islamic rule; they were objecting to the arbitrary, incompetent, corrupt and often cruel behaviour of rulers. The main Islamist organizations in Tunisia and Egypt were caught by surprise and initially were uncertain as to how they should respond. But while the youth, the educated professionals, the women and the unemployed could come together for impressive demonstrations, they lacked the leadership and organization to push ahead once the dictators were gone. The regimes had done a good job of encapsulating or co-opting the relatively secular political parties, labour organizations and professional societies. But they were unable to neutralize Islamist organizations such as the Nahdha Party and the Muslim Brotherhood, and once the dictators were gone these socially rooted organizations emerged to try and lead the opposition. In Tunisia and Egypt they briefly succeeded in forming governments, but they found that a legitimacy formula so heavily weighted toward Islam was insufficient to guarantee their domination. The military and the under-organized 'secular' forces still had the ability to check the Islamist tide. As for the other uprising countries, Islamists found themselves constrained or prone to extremist tactics that eroded their popularity. In Yemen the Islah was partially compromised by its ties with the old regime, while Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula was better at violence than politics. In Libya Islamists found themselves embroiled in the chaos of regional, tribal, and clan politics following the overthrow of Gaddafi. In Bahrain the monarchy sought to define the uprising as Shi'ite sectarianism underwritten by Iran in a manoeuver intended to discredit its democratic aspirations. And in Syria the brutality of the regime's response to the initial popular protests, which were not driven by Islamism, drove elements of the opposition to adopt extreme Islamist ideology and violence in response, creating debilitating disunity: once again, a purist Islamist legitimacy formula was unable to produce a broad consensus, and it reduced outside support (especially from the US). The Assad regime, rejecting the accusation that it was sectarian, sought to persuade the world that it was pluralist – protective of Christians as well as Sunnis and Druze, and opposed to 'Islamist terrorism'. Doubtless, Islam is an exceedingly powerful symbolic legitimizing force, but the last three years suggest that it alone is not the solution.

Democratic transitions: Not so easy, not so quick

The Arab uprisings provided a unique 'laboratory' for testing theories of democratic transition. The way matters have unfolded in the early post-uprising years has been an unpleasant surprise for 'transitologists' and democracy promotion advocates. Democracy was much on the minds of the first wave of protesters in 2011, but it was far from being the sole goal. Initially, protesters poured into the streets in order to rid themselves of 'bad leaders'. The protests, then, were couched in negative terms: 'the people desire the fall of the regime'. While polling has revealed that Arab public opinion is

highly favourable towards democracy and human rights, these abstractions must compete with the post-uprising realities. Clearly, people also were expecting better government and improved economic conditions. And, as post-uprising politics became ever more chaotic, the demand for stability and normality has grown. 'Uprising fatigue' has driven people who had initially risen up against military and police-dominated regimes to look to the military for a solution. The irony is not lost on liberal democrats in Egypt. A main proposition of transitions theory is that in confrontations between an incumbent authoritarian regime and a radical-reform opposition a compromise can be reached by bringing together the 'soft-liners' from the regime and the 'moderates' from the opposition, thus appealing to the rationality of all parties. Something like this may have happened in the post-Bin Ali Tunisia case in which the Nahdha Party-dominated government compromised with moderate opponents. While Tunisia is so far the sole case of a domestically driven consensual transition process, another case where a democratic transition of sorts might be occurring is Yemen, where 'moderates' from the regime of Ali Abdallah Saleh (who remains in Yemen and politically active) and a multi-factional opposition have held a National Dialogue, but within the framework of an agreement brokered by an external actor, the Gulf Cooperation Council. In Egypt, however, there appear to have been no 'soft-liners' in the confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood government of Muhammad Morsi and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The same must be said for Bahrain, notwithstanding accounts of 'moderate' elements within the royal family. In Libya after three post-Gaddafi years the opposition appears to be so fragmented that it is hard to speak of hardliners or soft-liners. And the worst case – Syria – remains paralysed, with no discernible soft-liners in the Assad regime. Despite the horrific human losses and mediation efforts by the UN and Arab League representative, conditions have deteriorated, turning what originally was a citizen protest against a brutal authoritarian regime into a militarized civil war deepened by the intervention of armed elements on both sides. Thus, after three years the situation remains at a bloody impasse.

Opening the black box of 'civil society'

What can we learn from these lessons? Each of the surprises can be traced to an insufficient understanding of civil society in the Arab world. 'Civil society' itself is a contested term, inasmuch as significant components are not obviously 'civil' – tribes, for example; and the boundaries between the domain of the state and the public domain, at one end, and the private domain, at the other, are not clear. But it is in this zone that the uprisings were generated. For too long it was under-theorized. Orientalist approaches treated the 'masses' as inert and undifferentiated, but when aggravated likely to behave irrationally.

Now we know better. Demands for constitutional reform in Turkey, Iran and Egypt around the turn of the 20th century signalled the beginnings of political openings. Later, after World War I, the region witnessed the growth of mass movements, nationalist, communist and Islamist. What Albert Hourani dubbed the Liberal Age saw limited parliamentary and electoral practices and the formation of political parties. The curtain came down in the 1950s and 1960s with the emergence of authoritarian regimes and the top-down mobilization of masses, accompanied by the suppression of autonomous societal groups, associations and parties. Although largely marginalized these movements did not disappear. While political scientists have focused most of their

attention at the state level, anthropologists, sociologists, and political economists have drawn our attention to the role of professional associations, youth, women and labour organizations. The communications revolution driven by the transistor radio, television, the tape recorder, the fax machine, satellite television, mobile 'smart' telephony and the internet multiplied the mobilization effect set in motion a century earlier with the rise of the press. Local political networks and neighbourhood politics may have constituted a kind of springboard for the 'Arab Spring'.

The problem is that we do not have a sufficiently comprehensive body of knowledge about this domain, notwithstanding the good work that has been done so far. Had we known more we might not have been surprised that the Khaled Said and Muhammad Bouazzizi killings would trigger that explosion of popular protest across the region. And perhaps with a deeper knowledge of the cleavages and fragmentation that characterize this 'intermediate sphere' we would have been less surprised at the failure of these activated societal actors to form effective and coherent structures for converting social protest into coherent political power in the post-uprising phase. Why has an Arab 'centre' been so slow to emerge? Why is trust in such short supply? What accounts for polarization and a zero-sum mentality? Why does contentious identity politics overshadow cooperation to achieve shared political objectives? We need to dig deeper – but carefully – into the murky realm of 'political culture' and encourage more research on social movements and organizations. New information technologies and social media have helped create, perhaps, a new 'public square' beneath the radar of regimes. And while new players with new support bases may be waiting in the shadows, it is important not to neglect the place of established elites. The messy post-uprising history of Egypt suggests that incumbents and newcomers need to come together to construct new legitimacy formulas.

Rethinking legitimacy in the Arab world

Failure of the old legitimacy formulas

Broadly speaking, in the last half of the 20th century the Arab monarchies employed tradition to legitimize their rule and the 'republics' employed an ideological cocktail of pan-Arabism, Palestine, anti-imperialism and egalitarian reform. A few leaders emanated charisma – Nasser, Hussein, perhaps Arafat. None of the Arab political systems really embodied Weberian legal–rational legitimacy. While the picture is mixed and exceptional cases could be found, on the whole these legitimacy formulas proved inadequate for underpinning stable, competent and authoritative (as opposed to authoritarian) governance.

It has been argued that 'tradition', and in particular the traditional norm of patrimonialism, accounts for the relative stability of the Middle East monarchies. There is something to this argument, but it must also be noted that several monarchies collapsed – in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Yemen. This suggests that patrimonial traditionalism was perhaps a waning legitimacy resource. Moreover, in the surviving monarchies even the most solid – Morocco and Jordan – suffered several attempted coups and, in the Jordanian case, a brief civil war. Today the oil-rich monarchies of the Gulf deploy massive revenues to hold at bay the populist currents that have roiled the region. They are also working to strengthen or perhaps even invent 'tradition' through promoting museums and 'traditional' cultural identity.

As for the 'revolutionary republics', although they enjoyed periods of legitimate rule by deploying charismatic and ideological resources, on the whole those formulas have not withstood the test of time and events. Arabism and Palestine, while significant, no longer carry the symbolic weight that they once did, perhaps because leaders themselves have proven so impotent in advancing these causes. Islamism, widely seen as a powerful new ideological resource, has lately shown its limitations. Political systems like Saudi Arabia, founded on a presumptive Islamic legitimacy, have proven vulnerable to more 'purist' Islamist opposition movements claiming that they are not Islamic enough. Yet the purists, represented by Al-Qa'ida and other groups, have been unable to mobilize sufficiently broad support to govern at all, let alone govern legitimately. And the turn of events in Egypt in 2013 showed how hollow or ephemeral an Islamist government's legitimacy can be. That said, it must also be noted that liberal democracy has proven to be surprisingly feeble as a legitimacy resource. Liberal democrats – the so-called Arab centre – have been unable to displace monarchical or military-authoritarian systems, at least until now. Little Lebanon stands as a qualified exception. Perhaps the shadow of the 'façade' liberal parliamentary experiences in the post-colonial Arab state helps to account for this weakness. As Nasser declared:

> We were supposed to have a democratic system during the period 1923 to 1953. But what good was this democracy to our people? … Landowners and Pashas used this kind of democracy as an easy tool for the benefits of a feudal system … I want to liberate the peasants and workers both socially and economically … This in my view is the basis of freedom and democracy.
>
> *(Owen 1993: 21)*

If it is true that the Arab states have been suffering a legitimacy deficit, one might reasonably ask why then have many of them experienced quite long periods of stability (although broken in some countries by coup attempts, 'corrective movements', terrorist waves, and civil wars!) especially from the 1970s into the 21st century. The answer, I think, lies in the *mukhabarat* state. Fear, rather than legitimacy, underpinned the longevity of rulers such as Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Bin Ali and Al-Assad. Even the 'softer' regime in Egypt under Sadat and Mubarak survived more on fear combined with the habit of obedience than on genuinely legitimate foundations. The uprisings of 2011 revealed the hollowness of their legitimacy claims.

Towards new legitimacy formulas

The turbulent developments in the post-uprising states suggest that new and durable legitimacy formulas will take time to be created and take root. Twenty-first century global, regional and domestic realities have rendered some of the old formulas obsolescent. Charismatic leadership alone will not carry the day; nor will shop-worn ideological formulations. The uprisings, at least in their initial stages, seemed to indicate the importance of the following principles:

- an end to arbitrary and often brutal governance;
- 'governmentality' – the requirement that governments must perform better than they have in delivering quality education and economic development;
- transparency and effective curbs on corruption;

- the promotion of inclusive civic identity beyond clan, tribe and sect – with a meaningful sense of citizenship and a public space open to all without fear of retribution;
- liberal nationalism tolerant of other communal identities;
- an ongoing commitment to a just solution to the Palestine tragedy;
- order and stability – values that have assumed greater priority in light of the turbulent immediate aftermath of the uprisings;
- and the Palestine cause remains an important legitimacy resource for those who can credibly claim to be doing something positive on its behalf. The downside is that failure to do so will be a drain on legitimacy.

It is not enough for the rulers emerging in the post-uprising era to proclaim such principles; they must show the ability to implement them. In Egypt the stunning reversal of fortunes for the Muslim Brotherhood is accounted for in large part by their incompetence in governing and their rejection of inclusivity.

The Egyptian case also suggests two characteristics of the current search for legitimacy. First, 'revolutionary legitimacy' may have a short shelf life. The euphoria accompanying the overthrow of Mubarak gradually dissipated as the struggle to craft an alternative order went on. Similarly, the 'revolutionary legitimacy' accorded to Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi after the overthrow of Morsi, in the opinion of some Egyptian observers, might also begin to wane in light of Egypt's intractable post-uprising economic problems. The second point is that ordinary people came to prioritize stability and order after undergoing many months of political turmoil.

A case for long-term optimism

We have scaled back our expectations for democratic transitions in the immediate post-uprising period. Yet in the longer term I think there are reasons for optimism. The emerging global multi-polar world may positively affect the possibilities of developing new legitimate and stable political orders. The decline of American hegemony with its preference for supporting friendly authoritarian rulers could open windows of opportunity for reformists – notwithstanding Washington's hollow 'democracy promotion' stance. Social media and the internet have energized society so as to challenge incumbent regimes' ability to dominate political discourse. The likelihood that emerging post-uprising governments will be weaker than their predecessors may make them more ready to engage rather than suppress critics and reformers. The risk here, of course, is the possibility that weak governments will be unable to ensure the stability that so many people crave. If there is a learning curve for new leaders and governments then one might expect them to abandon crude nationalist, Islamist or sectarian programs and instead try to foster more inclusive stances. Leaders who come to power through genuine, even if imperfect, popular mandates, may eventually realize that it is in their interest to build centrist coalitions and marginalize extremists.

The Arab uprisings have dramatically revealed that the social and political landscape of the Arab world has changed fundamentally. Legitimacy formulas that were effective for an earlier age clearly are not any more. The Arab world today is a region of multiple identities, new groups, movements and organizations, and is far more exposed to and integrated with global norms and institutions than ever before. It is a region beset with enormous problems: poverty, inequality, the inferior status of women, inadequate

educational systems and dysfunctional governments. But it also has impressive human and natural resources. As Clovis Maksoud has remarked, the Arab world is a rich nation of poor people. The challenge, then, for intellectuals, scholars and politicians is to point the way for new formulas that reflect and accommodate these new realities.

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4

Towards a Historical Sociology of the Arab Uprising

Beyond Democratization and Post-Democratization

Raymond Hinnebusch

The Arab Uprising has once again exposed Middle East experts to criticism and inspired calls for a rethinking of the theoretical approaches widely employed for understanding 'political development' in the region. During the 1990s those seduced by the 'transition paradigm' had proved overly credulous about prospects of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), inspiring a post-democratization reaction in the 2000s; but the champions of the latter have themselves now been exposed as overly credulous about the stability of the region's authoritarian regimes. Does the Arab Uprising revalidate democratization theory (DT) or does the tardiness and likely fragility of current democratization efforts validate post-democratization approaches (PDT)? This chapter reviews the relevance of rival approaches to understanding the Arab Uprising. It acknowledges that DT helps to identify the origins of pressures for democratization from below and that PDT identifies the techniques by which authoritarian regimes have managed these pressures. However, it will also argue that both theories, fixated on a simplistic authoritarian–democratic dichotomy, neglect the complexity of political regimes and how the struggle of social forces over state power shapes them. A historical sociology approach can incorporate and impart to the democratization debate a much greater explanatory richness.

Modernization theory and the origins of the Arab Uprising

DT is rooted in modernization theory (MT) studies of the requisites of democratization, which argued that beyond certain thresholds of socio-economic development, societies become too complex and socially mobilized to be governed by authoritarian means; high-income countries were most likely to be democratic and rising literacy, urbanization, enlarged middle classes, mass media and non-agricultural employment (indicators of 'social mobilization') were associated with an increased propensity to

political participation (Lerner 1958). Conversely, democracy could be unviable in, and authoritarianism possibly congruent with, pre-modern societies. Thus, in the Middle East, early post-independence democratization experiments at a time when the middle class was quite small and the majority of the population illiterate peasants descended into oligarchy. Nevertheless, since then levels of literacy, media exposure, urbanization, non-agricultural employment and the size of the middle class in MENA have greatly expanded, arguably building up participatory pressures that could be said to have exploded in the 2011 uprising. The vanguard role in the uprising of educated middle-class youth and the multiplier effect of the media, satellite TV and the internet, on the spread of political consciousness and mobilization, are striking validations of MT expectations.

It is one thing to overthrow old regimes and another to consolidate democracies and MT tried to identify the thresholds of modernization beyond which democratic consolidation becomes probable. At the middle-income levels typical of the contemporary Middle East (the Gulf oil states apart), democratization is possible but not necessary. Statistically, the economic threshold at which authoritarian reversal becomes unlikely is over US$11,000 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, while of the two Arab states widely seen to have the best chance of democratizing, Egypt's GDP was $6500 and Tunisia's $9500 in 2010. Springborg (2011–2012) believes the democratic revolutions of 1848 rather than those of 1989 provide the best analogy for the uprising since Arab societies are at levels of modernization far below those of 1989 eastern Europe and susceptible to the post-1848 democratic reversals; in Egypt, at least, he insists that the middle class is too small and the impoverished masses too large for democratic consolidation. Still, MENA's modernization level certainly does not preclude *unconsolidated* democracies, as in Turkey, where periodic military interventions punctuated regular elections, and they are high enough that pure authoritarian regimes are much less viable than hybrid regimes mixing elements of authoritarianism and democracy.

A second wave of MT, which arose as early democratic experiments in the least developed countries (LDCs) widely collapsed, focused on additional factors that obstructed democratic consolidation. This work demonstrated that social mobilization in LDCs might lead not to democratization but to what Huntington (1965) called 'praetorianism' because mobilization typically exceeded the political institution-building needed to accommodate it. Institutions were colonized by warring social forces and the military, with its command of organized violence, typically tried to fill the vacuum but was itself praetorianized. The main antidote for praetorianism was for Rustow (1970) a shared nationhood providing an underlying consensus that could contain societal cleavages. Arguably, in MENA the haphazard imposition of territorial boundaries under imperialism exacerbated sub- and supra-state identities that weakened the identification with the state needed for stable democracy and exaggerated praetorianism; of course, there are considerable variations among the Arab states, and Tunisia and Egypt, where the state does relatively correspond to a settled society with a sense of nationhood, have a better chance of consolidating democracy than artificial states fragmented by tribal and sectarian identities as in Libya, Yemen and Syria, where the uprising has provoked civil war; in the latter the most likely post-uprising outcome may be a hybrid regime or the sort of fragile 'consociational democracy' pioneered in Lebanon and currently being tried in Iraq.

The latest manifestation of DT, transition theory, which emerged in parallel with the Third Wave of democratization, added an element of agency missing in earlier approaches. It anticipated elite-led democratization responding to rising participatory

pressures, with the optimum scenario thought to be the emergence of reformers within authoritarian regimes in alliance with an opposition that was both moderate and popularly credible which, together, could marginalize the hard-liners in both camps and incorporate the masses in a way that was compatible with regime reform rather than collapse. This alliance would reach a pact embodying a compromise preserving elite interests while according the opposition increased influence through staged democratization (Waterbury 1994).

In the Middle East, Turkey's 1950s democratization was the classic case of a pacted transition. In the Arab world, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, several regimes sought new ruling bargains, often to defuse food riots, in which political rights would be accorded in exchange for austerity (Sadiki 2000). No Arab ruler, however, either possessed the nationalist legitimacy or commitment to democracy of Ataturk's successors and they therefore engineered controlled political liberalization as a safety value to relieve democratization pressures, intended as a substitute for rather than a stage on the way to democracy.

Nevertheless, many 'democracy spotters' expected such experiments to precipitate a 'slippery slope' scenario, in which the unleashed civil society and opposition party activists would use the limited political space accorded by political liberalization to mobilize pressures to complete the process of democratization. While, in reality, formal civil society in MENA did not succeed in this, the increased political space allowed by political liberalization did allow an expansion of informal networks of protest and activism, without which the uprising would not have happened. Moreover, where, as in Tunisia and Egypt, mass protest led the military to join forces with the protesters, facilitate the departure of discredited presidents, write new constitutions in concert with moderate oppositions such as the Muslim Brotherhood and hold free elections, this seemed to qualify as a pacted transition, albeit one that soon stalled short of democratic consolidation. Where the military either split into warring factions (Libya) or was in control of hardliners on the side of the regime (Syria), no pacted transition was possible and the result was civil war.

DT therefore offers essential explanatory power in understanding the forces at the societal and leadership levels that push for or obstruct democratization. The Arab Uprising happened because societal modernization reached a point where flashpoints could unravel authoritarian control; DT also suggests conditions that enabled or obstructed a peaceful transition (nationhood, leadership, including the military elite). What is missing from it is an adequate understanding of why authoritarianism was so durable for so long – and may still be.

Post-democratization: Controlling democratization pressures and authoritarian resilience

Understanding authoritarian durability was the project of post-democratization theory. As Valbjorn and Bank (2010) pointed out, expectations of democratization in MENA were twice disappointed, once in the immediate post-independence period and once in the post-Cold War 1990s when the Third Wave bypassed the region. In the first post-democratization period, Huntington (1965) famously shifted the focus from democratization, arguing that authority had to be created before it could be limited and that DT, in taking its existence for granted, missed half the story; the question for him was how order was built. Weberian analysis of authority building was widely deployed to

understand MENA (Hudson 1977) since much of the evolution of MENA regimes reflected the decline of older forms of authority and the rise of new elites seeking, often unsuccessfully, to create new forms of legitimate authority.

Still, most such 'revised modernization theory' focused on explaining what factors were short-circuiting an assumed nature progression from authoritarianism to democracy. Authoritarianism, early MT had conceded, could survive beyond the ordinary threshold at which democratization was thought natural and had done so in Europe through '*totalitarianism*': mass mobilization incorporated through Leninist organization combined with the destruction of the dominant classes and a state takeover of the economy. In the Middle East, there was, in the 1960s and 1970s, an analogue of 'totalitarianism': revolutionary regimes, seeking to consolidate power, had imported aspects of the Soviet model: the single party system, corporatist harnessing of workers unions, organization of the peasantry and revolutions from above that created big public sectors on which the middle and working classes became dependent; additionally, such regimes enjoyed political and economic support from the communist bloc. Although no Arab regime achieved more than a much-diluted totalitarian capacity to mobilize and organize society, ideologies of modernization and anti-imperialist Arab nationalism attained a certain hegemony among the salaried middle class and land reform won over the peasantry. The incorporation of the middle classes and the masses marginalized demands for democracy for several decades. However, the totalitarian moment in MENA had, by the 1980s, everywhere given way to 're-traditionalization'. Nevertheless, as King (2009) showed, the institutional remnants survived, albeit now used to *de*-mobilize former worker and peasant constituencies.

In later revised versions of MT, *political culture*, drawing on the Weberian tradition, was seen as short-circuiting the link between modernization and democratization. In Weber's paradigm, new regimes arose and consolidated themselves via hybrid charismatic-bureaucratic forms of authority; thus, as most famously in Nasser's Egypt, charismatic presidents, winning mass support in the name of revolution, concentrated power in populist authoritarian states resting on bureaucratic instruments of control. But also, such regimes were seen, inspired here by Ibn Khaldun, to go through a natural lifecycle of decline into 'neo-patrimonialism' – hybrid regimes mixing pre-modern practices of clientalism and primordial solidarities with modern bureaucratic and political technology. Revolutionary leaders turned into presidential monarchs appointing trusted kin and cronies to the helms of bureaucratic institutions. Ideology gave way to traditional legitimation. Ruling parties became disguised clientalist networks for dispensing patronage to insiders. Under these 'New Mamluks', politics was reduced to competition by small personalistic groups (*shillas*) for particularistic material benefits. Patriarchy in society was seen as congruent with this neo-patrimonialism at the state level (Sharabi 1988). Rentierism was brought in to explain the special viability of neo-patrimonialism when, in the 1970s, enormous amounts of unearned rent became available in the hydrocarbon-rich Middle East, enabling states to extend co-optation to segments of mass society, and to minimize the extraction that would generate demands for representation, although the amounts of rent available to most republics was limited. The resulting 'allocation states' lost the capacity to mobilize or modernize and their penetration of society contracted, allowing a certain restoration of traditional authority and solidarity at the local level. Under these conditions, the potential for either democratization or revolution was short-circuited by the encapsulating of the masses in traditional communities headed by notables co-opted into clientele networks.

Yet, it is also possible to see the seeds of the Arab Uprising in this patrimonialization, for, while it created *assabiya* linked in-groups with a stake in regimes, it also generated grievances among the many excluded who saw themselves as victims of favouritism, nepotism and corruption, generating feelings of injustice among the growing legions of youthful unemployed produced by a population explosion that exceeded economic growth. Moreover, modernization, notably the continuing spread of education and literacy, was changing the hitherto patriarchal mass culture by increasing aspirations for participation and by endowing individuals with such necessary participatory tools as literacy, hence reducing their tolerance for patrimonial practices. A certain incongruence was emerging between state practices and societal expectations.

Finally, and in reaction to the failure of the transition paradigm in MENA, new 'post-democratization' literatures emerged in the 1990s that stressed the adaptability of 'Liberalized autocracy'. Across the region, regimes revived the market economy, thereby adapting authoritarianism to the fall of socialism and the rise of neo-liberalism. In parallel, authoritarian regimes, seeking to dilute the spill-over of the 'Third Wave' of democratization into the region, initiated limited electoral contestation that, in reality, facilitated the division and co-optation of the opposition, rather than the accountability of ruling elites (Brumberg 2002; Lust-Okar 2004). Such hybrid regimes, combining authoritarianism with selected semi-democratic practices, were seen as a post-Cold War substitute for exhausted semi-totalitarian experiments that was congruent with the age of globalization and, in opposition to DT's view, a durable and viable form of governance that need not lead to democratization. What, however, this approach failed to appreciate was that these techniques could only be effective as long as citizens expected political liberalization to widen participatory opportunities. However, when opposition forces appeared to effectively exploit political liberalization to expand inclusion, regimes typically rolled it back, frustrating expectations. Thus, one of the catalysts of the Egyptian intifada was the reversal of electoral liberalization in the 2010 elections.

PDT was an advance on DT in that it allowed for a *continuum* along which hybrid regimes might be located between the authoritarian and democratic poles and in its belief that limited political liberalization need not be the first step on a slippery slope to democratization but, on the contrary, could be a substitute for it, making for more resilient authoritarianism. It reflected the empirical reality that democratic demands were contained for decades; if they eventually exploded in the uprising, PDT is nevertheless realistic in expecting that many post-uprising Arabs states are less likely to experience democratic consolidation than to revert to some hybrid form, such an 'electoral authoritarianism', or 'semi-democracy', especially in communally fragmented societies where traditional solidarities and cleavages can still be exploited by regimes to 'divide and rule'. PDT is an advance on DT's exaggerated expectations that the uprising would result in consolidated democracies. Yet, DT and PDT coincided in both, ultimately, seeing democratization as the natural outcome of modernization, differing only on their assessment of how readily the participation demands it generated could be translated into democratization and how durable the techniques deployed by authoritarian rulers to contain them were likely to be.

Historical sociology and MENA regimes

Historical sociology/political economy approaches mark an advance on this dichotomization of the political world into authoritarian polities (where elites rule) and

democratic ones (with rule by the people), as well as on the teleological expectation of a natural transition from the former to the latter as modernization advances.

First, the major finding of political sociologists, the iron law of oligarchy is that elites, not the people, govern everywhere, and if democracy means rule by the people it exists nowhere, a reality completely lost on DT. Mosca (1935), for example, showed how revolutionary elites soon joined the ruling class or turned into a new one, and how elites found ways to evade mechanisms, such as legislatures and elections, supposed to keep them accountable. He also showed, however, how electoral regimes were often better at the elite circulation and legitimation of elite power needed to keep the ruling class congruent with society than were authoritarian regimes. Additionally, as Gramsci showed, stable order required that the iron law of oligarchy be counterbalanced by inclusion of a 'historic bloc' of supportive social forces, if only to exclude other social forces.

Similarly, Dahl (1971), acknowledging elite rule but also insisting that mass participation still mattered, disaggregated DT's single authoritarian-democratic dimension into two separate dimensions: first, level of elite contestation; and, second, level of mass inclusion. For Huntington, low mass inclusion roughly denoted that of the upper class only, medium inclusion brought in the middle class, and high inclusion brought in workers and peasants. Dahl's two dimensions allowed for four, rather than two ideal types, only two of which would be recognizable to DT, namely, where both were low (non-democratic) and where both were high – which Dahl, recognizing the reality of elite rule, preferred to term 'polyarchy' rather than democracy. Completely lost on DT are cases where the two dimensions do not vary together, namely, high elite contestation combined with low inclusion (the liberal oligarchies that dominated the post-independence Middle East) and regimes mixing low contestation with high inclusion (the revolutionary one-party states that dominated the second generation post-independence era in the republics). Finally, as against DT's teleology, historical sociology recognizes that both contestation and inclusion can be *reversed*, and not necessary in parallel, with, for example, contestation being contracted and inclusion widened, as in revolutionary regimes, or contestation expanded and inclusion contracted, as in post-revolutionary regimes.

DT and PDT are also thin in that they ignore the deep political economy infrastructure and the social forces that give substance to and drive changes in political institutions. For Marxism, the political regime is shaped by the mechanisms for the extraction of a surplus from the producers. As such, economic development strategies shape the inclusion and exclusion of social forces which give regimes their essential character: thus, while export strategies in LDCs tend to require inclusion of land/capital and exclusion of labour, populist import substitution industrialization (ISI) tends towards the opposite. Such choices determine regime outcomes: Moore (1966), for example, showed that where the state joined with the landed oligarchy to repress and exploit the peasantry to serve an agricultural export strategy, the long-term outcome was fascism and where middle-class intellectuals mobilized the peasants to expropriate the oligarchy, the result was communism; while these two pathways had similar 'totalitarian' political insitutions, they incorporated quite divergent social forces.

As for democracy, Moore saw it originating in a balance of social power between the crown/state, the landed oligarchy and the bourgeoisie. However, it expressed dominant class rule unless the mobilization of the working classes sufficiently balanced the monied power of propertied social forces to give actual substance to electoral politics.

This scenario was only likely when the economy was expanding enough to satisfy both capital and labour, such as 1950s Fordism in the West. By contrast, under the post-Fordist globalization of finance capital when states are locked into neo-liberal economic policies by international financial institutions, withdrawing much public policy from the democratic process, the result is what Robinson (1996) called 'low intensity democracy', a form differentiated from electoral authoritarianism merely by degrees. Importantly, the victory of the neo-liberal Washington consensus over socialism in the developed world was paralleled by its export to MENA, backed up by the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) loan conditionality, where it shifted the balance of social and normative power against labour and precipitated a transformation of populist forms of authoritarianism to post-populist variants.

It is in this political economy context that the evolution of MENA republics can be understood:

1 The early independence period was dominated by liberal landed oligarchies following an agricultural export strategy and combining some elite contestation with mass exclusion.
2 They were displaced by populist authoritarian (PA) regimes, pursuing 'revolution from above' and import substitute industrialization that sharply contracted elite contestation while expanding inclusion for the masses; this stage was arguably a function of the transition from 'feudalism' to capitalism in which a 'Bonapartist' state is able to balance above classes.
3 In the subsequent era of neo-liberal globalization, when post-populist authoritarian regimes re-empowered capital, expanded contestation among elites was paralleled by the contraction of mass inclusion.
4 The uprisings were reactions to this mass exclusion; the big question is whether, post-uprising, enough mass inclusion is possible to consolidate polyarchy or whether polities revert to hybrid, less than fully inclusive governance (Hinnebusch 2010).

The context of the Arab Uprising: 'Post-populist authoritarianism'

Why have Arab republics (compared to monarchies), proved so vulnerable to the Arab Uprising? They all do share something, namely, that they built their power and legitimacy on a distinctive populist formula that they subsequently abandoned. Neither authoritarian persistence nor the Arab Uprising can be understood without a political-economy analysis of the evolution of 'post-populist' authoritarianism in the Arab republics (Hinnebusch 2010).

Populist republics carried out a revolution from above against the landed oligarchy through nationalizations and land reform and launched import substitution industrialization. Sharply contracting elite-level contestation by repressing all opposition, their survival required expanded mass inclusion, incorporating worker and peasant constituencies through single party/corporatist structures. Enjoying neither electoral nor traditional legitimacy, legitimacy in these populist authoritarian (PA) regimes was contingent upon the charisma of leaders, a social contract under which constituencies were accorded jobs and welfare and an Arab nationalist foreign policy that challenged Western dominance in the region; the latter was only possible because of the bipolar world structure: the existence of the socialist East bloc ready to accord protection, aid and markets to anti-imperialist Arab regimes.

However, political consolidation of PA regimes generated economic liabilities. Patronage and corruption were used to ensure the loyalty of key elites, public sectors to co-opt the middle class, and welfare entitlements to keep the masses pacified. The lack of efficiency-driving competition in the state-dominated economy meant the public sector failed as an engine of capital accumulation. Because PA states could not sustain capital accumulation, they all faced the need to revitalize the private sector as the main engine of growth and to encourage foreign investment, hence to reopen (*infitah*) their economies to the world capitalist market. In some cases, PA regimes' anti-imperialist foreign policies had got them into costly wars that deepened economic crises. The US hegemon used such a crisis to co-opt and reduce the Arab hegemon, Egypt, to a new dependency and later militarily destroyed its putative replacement, Iraq. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the main sources of aid/rent and investment were in the West; accessing this required foreign policy re-alignment westward and peace with Israel, at the expense of nationalist legitimacy.

Restoring confidence to investors in regimes that had attacked the bourgeoisie a generation ago required policies that strongly favoured them, including low taxes and deregulation; and more rule of law for the 'haves' but less for the have-nots, hence the reinforcement of property rights parallel to a rollback of social protections such as labour rights and agrarian relations laws. The exhaustion of ISI required a move towards export strategies that required driving down the price of labour; where regimes dependent on oil rent got into debt when oil prices fell, international economic institutions foisted neo-liberal 'structural adjustments' on them that required cuts in food subsidies and a hollowing out of public educational and health services while private facilities for the rich and bloated military budgets expanded. IMF-dictated privatization of state industries led to redundancies and much increased prices for consumers. In Egypt, the IMF-recommended abolition of the agrarian tenancy law made a million peasants homeless (Guazzone and Pioppi 2009). And, just as international socialism had, at the time of the rise of PA, delegitimized great social inequalities, so the new norm of unlimited self-aggrandizement by the rich, spread by the global triumph of international finance capital, legitimized, for MENA elites, their disproportionate seizure of wealth for themselves and their neglect of the growing poor.

How was this transition managed without incurring rebellion by those who lost out: public sector workers, land reform peasants and the poor? Authoritarian persistence cannot be explained by coercion alone and, indeed, the logic of authoritarian rule is to *include* some social forces in order to *exclude* others; hence post-populist authoritarian (PPA) regimes had to build new constituencies among those benefiting from neo-liberalism to substitute for the old populist coalition. Yet, they had also to avoid overly empowering a potentially rival social force, an independent bourgeoisie. Hence, they fostered their own business elite: thus, Heydemann (2004) and King (2009) showed how the ruling elite used its control over the economy for private enrichment and to go into business on the side, and used IFI pressures for privatization to seize control of public-sector assets for itself and its clients, enriching presidential families, ministers and private investors allied with them in 'networks of privilege' (Heydemann 2004). In parallel, emerging new private-sector capitalists were dependent on the state for monopolies and contracts, fostering networks between them and the new regime-connected business elite. These practices generated the most typical phenomenon in the transition from statist to market economies, namely, *crony capitalism*.

This post-populist economic tangent required, of course, the maintenance of authoritarian power, albeit now used to reconstruct and defend rather than break down social inequalities (as in the populist period). Heydemann's (2007) idea of 'authoritarian upgrading' denoted the co-optation and control techniques by which such post-populist regimes tried to compensate for the risks of abandoning their mass constituencies. But what needs underlining is the highly class-biased character of this strategy: political liberalization was designed to give confidence to investors while containing opposition to neo-liberalism. Thus, selected access to the ruling elite was opened for businessmen through parliaments and business associations, or via pro-neo-liberal parties fostered to co-opt them, resulting in increased concessions to their interests and facilitating the clientele connections that fuelled crony capitalism (Glasser 2001). The judiciary was empowered to enforce selective rule of law, mostly protecting property rights rather than labour rights. Greater freedom of the press and party pluralism was allowed to appease the middle class but combined with 'red lines' to prevent opposition access to the masses, thereby ensuring that pro-regime parties remained dominant; party pluralization, by institutionalizing the multiple cleavages that split society, and regimes' selective inclusion and exclusion of political groups from participation in semi-competitive elections facilitated divide and rule strategies (Lust-Okar 2004). In parallel, former populist constituencies were marginalized through the disempowerment of their syndicates and regimes' refusal to extend labour rights (collective bargaining, the right to strike). Finally, parallel with this liberalization, regimes also compromised with and co-opted (rather than solely repressing) rising Islamists, conceding a growing presence of Islam in the public sphere. They also offloaded welfare responsibilities to religious charities dominated by the *ulama* and Islamists, often with financial connections to the Gulf, hence with an interest in economic liberalization, while also using the Islamist 'threat' to exploit the widespread cleavage in MENA between Islamists and secularists. In summary, post-populist authoritarianism amounted to a simultaneous incremental expansion of competitiveness for the haves, largely via co-optation, and shrinkage of inclusion for the have-nots.

Far from being a first step towards democratization, post-populism deepened obstacles to it. On the one hand, regimes were strengthened by the adhesion of crony capitalists and the bourgeoisie as a whole, which, needing the state to discipline the working classes, could not lead a democratic revolution against it. On the other hand, regimes could not empower the masses at a time when they were reneging on the social contract and sacrificing their nationalist legitimacy. Nor could the main opposition, the Islamic movements that filled the welfare gap and championed the victims of economic liberalization, be politically included without jeopardizing the West-leaning political-economic tangents of post-populist regimes.

Authoritarian upgrading worked for three decades. However, PDT overestimated the durability of authoritarian regimes and it is now apparent that the seeds of rebellion were planted by post-populist transition. Post-populism, although meant to 'fix' certain vulnerabilities in PA, generated powerful mass grievances; on the other hand, authoritarian upgrading techniques, although meant to compensate for the negative side effects of post-populism, also had their own cumulative costs. While the masses of working people were the main victims of post-populism, the middle strata and sectors of the bourgeoisie were also eventually alienated, notably by the aggrandizement of presidential families, as presidential monarchs attempted to make the office hereditary and transferrable to their sons; gradually rule by the single party, which incorporated

an array of interests, gave way to rule by the single family (*jumlukiyya*), over-concentrating patronage in its hands, and starting a narrowing of contestation in tandem with the narrowing of mass inclusion, thereby dangerously shrinking the social bases of PPA regimes.

At the same time, PDT also underestimated how oppositions were in some ways empowered by some of the modernization techniques imported under authoritarian upgrading, such as the internet and mobile phones, which were famously used in the uprisings; by the strengthening of Islamist movements through their growing influence over public discourse and their assumption of many of the states' previous welfare responsibilities; and by the limited political liberalization that opened an incremental space where, in Egypt notably, street protests and strikes became a regular occurrence, whether over labour redundancies, the Iraq War, the Israeli wars in Lebanon and Gaza, or the grooming of Gamal Mubarak for succession, providing valuable organizing experience and generating the networks that would facilitate the 2011 uprising.

Prospects for democratic consolidation

The Arab Uprising has encouraged movement toward polyarchy, with increased contestation and widened inclusion by comparison to PPA; however, democratic consolidation is unlikely in the immediate future.

First, conflicts between the interests and ideologies of the three main forces that led the uprising – Westernized or expatriate youth, with their individualist orientation; Islamists, themselves split; and the unionized workers and the deprived underclasses – will permit the remnants of ruling establishments, above all the military, to continue to 'divide and rule', albeit with electoral competition playing an enhanced role in determining the power balance among the rival forces. In those cases where this power struggle deteriorated into civil war and failed states (Libya, Syria), the possibilities of democratization are even more remote.

Second, the options of the post-uprising governments will be highly constrained by the dependencies their predecessors created. Global neo-liberalism will sharply constrain attempts to attack the social inequalities that it helped generate: a return to populist measures would lead to capital flight, scare away investors and sacrifice US aid and IMF loans. Indeed, Western IFIs are reframing the uprisings as revolts against the intrusive state and rentier monopolies, a problem they want addressed by further opening to global finance capital. In Egypt's case, the foreign loans that have drained capital from the country have made it dependent on further loans to cope with the economic crisis deepened by the uprising; IFIs are making such loans conditional on further privatization via so called private–public partnerships, allowing Western and Gulfi investors to buy up prime parts of Egypt's infrastructure (Hanieh 2012). Nor can Western aid or investment be readily jeopardized by pursuit of the widely popular Arab–Islamic causes that people expect of their governments, notably the defence of Palestinian rights.

The problem is that while democratic consolidation depends on the ability of parties to attract mass votes, elected governments appear unable to deliver on the expectations of the voters. Can this dilemma be overcome? For a period, it seemed that the simultaneous electoral victories of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated political parties across the region would bring to power governments able to legitimize capitalist practices in Islamic terms, as in Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was linked, via the Gulf petro-monarchies, to international finance capital, but also incorporated a cross-class mass constituency. Its project

for a more competitive version of capitalism with greater rule of law than under Mubarak might have made capitalist development congruent with popular Islam and stimulated sufficient growth and jobs to satisfy voters. This development also promised the political incorporation of moderate Islamic movements, which is an essential, although not sufficient, condition of democratic consolidation in the Arab world, as it was in Turkey. However, if state establishments are able to exploit cleavages between secular and Islamic forces to marginalize the Brotherhood, as in post-Morsi Egypt, democratic consolidation is unlikely.

Another minimal condition of democratic consolidation would be a sufficient balance of class power to give substance to polyarchy: this would require freedom for independent worker and peasant unions to fight for the rights of their lower class constituents. Elsewhere, however, movement to the stage of industrial exports has required driving down the cost of labour and, far from incorporating unions, breaking their power. In an age of financial globalization, with its extreme mobility of capital, any development strategy will likely put the demands of capital over those of labour.

Generally, the pressures from Western finance capital to lock MENA countries into international agreements that remove the big socio-economic issues from democratic accountability, much as in the West itself, will at best likely result in 'low intensity democracy'. If little real electoral choice is allowed under globalization in the developed West, how much less so are the economically dependent Arab states likely to enjoy it? Expecting more from democratic politics, Arab publics may well be rapidly disillusioned. As elsewhere, political competition may come to turn on highly divisive 'identity politics' (e.g. Sunni versus Shia) allowing 'divide and rule' by durable elites.

Conclusion

DT identified how modernization both increased the aspirations and relative capacity of society, especially the educated middle class, for political participation. It identified other requisites of democratic consolidation, notably a sense of nationhood lacking in many Arab states. Revised modernization theory identified the institutional practices, first 'totalitarian', then 'neo-patrimonial' and finally 'liberalized autocracies', which gave durability to authoritarianism. The agency of leadership to make a difference was identified in the contrary possibilities of democratic transition via elite pacts or its avoidance via authoritarian upgrading.

What these approaches neglected was the underlying political economy motors of politics and the importance of the balance of class power in giving social content to various institutional forms. Thus, populist and post-populist authoritarianism served such different class interests that the two can only be equated by fixating on the *form* of politics at the expense of its *content – who gets what*. Similarly, how far post-uprising moves toward polyarchy will matter depends on how far they allow a class balance in which the working classes can check the power of capital; that failing, the region is likely to revert to forms of electoral authoritarianism designed to favour capital while providing enough political safety values to dilute mass discontent.

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5

The Arab Spring

Why in Some Arab Countries and Not in Others?

Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid

Introduction: Transition?

Although the wave of uprisings has affected many countries in the region to different degrees, this chapter will focus on the countries where they led either to change of rulers, such as in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, or very much threatened regime stability, as is the case in Syria. It is in these countries that the uprisings have been more decisive, and their differences with other countries where that wave was not as powerful requires explanation.

Interestingly enough, authors of one of the first studies of the so-called 'Democracy's third wave' (Huntington 1992) gave a title to their four volumes study, calling that phenomenon 'Transition from authoritarian rule'. They deliberately were cautious enough about what they examined in Southern Europe and Latin America to describe it as 'transition to democracy' (O'Donnell et al 1986). They were not sure where that process was heading. Much the same could be said about that massive wave of protests that started in the Arab world in Tunisia in December 2010 and later moved to several Arab countries, particularly Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Bahrain. The authoritarian regimes that ruled Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been overthrown together with the former president of Yemen. But it would take observers of the political scene in the Arab world a big dose of optimism to conclude confidently that this wave is definitely taking these countries along the path of liberal democracy, as it is known in the West. There are four causes for this scepticism. One is that one short-lived experiment of elected government failed already in one of these countries, namely Egypt, with Mohammed Morsi, the elected president, removed from office following a popular revolt on 30 June 2013 endorsed by the armed forces three days later. A second cause is that the winners in most of these countries were Islamist forces who may accept some principles of democracy; but most or some of them have difficulty with unlimited freedom of belief and expression and gender equality. Without respect for these rights, one cannot talk of triumph of liberal democracy in these countries. The fluidity of the political situation under the transitional regimes and threats to domestic security which

they are not able to overcome do not seem to be coming to an end soon. The fourth cause is that removing Islamists from the political scene, as the case of Egypt suggests, does not by all means ensure that the post-Islamist regime will be democratic.

Let us not venture into speculation about the future of democracy in countries of Arab uprisings. Political scientists have fared badly when they attempted to predict the evolution of historical processes of change in Eastern Europe in the recent past and when they foresaw decline of religion in political cultures of developed and developing countries as well.

What these countries have in common

The first common feature among all of these countries is that they belong to the category known as the poor in the Arab world (Kerr and Yassin 1982), mainly countries which did not have much of the rent income which enabled petroleum- wealthy Arab countries to amass large financial assets that they used to buy the loyalty of their citizens, or at least to assuage discontent over socio-economic conditions. The former remained relatively poor compared to the latter. They all had a per capita income below the average or very close to the average of the Arab world as a whole, but far less than that of Arab Gulf countries. While the average gross national income for all countries of the Middle East and North Africa was US$3597 in 2009, only one of the countries of Arab uprisings, namely Tunisia, slightly exceeded this average with $3720, compared with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, which had per capita incomes ranging from US$17,210 to $43,930 (World Bank 2011, 10–13). Despite the fact that Libyans were reported in such statistics to be enjoying a per capita national income of US$12,020, it is doubtful that such a figure reflects the economic realities of the Libyan people. They paid, in fact, the price of the adventurous foreign policies of Moammar Gaddafi that had led the United Nations Security Council to impose economic sanctions on the country, with dire consequences for the well-being of its people. Despite a paucity of data, there are few indications of the impact of UN sanctions on Libya. Malnutrition and underweight affected 5.6 per cent of Libyan children between 2004–2009, while those affected were only 3.3 per cent in Tunisia, a country less endowed in terms of oil wealth than Libya, and their percentage was not much higher in Egypt (6.8 per cent), the same as in the region as a whole. Adult mortality rates in Libya ranged during the same period between 144 and 89 for males and females, respectively, whereas those for the region were slightly lower: 104 and 73 (World Bank 2011, 110–113, 118–121) A considerable number of people in all these countries lived in poverty. The same source indicated that rates of poverty in most of these countries, with the exception of Tunisia, were close or even higher than those of the region as a whole. While 16.9 per cent of people in the region were living on an income of less than US$2 a day, those who lived below the international poverty line averaged 46.6 in Yemen, 18.5 in Egypt, 16.9 in Syria and 12.8 per cent in Tunisia. No such figures were available for Libya (World Bank 2011, 64–67). Signs of the suffering of people in these countries as a result of their precarious living conditions multiplied in the last three years before the uprisings of 2011; the impact was felt in nearly all of them. With the rise in food prices, social discontent became endemic and protest actions were common.

These economic difficulties were aggravated by the economic policies these regimes pursued. With or without agreement with the International Monetary Fund, they all

adopted the neo-liberal economic package which stressed abandoning welfare policies known commonly as the old social contract which promised people decent living in return for their political acquiescence (Dixon 2011, 309–316).

Politically, these countries faced a legitimacy crisis with almost identical causes. They were all republican regimes. Their regimes acted like monarchies, with no real limit to tenure of their heads of state and no free and fair election for accession to this highest post. Not surprisingly, their rulers were the most enduring of all heads of state in Arab countries. Moammar Gaddafi of Libya was the longest serving head of state, having been in power for 42 years, followed by Ali Abdallah Saleh (33 years) and Hosny Mubarak (30 years). Bin Ali of Tunisia was in power for 24 years when the revolution started. Bashar Al-Assad was their youngest as he came to the presidency of Syria in 2000, 11 years before his people revolted against him. With the exception of Gaddafi who claimed that he was merely leader of a revolution, not head of state, they all orchestrated a sham election once every five or six years which they ran mostly unopposed. Once in office, they would cling to power until removed either by death or assassination. They were all careful to take measures ensuring that this supreme post would remain in the hands of their families. They prepared the scene for the presidency to be inherited by one of their sons, usually the eldest unless he was too young or had no political ambitions. If the president had no son, his family or that of his wife would take matters into their hands, ensuring that this valuable post did not slip into other hands. Having no son old enough to succeed him, Zein Al-Abdin Ben Ali left it to his wife, the former hair dresser Laila Al-Tarabulsi, to prepare Sakher Al-Mattary, his son-in-law who was 31 years old at the time of the revolution, to become Tunisia's next president. Hosny Mubarak kept silent on the plans of his son to succeed him, apparently buying time for his wife to promote their son to be the new president. Ali Abdallah Saleh put members of his family in key positions in the armed forces and security agencies. The sons of Gaddafi considered Libya to be their private estate. The road to 'royal republics' was paved for these rulers earlier by the late Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, who had prepared his eldest son Bassel to succeed him. When Bassel lost his life in a car accident in 1994, his father put his eyes on Bashar, the second eldest, to keep Syria in the hands of the Al-Assad family. He also changed the country's constitution to accommodate the relatively younger age of Bashar. Definitely all these presidents made mockery of republican ideals, setting the stage for the emergence in the Arab world of what could be called republican dynasties. Ironically enough, the legitimacy of some of these regimes, notably in Egypt, Yemen and Libya, owed much to the fact that they overthrew hereditary regimes, monarchies in Egypt and Libya, and the Imamate in Yemen (CIDOB undated).

Those presidents obviously were not interested in keeping the supreme post in the hands of their families purely out of lust for political power. They were very anxious to enjoy the privileges of power under political systems with no effective accountability mechanisms. One of these privileges was definitely the unlimited capacity to accumulate private wealth by any means and to run the state as a private property, with members of their families wielding all influential positions, perhaps as an insurance against any revolt against their abuse of power. The extent of their corruption, though widely known to their people, was minutely detailed in the investigations and trials that followed their overthrow. Bin Ali was sentenced in absentia to spend 66 years in prison for his corruption. He and his wife Leila Al-Tarabulsi, as well as her brother Belhassan al-Tarabulsi, were accused of illicitly accumulating millions of dollars deposited

in foreign banks. The Tunisian governments that took office following the overthrow of Bin Ali struggled to get this fortune back, hoping that European and Arab governments where parts of such wealth were deposited in secret accounts would be supportive of such efforts (BBC News Africa 2011). Similar charges were made against Mubarak and his two sons Ala' and Gamal. Mubarak was condemned to three years in prison and his two sons Alaa and Gamal to four years for their embezzlement of public funds for construction of private palaces. Suzan, Mubarak's wife, was in control of millions of dollars of foreign aid given to various semi-governmental bodies, as well as some non-governmental organizations which she headed. While Ala' devoted his energies exclusively to business activities, particularly in the financial sector, his brother Gamal combined interests in both business and politics. He was promoted within the ruling National Democratic Party to be the head of the Supreme Council of Policies. By virtue of this post, he could hold the prime minister and cabinet ministers accountable to him, despite the fact that he was not a popularly elected figure (Johnson 2011). Mubarak and his sons could escape conviction on some of these charges by giving back the expensive gifts they were presented from state-owned companies or by giving up some of the properties they had acquired before the January 2011 uprising. None of those deposed leaders were as careful in putting members of their extended families in all positions of power in the government as Ali Abdullah Saleh, the former president of Yemen. He appointed his son Ahmad to be the commander of the Republican Guard and Special Forces. Three of his nephews were successively chief of staff of the Central Security Forces, commander of special guard and deputy president of national security. He did not forget his step brother and his sons, the brothers of his four wives, cousins, nephews or even natives of his village. They held positions ranging from commander of the air force, deputy prime minister, governors of provinces to commanders of important units in the armed forces (Canadian Business Online Staff 2011). Three of Gaddafi's seven living sons at the time of the uprising were exerting much influence in the government and in the economy. Saif Al-Islam was believed to be Gaddafi's successor, although he denied such speculations, but was his father's right hand in resisting the revolution until his father's last day. Mohammed, the eldest son, was in charge of the country's communication agency, which also ran the telecommunication services, while Khamis headed a special security force. The last head of Libyan Intelligence Services was Abdallah Al-Senousi, Gaddafi's brother-in-law (*Global Post* 2011). In Syria, four members of the Al-Assad family control the country's politics, military, security and economy. Besides Bashar, the president of the country and leader of the Ba'th Party, his brother Maher is commander of the fourth army division, the most powerful in the Syrian army; Asef Shawkat, Bashar's brother-in-law, was believed to have been in control of the security apparatus; and finally Rami Makhlouf, Bashar's cousin, owns the largest communication and retail companies as well as other interests. Both Asef and Maher were present in the Defence Ministry when an explosion killed the first, among others, while Maher was seriously wounded. Their women are no less involved in politics, particularly Anisa Al-Assad, Bashar's mother, and Bushra his sister. They are believed to be supporters of tough positions in dealing with the uprising (Inman 2012).

Leaders of the five countries also shared one feature in common, namely strategic short-sightedness. Some of them were completely oblivious to the rising political aspirations of their widely educated citizens, particularly those of young people aged 15 to 24 whose literacy rates ranged between 88 and 100 per cent for males, and between 72 and 100 per cent for females. The highest rates were those in Libya where

almost all young people were literate; but Yemen and Egypt lagged behind with rates in the order of 62 to 66 per cent in Yemen and Egypt, respectively. Higher rates prevailed in Tunisia and Libya (84–89 per cent, respectively) and 78 per cent in Syria (World Bank 2011, 88–91). In facing a better educated people, Bashar Al-Assad and Gaddafi were determined to keep their tight hold on political power lest any measure of political reform could undermine the stability of their regimes. The other three leaders allowed a façade of multi-partyism to exist, tolerating the presence of opposition political parties, but never letting free and fair elections decide who would run the country. At different moments, these three leaders could have seized an opportunity to introduce genuine reform which could have kept them, but not their sons nor their party members, at the helm of state for some more time. Each of them could have used the occasion of his last election to the supreme office to introduce genuine political reform. Both Bin Ali and Mubarak could have done so on the fifth time each was elected president in 2009 and 2005, respectively, while Saleh could have seized that opportunity prior to the start of his sixth term in office in 2006. Even when the uprisings started, they could have seized this chance in its early days, but when this idea dawned upon them, as in the case of Mubarak's second speech on 1 February 2011, it was already too late. They were no longer trusted by their people.

Much was written about the impact of the new social media in facilitating Arab uprisings of the Arab spring. Several commentators pointed out the role played by mobile phones and internet sites, particularly Facebook and Twitter, in allowing protesting people, coming initially from among the educated youth, to exchange ideas, mobilize supporters and circulate instructions and calls for action escaping the watchful eyes of their countries' security agencies (DeLong-Bas undated; Reardon undated). Undoubtedly, such media were an effective tool of coordination of protest activities, although it is doubtful that their use by protesters explains successes of the Arab uprisings. Other means of communication, including the so-called 'Arab Radio' or direct contact of mouth to mouth were available. This proved not only to be complementary but also a substitute to social media in Tunisia and Egypt when the two falling regimes resorted to suspension of internet services in the hope of disrupting coordination of activities among militants. Available figures of the World Development Indicators do not suggest that any of these countries, with the exception of Tunisia, were on average better endowed with such media than what was normally the situation in the Arab world. But the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) ranked second among all low- and middle-income regions in terms of mobile cellular subscription, being 67 for every 100 people in 2009, exceeded only by Latin America and the Caribbean region. MENA was also in a better position than Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and Pacific regions of low- and middle-income countries. The regional average was exceeded only by Tunisia, where almost everybody subscribed to a cellular phone (93 for every 100 persons), followed in this respect by Libya, Egypt and Syria, respectively, with Yemen coming at the bottom with 16 mobile phones for 100 persons. The region did not seem on the whole better endowed with respect to access, and use of personal computers and internet taking a fourth position among low- and middle-income regions, being ahead of only South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Only 21.5 and 5.7 of every 100 persons in the region had access to personal computers and internet, respectively (data from 2008–9). Again Tunisia surpassed the regional average by far, with 9.7 and 33 of every 100 persons having access to these media. Egypt and Syria were close to the regional average in the access to the internet, while Syria surpassed the regional average in terms of access to

personal computers. Libya and Yemen lagged behind. What these figures do not indicate is that access to personal computers and internet was quite common among certain categories of people, namely urban middle-class young people, while rural and poor population lacked such access. The former were the ones who took the initiative in launching the Arab revolts. Many of the latter followed (World Bank 2011, 306–308, 310–312).

Where did they differ?

The five countries where the Arab Uprisings led, or could very possibly lead, to overthrow of the authoritarian regime differed also in many respects. Their paths to this outcome diverged considerably, with the journey from authoritarianism to something else being relatively short in some, much longer in others. The human cost also varied, not necessarily coinciding with the duration of the revolt. Two inter-related factors explain or help to explain the duration and the human cost, namely the role of the armed forces and foreign intervention.

The journey was the shortest in Egypt, lasting only 18 days. Tunisia was the first to spark the revolts but was the second in duration as it took Tunisians 28 days to get rid of Bin Ali. It took the Libyans, helped by foreign intervention of NATO raids and other military assistance, six months and two days to arrest Gaddafi and his eldest son. Foreign diplomatic mediation did not enable Yemenis to swiftly put an end to the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who left power 13 months after the revolt started. More than three and a half years since the start of the Syrian revolution, Bashar Al-Assad is still in power, and his position has been regionally and internationally enhanced thanks to his diplomatic shrewdness and in-fighting among opposition forces.

Human cost and duration of the uprising

To some extent, the human cost of the Arab uprisings coincided roughly with their duration. In absolute terms, this human cost measured by the number of violent deaths during days of the upheaval was the lowest in the two countries where the revolt was the shortest, namely Tunisia and Egypt. If related to the number of population in each country, and based on data from several sources including Amnesty International, the *Economist* has estimated that until July 2011 the toll was highest in Syria, followed by Bahrain and Tunisia in that order. Egypt came in fourth place and Yemen was lowest. The numbers of people who were killed during these uprisings until July 2011 ranged between 1300 in Syria, 864 in Egypt, 219 in Tunisia, 200 in Yemen and 29 in Bahrain (*Economist* 2011). No doubt the numbers have increased in some of these countries since then, but the biggest increase was in Syria where, according to the *Guardian* newspaper using United Nations data and other sources, victims of the conflict rose to 19,235 in July 2012 (Rogers and Burn-Murdoch 2012) The latest UN estimate of the number of casualties in the Syrian conflict was published in late July 2013 before it suspended counting the number of deaths because of the difficulties of verifying any figures due to the tense situation on the ground (Press TV 2014). At that date, over 100,000 people had lost their lives in the conflict. An Oxford Research Group estimated the number of children to have died in this conflict to be 11,420 by the end of August 2013 (Salama and Dardagan 2013). Libya remained a problem, as estimates of Libyan rebel groups were much higher than those of international organizations.

Leaders of the new government in september 2011 suggested that the numbers ranged between 30,000 and 50,000, but the International Committee of the Red Cross did not find evidence for more than 1000 dead (Nordland 2011). These figures do not include casualties of the transitional period in the countries where the old authoritarian regimes were overthrown. The victims of the conflict between governments and opposition groups escalated in all four countries, particularly in Libya and Egypt.

The human cost was thus definitely higher in Libya and surely in Syria where the revolution was accomplished by force. The revolutionaries in the two countries had to fight a well-entrenched regime that was determined to dig in and not to give up its hold over power. The position taken by the armed forces determined to a large extent both the duration of the revolution and its human cost. In both Tunisia and Egypt the military command decided to stand by the people. The military were divided in Yemen, but this internal conflict with the armed forces of Yemen still left Saleh with the bulk of the army and security services largely behind him. Internal divisions in Libya and Syria did not tip the balance of force on the side of the revolution as the majority of the armed and security forces in the two countries remained loyal to the authoritarian leader and his family.

On the other hand, the five countries have experienced large economic losses that were estimated by the International Monetary Fund in July 2011 to amount to US$55 billion in the five besides Bahrain, including loss of public revenue in the range of $35.2 billion, and increased cost to gross domestic product (GDP) in the order of $20.56 billion. The fall of public revenue reached the level of 77 per cent in Yemen and 84 per cent in Libya. The economic cost was much higher as these figures do not take into account damage to infrastructure and business or the fall of foreign direct investment (Biles 2011). The continued deterioration of the security situation in all these countries has left its mark on their economies. Three years after the uprisings took place, the HSBC put the figure of US$800 billion in losses to the GDP in seven Arab countries where the uprisings took place besides Lebanon. It had reversed its estimate of the GDP growth rate of Libya from 15 per cent in 2014 to merely 0.7 per cent. The HSBC added that in the 'Longer term, the disruption of education, training and employment for scores of citizens will affect their ability to develop and contribute their human capital' (Jupp 2013).

Role of the armed forces

Very short on legitimacy, Arab authoritarian regimes had to rely on the armed forces as the ultimate pillar of their rule. With their reserves of popular support dwindling, their only hope of maintaining themselves and their families in power rested on their control of the armed forces. Their leaders realized that the armed forces could become the only political force that might unseat them from their positions, particularly when the armed forces have been professionalized and maintain a considerable degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the head of state, as in Tunisia and Egypt. But in order to minimize this threat, Arab rulers resorted to several methods. To keep the military satisfied, all heads of state in Republican Egypt conferred on the military multiple privileges, including relatively higher pay, access to special hospitals, clubs and hotels, and summer and winter resorts that are definitely envied by other factions of the professional middle class. Bourguiba and Bin Ali in Tunisia managed to keep a small army away from politics. On the other hand, the two countries had professional armies with appointments and promotions subject to formal rules. In the two countries, family ties

and other primordial loyalties have no effect on who becomes a commander of an important division or who rises to a higher rank. It is true that both Bin Ali and Mubarak had a military background; both were former army officers, but none of them put members of his family, clan or sect in senior positions in the armed forces.

That was definitely not the case in the three other countries. In Yemen, members of Saleh's extended family and people of his village manned almost all leading positions in the army and security services. In Syria, the first act that the late Hafez Al-Assad did when he started to groom Bashar to the post of president, following the death of his brother Bassel in 1994, was to give him a military rank. Maher, Bashar's brother, became the commander of the fourth division, the elite division of the Syrian army, and Alawite officers, who belong to the same sect as the Assads, dominated the officers corps. Gaddafi for his part did not trust the professional army of Libya and relied more on security services and militias that were under direct control of members of his family and tribe (Pollack and Bayman 2011; Gelvin 2012).

Under these varied conditions, army commanders in Tunisia and Egypt had, at the moment of truth, the liberty to decide whom to support. They had the choice either to stand by a leader who had lost all legitimacy, engaging the troops in a confrontation for which they were unprepared, or spare themselves and their countries the heavy price of repression. Moreover, one important consideration weighed heavily for Egyptian military commanders, namely their resentment of becoming subordinate to a new civilian leadership headed by Gamal Mubarak and his business clique. Gamal's rise to the supreme post in the country would have not only ended their closeness to a president who was himself a former army officer, but it could mean also loss of their economic privileges relative to the new business elite whose fortunes would continue to flourish under the liberal policies Gamal favoured. It was known that Field Marshal Tantawi, Mubarak's last minister of defence, had expressed on several occasions his opposition to the liberal economic policies adopted by Mubarak's cabinets since the signing of two agreements with the IMF and the World Bank in 1991. In fact, it is well known now that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that took over power following Mubarak's departure was waiting for a proper moment to move against family succession plans of Gamal Mubarak. The popular revolution of 25 January ave SCAF that opportunity (Al-Menawi 2012).

None of these considerations were important for General Rachid Ammar, chief of staff of the Tunisian armed forces, who found that the price of supporting Bin Ali against popular will was too heavy. He decided therefore to abandon his boss (Kirkpatrick 2013).[1] These choices were never available to commanders of armed and security forces in the three other countries as they were closely tied to the head of state. They judged that they should either hang together or hang separately.

Role of foreign powers

The positions taken by major as well as regional powers varied greatly. One could argue that there were three patterns of positions by major powers outside the region. One pattern was to wait and see the outcome of the uprising, pining hope on the incumbent leadership to be able to weather the storm and offer enough concessions as to satisfy protesters and keep the same foreign policies as before. The second pattern was to try to mediate between the incumbents and the opposition and to seek a settlement that would almost keep the old system intact with only cosmetic changes at the

top. The third pattern would be for some major powers to support rebels and provide them with assistance, ranging from un-lethal equipment to arms and finally giving rebels a hand by engaging in fighting incumbent troops. The first pattern was the one taken in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, the second was practised in Yemen and the third was what finally prevailed in the Libyan and Syrian cases (Pollack and Bayman 2011).

In three of these cases major powers, mainly the five permanent members of the Security Council, adopted more or less the same position. Important divisions were manifest when the revolution broke out in Libya, but such divisions did not prevent the Security Council from adopting a resolution imposing sanctions and even authorizing military intervention, presumably to defend civilian populations. In the case of Syria, the gap separating these positions was so large most of the time as to prevent the Security Council from taking any action except to successfully appoint one joint representative of both the UN and the Arab League to mediate between the government and opposition groups inside and outside the country. Finally, following acceptance by the Syrian government of a Russian proposal to destroy its stock of chemical weapons in terms of Security Council Resolution 2118, the US and Russia agreed to work together to convene a second Geneva Conference with the participation of all Syrian factions in the hope of reaching a peaceful settlement of that dispute. The conference met in February 2014 but failed to produce such an outcome.

Differences of approach towards Arab uprisings by major powers outside of the Middle East reflected their divergent relations with countries where uprisings took place. Despite the reversal of Gaddafi's radical policies following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, each of the four Western powers, namely the US, the UK, France and Germany, could not forgive Gaddafi for any of the terrorist attacks presumably committed by Libyan agents against their citizens or interests (Prashad 2012). Bashar Al-Assad was an ally of Hezbollah and Iran and was supporting militant Palestinian factions, including Hamas, all opposed to peace deals that the Palestinian Authority was trying in vain to conclude with Israel. China and Russia, on the other hand, had important economic interests with the two regimes. Both disliked any use of domestic conflict as a rationalization for foreign military intervention. They could envisage similar situations in their own countries, which could be used by these Western powers as a pretext for their intervention directly or indirectly with the UN or other international organization as a cover.

Regional powers, particularly Gulf countries, Iran, Turkey and Israel, were also divided. Conservative Gulf countries were quite apprehensive of developments in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. They were concerned that the revolutionary fervour would be contagious and would soon be echoed in their own countries. It is known that Saudi Arabia advised the US president to stand by the side of Mubarak in Egypt. Gulf governments tried to limit possible repercussions on the stability of their regimes. Their methods varied, ranging from military intervention in Bahrain and mediation efforts in Yemen. But they resented the more radical regimes of Libya and Syria, and moved therefore to support the opposition, pushing Western powers to engage more forcefully on the side of the revolutionary movements in the two countries. The Iranian government supported the revolution against all the governments that were not on good terms with it and stood strongly beside its ally in Syria. Iranian media welcomed Arab revolts as being inspired by the model of the Iranian revolution, particularly when these revolutions, as in Tunisia and Egypt, paved the way for electoral victories of Islamist

parties, which came to dominate their new governments. Israel for its part was worried that the uprisings of the Arab Spring would empower Islamist and nationalist parties opposed not only to its occupation of Arab territories, but even to its own existence. Apart from Qatar, they all welcomed the removal of the Muslim Brothers' regime in Egypt in July 2013. A total of US$12 billion from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates supported the interim government in Egypt during its serious economic difficulties as a result of the previous regimes (Feteha 2013).

The new distribution of power in the Arab world, marked by the fall of authoritarian republican regimes, allowed conservative Gulf countries to dominate the Arab League, the regional organization of Arab countries. Surprisingly, and for the first time in its history, the Arab League took positions on domestic politics in Arab countries and even condemned Arab governments for their massive violations of human rights. Under two of its secretary generals, both Amr Moussa and Nabeel Al-Arabi, supported by Saudi Arabia, other Gulf countries and remaining monarchies of the Arab World, the League took resolutions that paved the way for NATO countries' military intervention in Libya and for the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions on Syria by the United Nations Security Council. Rulers of Gulf countries did not forgive Gaddafi for his denunciation of their regimes and Bashar for his alliance with Iran. Before this remarkable precedent, the only country that had been denounced by the Arab League for human rights violations was Israel (Gause and Lustick 2012).

Are other Arab countries immune from contagion of uprisings?

The Arab uprisings have been confined until the winter of 2014 to these six countries. Some of the features of the six countries were not present in other Arab countries. Gulf countries enjoy a financial wealth that could enable them to satisfy the aspirations of their people for better living conditions without any change in distribution of wealth or power. The Algeria of Bouteflika found itself in a similar situation thanks to the rise of petroleum prices in the international markets. Monarchical regimes, including those of Jordan and Morocco, suffer less of a problem of legitimacy, as the hereditary formula of succession at the helm of state is generally respected and accepted by the population. The armed forces in these countries are often led by members of the ruling family or by officers who come from tribes loyal to them, as is the case in Jordan. Finally, foreign powers are not interested in a regime change in any of these countries. In the case of Gulf countries or Jordan, it is quite likely that the US, in particular, would resist such change as demonstrated in its military intervention against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and opposition to Syria's threat to Jordan in 1970. The two monarchies in Jordan and Morocco have shown much acumen in managing domestic conflict, offering concessions at the right time to dissipate tension and direct discontent to the government rather than to the ruling family.

Failure of the transitional governments in all four countries to offer security, stability, economic growth or social justice to their citizens, and the continued bloody conflict in Syria with its heavy human cost probably helped to contain the contagious effect of the so-called 'Arab Spring' to these six countries. This failure in itself does not make these other countries immune from rising demands of their citizens to meaningful political participation or clean government. The future will prove the impossibility of combining far-reaching social modernization with archaic political structures.

Note

1 It is this autonomy of the armed forces in Egypt that allowed the military to play a decisive political role following the election of a Muslim Brother president in July 2012, first by attempting to mediate between Dr Mohammed Morsi and the liberal opposition in November 2012, and then siding with the popular revolt against him on 30 June 2013 and removing him from the presidency three days later.

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Part II

The 'Travel' of Revolution

From Tunis to Sanaa

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6

Interpreting the Tunisian Revolution

Beyond Bou'azizi

Amor Boubakri

Introduction

On 17 December 2010 a young jobless man from a remote Tunisian town, Sidi Bouzid, set fire to his body to protest against the lack of social justice and the corruption of the government. This hopeless act of protest triggered the Tunisian Revolution that defeated one of the most long-lasting dictatorships in the Arab region and has led to a deep political reform in Tunisia since 14 January 2011. A genuine understanding of the Tunisian Revolution needs to go beyond the course of events and consider the long history of the struggle for political reforms in Tunisia.

Actually, Tunisia experienced the first modernization attempts under the rule of Hammouda Pacha from 1782 to 1815. Some governmental institutions were established for the first time, illustrating, as such, the entity of the modern Tunisian state. Thus, some ministries and state offices, such as for diplomacy, were set up. Nevertheless, the idea of reforming the governing system sprang only later from a group of people directly related to the ruling circles. Among the elite icons one could mention Hayreddin Pacha, Ahmad Ibn Abi Diyaf and Mohamed Bairem V (Y. Ben Achour 1980: 290–295).

The Tunisian elite of the 19th century had, mainly, shown an interest in the constitution. This reformist trend reflects the influence of reform ideas that had spread in Turkey and Egypt during the 19th century, aiming to help those countries to rise out of obscurantism and backwardness and face challenges imposed then by the new European powers on the Islamic world.

Therefore, the Tunisian elite took part together with elites from Arab and Muslim countries in reforming those nations which appeared very weak compared to the rising European nations. This came as a result of the relations between those elites because of their constant mobility. Hayreddin Pacha, for instance, regularly visited Istanbul, while Ahmed Fares Al-Chadiaq lived in Tunis between 1847 and 1859 and was in direct contact with the reformist elite, including Hayreddin Pacha (Al-Matoui 1989: 125–146). Ahmad Ibn Abi Diyaf had also met the Egyptian reformist Rifa'a al-Tahtawi in Paris.

This was a contributing factor in the spread and circulation of reformist ideas among the Tunisian elite, which was obviously influenced by what was happening in the rest of the Arab and Muslim world.

The Tunisian elite, however, was not solely in touch with the Arab and Islamic East. It was in close touch with Europe, too. The recurrent and often long visits helped grasp an idea about the renaissance of European nations and the level of scientific, technological and economic progress they achieved while Tunisia was witnessing a state of total retardation similar to all other Arab and Muslim countries. Among the famous visits was the one carried out by Ahmad Bey (who ruled Tunisia from 1837 to 1855) to France in response to an invitation from King Louis Philip. He was accompanied by some of his advisers, such as Ahmad Ibn Abi Diyaf and Hayreddin Pacha. In his well-known work *Elithaf*, Ahmad Ibn Abi Diyaf spoke extensively about that visit and the Bey's fascination with the progress France had then achieved then (Ibn Abi Diyaf, 1990).

It can be said that the fascination by the progress Western civilization had achieved was a feature shared by all Tunisian and non-Tunisian reformists during the 19th century. This was obvious, for instance, in *Paris Profile*, written by Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi (Al-Tahtawi, 1991). This fascination was accompanied by a deep awareness of the backwardness of the Tunisian society in terms of bridging the gap to modernism and civilization. Therefore, reformists agreed on the necessity of imitating the West in all the necessary steps to achieve progress in Tunisian society and to get rid of the conservative ideas refusing all that came from outside the Muslim world (Ben Hammed 2010: 199–251).

The Reformist leaders considered that one of the main reasons for the progress of the West was the management of government in a rational way. Tunisia needed, thus, to reach the same goal: to set up of a rule of law that could reduce abuse and help state institutions perform better and bring about welfare to all.

Therefore, Hayreddin Pacha (also called Khair al-Din al-Tunsi), in his book *Aqwam al-masalik li ma'rifat al-mammilk* [*The Surest Path to Knowledge the Condition of Countries*], issued in 1867, called for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and modern institutions that could help Tunisian society prosper economically and socially (al-Din al-Tunsi 1998: 81–85). He strove hard to persuade religious leaders to support the reforms given their great influence on all sectors of Tunisian society (Green 1978: 103–128).

Ahmed Bey tried to introduce some reforms aiming to modernize the Tunisian state in a way similar to his predecessor Hammuda Pacha and in order to respond to the aspirations of the Tunisian elite. But he went too fast in implementing formal reforms because of his fascination with what he saw in his visit to France. As a result, his reforms did not bring the expected results (Brown 1974).

Nonetheless, reform efforts did not stop after Ahmed Bey. Those who believed in reform continued. This coincided with pressures exercised by France and Britain on the Bey to accept reforms guaranteeing the respect of the rights of the European community residing in Tunisia. For this reason, Mohamed Bey issued the Fundamental Pact (*A'hd al-Aman*) in 1857 which involved equal rights for all individuals regardless of their religion.

The Fundamental Pact can be regarded as a sort of declaration of rights similar to the ones in Europe and America, in particular during the 17th and 18th centuries. It contained the same principles brought by the '*Tanzimet*' in Turkey and more precisely the '*Khati Hamayon*' issued in 1856.

After the Fundamental Pact, Mohamed Sadok Bey issued the 1861 constitution which is now regarded as the first written constitution in the Arab and Muslim worlds. In this constitution, the Bey agreed on a relative restriction on his powers by establishing a constitutional monarchy. The constitution created the Great Council, which was a sort of parliamentary body able to endorse laws and evict the Bey (Jegham 1989: 63–91). The representativeness of the Great Council, however, was very weak because all its members were appointed by the Bey himself.

Despite the important improvements contained in the 1861 constitution compared to the Fundamental Pact, it was limited in value. Actually, the Bey decided to suspend the constitution following the uprising of the western parts of the country led by Ali Ben Ghedhahim against the Bey's rule. The uprising was triggered by the decision to double taxes despite the appalling living conditions of people of these regions (Zghal 1970: 144–150).

This popular uprising showed the gap which separated the élite from the ordinary people who were not interested in these constitutional reforms. On the contrary, these reforms were generally resisted because they reflected, in their eyes, the Bey's submission to the claims of the Western powers and did not spring from a real desire to reform the political regime. This regime was hold responsible for the injustice, oppression and corruption that generated the social and political collapse of Tunisia.

This situation led Sadok Bey to hand over Tunisia to the French protectorate following the signature of the Bardo Treaty on 12 May 1881. This was the period when the Bey's role in political life started to recede while the national liberation movement had emerged as a new political and social actor.

Nationalism and reformism

Despite the failure of the reform attempts which took place in the second half of the 19th century, the Tunisian elite had continued to believe in the necessity of building a new constitutional system that could end absolute power. The reformist ideas were supported by Tunisian nationalists opposed to the French protectorate, while they were limited, previously, to the confined circles of the Bey, which consisted of a group of *Mamlouks* who were cut off from Tunisian society. The reformism had become, therefore, close to Tunisian people and expressed their aspiration for liberation.

Ever since its birth, the Tunisian Nationalist Movement adopted liberal and democratic principles in its struggle against French occupation. In such a manner, the constitutional thought was embedded in the Tunisian soil and started to express a national tone, while in the 19th century it lacked the patriotic symbolism and sounded as if it had been a result of foreign incursion rather than a struggle for the democracy (Jegham 1989: 63–91).

Actually, the democratic and liberal principles were so rooted in the minds of National Liberation leaders that the major Tunisian party held the name of the Tunisian Liberal Constitutionalist Party (the *Destour*). The *Destour* was founded in 1920 and was led by Cheikh Abdelaziz Thaalbi (1876–1944), who was one of the most important Tunisian militants for parliamentary monarchy in Tunisia.

Initially, the Tunisian Nationalist Movement pleaded for the implementation of basic political reforms and return to the 1861 constitution. The movement considered that the establishment of the French protectorate following the 1881 treaty was not in

contradiction with a reimplementation of the 1861 constitution (R. Ben Achour 2009: 96). The *Destour* called for a legislative council representing Tunisians, with a power to control the governmental action and separation of powers (Thaâlbi 1985; Mnasria 1988: 56–62).

With the emergence of a new group of young patriotic leaders such as Habib Bourguiba, the New *Destour* was created and adopted a new strategy of dealing with the French protectorate that clearly claimed for independence and not simply political reforms (Dhaouadi 1982). Thus, the New *Destour* turned the struggle against the French Protectorate from an elite fight to a popular fight. The liberal and democratic ideals became widespread among common Tunisians who cherished the dream of independence from France and the right for self-determination through representative organizations elected by people. The French protectorate faced those claims with oppression. This is what happened on 9 April 1938 when many protesters in the capital marched in the street asking for a constitution, a Tunisian parliament and a patriotic government. It is now celebrated as the Martyrs' Day after independence. Therefore, the struggle for political rights became loaded with anti-French colonization feelings as it was a basic claim adopted by the Nationalist Movement in its defence of the Tunisian people's interests.

The Nationalist Movement claimed a new constitution for Tunisia that fits in with the new social and political reality. In doing so, they abandoned the 1861 constitution, which no longer answered the expectations of the Nationalist Movement. Therefore, from the day it was founded, the New *Destour* party asked for a constitution that paved the way for a democratic government. This happened basically in its meeting on 10 June 1936 and during its second congress held on 29 October 1937. The New *Destour* then issued a 'Chart of General Principles for The Tunisian Constitution' on 10 June 1949, which consisted of a set of political claims submitted to the Bey and particularly involving the election of a national constitutional assembly that would draft a new constitution for Tunisia (Amor 1986).

The political claims of the National Movement were strong and were primarily meant to enable the Tunisian people to build the institutions that would support sovereign rule and put an end to the French protectorate. As a result, the objectives of the Reformist movement shifted from the attempt to reform the governing system in order to reduce oppression and despotism to the establishment of government based on the people's will. This shift was due to the emergence of a new young élite influenced by modern democratic thought.

The new Tunisian elites were actually very familiar with democratic thought. A number of militants went to France by the beginning of the 20th century for studies at French universities, especially the faculty of law in Paris where Habib Bourguiba and some of his comrades studied (Youssef 2006).

This period was also featured by a relapse of the position of the Bey's status, whose powers gradually shrank as a result of the French colonial authorities. This political decline had weakened the social class supporting the Bey, which essentially consisted of the *Mamlouks* and aristocrats. The Nationalist Movement, on the other hand, turned to popular masses, which started to become an important actor in social and political life. Trade unions were created, especially the Tunisian General Union of Labour led by Farhat Hached, founded on 20 January 1946. New and efficient forms of struggle against French colonialism then emerged. This included labour strikes and popular protests which were very efficient in the fight for independence.

These struggles were crowned by the 3 June 1955 Agreements that allow Tunisians a form of independent authority and which were known as the Internal Autonomy Agreements. At the same time, the Bey agreed on the election of a national constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

Post-colonial governments: Hopes and disenchantments

With the 1955 Internal Autonomy Agreements, Tunisia partly recovered its sovereignty. The Bey thus issued a decree on 29 December 1955 providing the elections of a national constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The elections held on 25 March 1956, just few days after the declaration of Independence on 20 March 1956, allowed Tunisian people for the first time to express their will on a wide scale. However, universal suffrage was not guaranteed in these elections given that women were not able to vote (Bouguerra 2011).

The National Constituent Assembly (NCA) held its first session on 9 April 1956, which coincided with the 18th anniversary of 9 April 1938 events, the Martyrs' Day. Habib Bourguiba was elected president of the NCA. It was obvious from this first session that the new political elite, strong enough with its militant legitimacy against French colonialism, favoured a modern political system based on the people's sovereignty and doing away with the archaic monarchy. After being elected president of the NCA, Habib Bourguiba said in a speech where he spoke to NCA members: 'You are gathering here by the will of the people … sovereignty in Tunisia is the people's sovereignty and the people are the real source of legitimacy' (National Constituent Assembly 1956: 3). This was confirmed by the NCA decision to withdraw the constitutional monarchy project and to declare Tunisia a Republic on 25 July 1957 before adopting the constitution.

The abolition of the monarchy was a result of social and political changes that Tunisia had known ever since World War II. These changes gave more legitimacy to people as a source of power. Thus, the way was paved for the abolition of monarchy and declaration of the Republic. Furthermore, the Bey accepted the NCA decision without showing any refusal or resistance (Amor 1986: 31–32).

After abolishing the monarchy, the NCA turned to drafting a modern republican constitution, adopted on 1 June 1959. It outlined people's sovereignty and admitted that people are the source of sovereignty and that they exercise it through parliamentary representation illustrated by 'the Nation's Assembly', renamed 'the Assembly of Representatives' beginning in 1981. The right to vote and candidature to all positions including presidency of the state became accessible to all citizens regardless of their gender. However, religious equality was not complete because it was stipulated that the candidate for presidency must be Muslim. The constitution also provided for basic human rights and the foundations of a civic governing system. The political system, on the other hand, was based on the separation of powers and was influenced by the American presidential system. Thus, the president was elected by universal suffrage and had the entire executive authority.

The 1 June 1959 Constitution to a large extent reflected Habib Bourguiba's belief in a strong executive authority to face security challenges during the first years of independence. Furthermore, the building of a modern state with strong institutions and the improvement of the social and economic conditions of Tunisia were top priorities for

Bourguiba. All of this required a presidential model of government rather than a parliamentary one to ensure the necessary means to handle this task.

Besides, the 1959 constitution established the basis for a modern democratic system based on people's sovereignty, the separation of powers and fundamental human rights. These principles had been inspiring the Tunisian Reformist Movement during the decades since the 19th century. The impact of modern constitutional experiences was obvious since the constitution makers learned from the constitutions of the most important democratic experiences available then, mainly the constitution of the Fifth French Republic issued on 4 October 1958 and the US Constitution issued on 17 September 1787 (Tunisian Association of Constitutional Law 1986).

However, post-colonial political practice did not fit with the requirement of the 1959 constitution, which did not produce the expected results and did not generate a significant political development. All constitutional principles were disabled because of the despotic propensity of Habib Bourguiba's rule ever since he was appointed first president of the Republic by the NCA on 25 July 1957, and then elected by general suffrage in December 1959.

The regime verged towards an oppressive one-party system ruled by one man, who named himself '*Al-Mujahed Al-Akbar*': the Supreme Combatant. Furthermore, the New Liberal Constitutional Party that led the fight against French colonialism, for the purpose of constitutional rights, turned into an instrument of domination, monopolized all state institutions and wiped out all types of oppositions.

Freedoms and rights such as the freedom of speech and press, of association and political parties were all systematically violated. Activists were constantly trialled and justice had been used to tyrannize political opponents since the early years of independence. In 1968, the State Security Court was created to repress the protests carried out by the leftist movements at the University of Tunis. Furthermore, political activists and opposition leaders suffered from torture and ill-treatment (Camau and Geisser 2003).

The oppressive propensity peaked when the Republican regime was suspended and President Habib Bourguiba was announced president for life on 1 June 1975. This paved the way for the consolidation of an oligarchic system aggravated by the total lack of balance between the three powers. The repercussions of this decision were enormous both on the government and society as it created a state of high political and social tension. Actually, all political horizons were blocked and the regime was in a bubble. This situation caused a total inability to cope with people's expectations and the new elites' desire to participate in political life and build a new modern system based on democratic institutions.

On the other hand, the decision to assign Habib Bourguiba presidency for life created an atmosphere of an unscrupulous competition within the regime because of his deteriorating state of health which prevented him from exercising his job in the last presidential term. This created anarchy within the government and coincided with sharp social crises illustrated by the general strike announced by the UGTT on 26 January 1978, the bread uprising of 3 January 1984 which led to the loss of many lives following the outbreak of many demonstrations and peaceful protests.

Within a context of degenerating political, social and economic conditions, Zinelabedine Bin Ali managed to evict Habib Bourguiba on 7 November 1987 based on a medical report that proved his inability to undertake his duties as a president. Being a prime minister, he took power with reference to Article 57 of the 1959 constitution

which states that 'If the position of the President becomes vacant because of death or resignation or total disability, the prime minister shall immediately take office for the remaining period of the parliamentary term.'

Shortly after taking office, Bin Ali amended Article 57 of the constitution on 25 July 1988, which meant that the prime minister can no longer automatically inherit the presidency of the Republic, as was the case with Habib Bourguiba. All the post-1959 constitution amendments came to reinforce authoritarian government where the prerogatives of the executive, especially those of the president of the Republic, had the upper hand regarding parliament and the judiciary. This, of course, was enhanced by three decades of despotism which shaped the Habib Bourguiba's ruling period.

On the political level, Bin Ali's period was characterized by cosmetic changes to ensure the continuation of the same despotic regime and the one-party domination on political life coupled by a tight grip on rights and freedoms. Those cosmetic changes consisted of authorizing some political parties after a prohibition which dates to 1963. Similarly, the opposition entered parliament starting from 1994 and consolidated its presence in the elections of 1999, 2004 and 2009 (Boubakri 2011). But this did not affect the nature of the regime, which remained basically authoritarian.

It was proved later on that most parties which benefited from this policy were in favour of the regime. Their role was, actually, confined within the limits of providing false democratic legitimacy to the regime which went on crushing the real opposition involving democratic, liberal and leftist groups and Islamist movements. For the opposition, winning a seat in Parliament required obedience to the ruling party, the Constitutionalist Democratic Rally (RCD), and a reluctance to accept any criticism of the regime and its policies. This shows a total absence of any readiness to accept the rules of democracy based on respect of the rule of law and basic human rights (Lamloum and Ravanel 1999–2000).

The Bin Ali regime accelerated oppression of Islamists, human rights activists and the opposition. The police were used in order to preserve one single party in power. This was worsened by widespread corruption within the ruling class and other associated groups, resulting in social and political tension because of the degeneration of the political system, which could not meet the expectations of large segments of the Tunisian people, especially the young who were jobless and short on hope (Hibou 2006). For all of these reasons, the revolution was triggered from the marginalized regions of Tunisia and Bin Ali was dethroned on 14 January 2011.

The revolution: Revenge of the oppressed and marginalized people

To focus exclusively on the recent events in Tunisia, we can say that serious challenges to Bin Ali's regime had started at least since 1998. Indeed, during its entire rule, Bin Ali had only benefited from a short respite, mainly from 1992 to 1996. During this period, the dictatorship had reached critical levels, and those who had the courage to defy the authoritarian regime were rare. Civil society and political opposition were mercilessly oppressed. A huge number of militants of all sensibilities were jailed after unfair trials and torture and other abuses were rife. All of these violations have been regularly reported by Amnesty International and other human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Amnesty International 1993).

The year 1998 was the beginning of the first break of silence when some militants decided to create the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (NCLT), a national

NGO that had never been recognized by the regime. Some interesting reports issued by the NCLT on human rights situation in Tunisia had had a great impact upon activists and opened the way to more challenging actions against the dictatorship.

One of the most important and courageous acts of civil resistance was, definitely, the hunger strike carried out by the journalist Taoufik Ben Brik, who was deprived of his passport for his criticism of the regime. The strike received wide media attention, among the French media and Al Jazeera. Hunger strikes have become, ever since, widely used as a civil resistance technique by activists. Bin Ali's regime was frankly and openly criticized by the Tunisian elite, mainly human rights activists and opponents.

The main pressure that Bin Ali faced during 1999 to 2001 had showed the weakness of his regime and the limits of the dictatorship before the new mass media and internet, as well as NGOs. Bin Ali himself had publicly admitted to being involved in corruption and human rights violations. However, the 11 September 2001 events were an opportunity that had reinvigorated the authoritarian regime. The 'war against terrorism' had offered an opportunity that Bin Ali seized perfectly to return to his atrocious methods of repression without risking any criticism from international opinion, which as absorbed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the meantime, the regime's tyrannical repression worsened. Corruption became a widespread practice, mainly among Bin Ali's own family, and human rights violations and repression reached unprecedented levels. Bin Ali's technique of dominating society consisted of manipulating national and international opinion with a false adhesion to democracy. He created *de façade* political opposition that supported him all the time, while the real opposition was cruelly oppressed. At the beginning of his era (1987–1992), Bin Ali tried, maliciously, to divide the opposition mainly by isolating the Islamist movement (the Al-Nahdha Party). After his brutal crushing of Al-Nahdha, he continued to oppress all secular parties criticizing his regime.

The brutal oppression of Bin Ali's regime forced Islamists and secular militants to cooperate and unify their means in the struggle against dictatorship. Consequently, the different political sensibilities and trends have learned and managed to work together with mutual respect and tolerance. It is rare, indeed, to see in the Arab region secular political parties accept Islamist movement and to see Islamists and Communists fighting together in a unified front against dictatorship. This occurred mainly within the 18 October 2005 movement when leftist and Islamist leaders carried out a hunger strike to protest against the regime.

The seeds of a genuine democratic and peaceful coexistence between future democratic actors have already been sown unconsciously by Bin Ali himself. In other words, the ingredients for a constructive political life are there and have already existed in Tunisian society. Bin Ali had aimed to create a total vacuum to avoid any alternative rule except his own one. The plan has, obviously, failed thanks to the sacrifices made by the Tunisian elite and militants.

Dynamism among the Tunisian opposition has become more consistent and its action more challenging towards the dictatorship after the break caused by the 11 September events. Civil society has also become more audacious. The right to association have been gained *de facto* against the regime's will. A substantial number of local human rights NGOs have been created and have acted without obtaining legal status. Furthermore, these NGOs have acted enthusiastically and efficiently despite strict control and oppression. The revival of civil society and the opposition during the last six years could explain the fact that Bin Ali's regime had constantly been subject to

high pressure from international human rights NGOs. The good positions of some Tunisian militants within these international NGOs have been very beneficial for the resistance.

In addition, the important role of professional organizations in Tunisia should also be taken into account. In the first line of the resistance, we find mainly UGTT, which is the unique workers' union in Tunisia that represents all professional categories except liberal professions. UGTT was created in 1945 and has always played an important role in modern Tunisia. It has fought for social justice and defended the material and moral interests of all categories of workers without exception.

The most important role assumed by UGTT has been the promotion and protection of the middle class, the real driver of political change and reform in modern Tunisia. In addition to its social role, UGTT has influenced the political scene. On the one hand, it occasionally had a direct political role in the elections. On the other hand, UGTT has also been during its long history a refuge for opponents who have not been allowed to act freely. During the last few years before Bin Ali's fall, UGTT has witnessed dynamism and protestations reflecting a deep crisis in Tunisian society, as well as anger with Bin Ali's regime.

In addition to UGTT, it is worth mentioning the role of some other professional categories during the last few years, such as journalists and judges. Lawyers have mainly had a decisive role in the resistance against dictatorship. The Tunisian Bar Association has been an open challenger to Bin Ali. During the last few days of the dictatorship, lawyers, with their professional dress, have been seen in the streets demonstrating with ordinary people.

It is worth mentioning that the Tunisian revolution has some clear precursor signs. Precisely, the events of the Mineral Basin region (south-west of Tunisia) in June 2008 had clearly announced this revolution. During these events Bin Ali was defied, for the first time, by a population who had openly protested against corruption and lack of social justice. Since then, Bin Ali's regime has, increasingly, faced protestations in several regions with similar claims: end corruption and social justice.

Thus, the Tunisian revolution against dictatorship is, basically, a result of an interesting dynamism within Tunisian society during the last few years. Political parties, NGOs and other actors have played a decisive role in ending Bin Ali's dictatorship. All social categories, regions and political movements have contributed to this revolution. The Tunisian revolution has succeeded at a time when the Tunisian people and its élite have decided to heroically resist Bin Ali's tyranny. Yet, at the origin of this revolution was the tragic self-immolation of a young jobless man. However, the martyrs were, basically, militants from the workers' union and other social categories, including one professor from the university. The struggle against dictatorship had, actually, unified all of these actors.

The 14 January 2011 revolution was, actually, the immediate result of Bin Ali's authoritarianism and the culmination of a long political and social struggle against exclusion and marginalization. It was also intended to allow all segments of the Tunisian people to actively participate in political life and to achieve social justice. These struggles went on for decades since independence and all political families took part in these struggles.

Given the wide gap between Bin Ali's regime and the aspirations of the Tunisian people, the call for abrogating the 1959 constitution and a draft of a new constitution was among the strongest claims of the revolution. Most political and social

powers representing the revolution were unanimous on that claim. These forces were represented through the Council of Protection of the Revolution (Houki 2012). However, the intention of the first transitional government formed after Bin Ali's fall was to make some constitutional reforms and preserve the 1959 constitution (Sarsar 2012).

A temporary vacancy in the Presidency of the Republic was first announced with reference to Article 56 of the 1959 Constitution, which states that 'Should the President of the Republic fail, temporarily, to assume his duty, he can delegate, by Decree, his authorities to the Prime Minister but cannot dissolve the Parliament.' Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi took charge of the presidency on 14 January 2011 with respect to these constitutional provisions. But the revolutionary forces were not convinced of this measure for multiple reasons: first, the criteria for applying Article 56 were not available because Bin Ali left Tunisia under angry popular protests and did not issue a decree to delegate his powers to the prime minister.

Most importantly, the prime minister's decision to take charge of the presidency met with fierce resistance from the revolutionary forces, who considered that the above mentioned decision meant that Ben Ali could go back to office. The decision was then abandoned under pressure from people marching in the street and Article 57, referring to ultimate vacancy in the post of the president of the Republic, was applied. The article stated that:

> In the case of a vacancy in the post of President of the Republic because of death or resign or total disability, the Constitutional Council will immediately meet and confirm the ultimate vacancy by an absolute majority vote of its members then inform the President of Assembly of Consultants together with the President of the Assembly of representatives who will take immediately temporarily in charge the post of President for a period ranging between 45 days at least and 60 days at most.

Thus, on the basis of Article 57 of the 1959 constitution, Foued Elmbazzaa, as a president of the Assembly of Representatives, was declared an interim president (Y. Ben Achour 2012; Ben Mrad 2012).

Actually, the purpose was not only to dethrone the head of the system but to put an end to the whole system, which is perceived as responsible for all the wretched problems Tunisia has suffered from, namely marginalization, exclusion, despotism and the abuse of people's rights and dignity. Therefore, the revolutionary forces maintained their pressure on both transitional governments through sittings in Al-Kasbah Square, the headquarter of the government, until Parliament was dissolved and the 1959 constitution was abrogated and a National Constituent Assembly was elected to draft a new constitution.

Conclusion

The Tunisian Revolution paved the way for a new era that could lead to a democratic political regime based on the will of the people, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Although the process is still on the move, its framework is well defined by the principles the revolution. It sounds clear today that Tunisia is on its way to drafting a democratic constitution based on real separation of powers and balance between them.

This constitution should guarantee respect of people's rights and liberties and provide the necessary measures to prevent a recurrence of previous dangerous abuses (Boubakri 2012).

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7

The Roots of the Tunisian Revolution

Elements of a Political Sociology

Sami Zemni

Introduction

The far-reaching transformations that the Arab world has witnessed since the end of the year 2010 offer us an opportunity to reflect on political change in a region where politics had been largely reduced to the longevity of authoritarianism and the spectre of Islamist politics. While it is questionable that the main task of social and political sciences is to 'predict' events, it is reasonable to state that the energy and resources used to explain the durability of authoritarian rule in the region have led to a misjudging of the forces of change in the region. That is not to say that numerous academics and observers did not produce useful knowledge on Arab politics, but that the predominant scientific paradigm of authoritarianism was ill equipped to grasp the nature of the events. The starting point of the Arab Spring, Tunisia, came as an especially big surprise. The Tunisian authoritarian regime seemed particularly well entrenched and resilient (Murphy 1999; Brownlee 2007). The country benefitted from a rather positive image abroad as a reformist, 'moderate' and pro-Western state. While the country did not have to confront the same levels of poverty as some of its neighbours, it could present more than decent growth rates. Presenting itself as the country of the 'middle classes', Tunisia boasted about the efficiency of its educational system and the efficacy of its enlightened political elite led by its 'visionary' president, Zine al-Abidine Bin Ali (Beau and Tuquoi 2002). In short, Tunisia wasn't the most conspicuous candidate for a popular national revolution.

By returning to the Tunisian revolutionary process, I want to shed light on the contingencies of the lived revolutionary experiences of the different social groups and classes that made up 'the Tunisian people' who rose against Bin Ali. My goal is not to rewrite the Tunisian revolutionary events as to construe it as an ex-post inevitability or, as Charles Kurzman stated in relation to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, to fall into the trap of '*the mirage of retroactive probability*' (cited in Hmed and Raillard 2012: 32). Rather, I see the events that started with Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Sidi

Bouzid and culminated in Bin Ali's escape to Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011 as a phase of accelerated political activity in which different types of political opposition and forms of resistance coalesced in a momentous alliance against Bin Ali and 'his regime' (Zemni et al 2013). I contend that the largely spontaneous mobilizations of youngsters in the economically marginalized areas of central Tunisia gradually politicized, turning a localized socio-economic mobilization into a national revolution. This was made possible by the connecting of different types of mobilizations (carried out by different social groups and classes) through mainly contingent factors.

However, the emergence of 'the people' within this revolutionary episode as a more or less united mass actor was only possible through an interpenetration of past and present political and economic struggles, or as Ayeb (2011: 475) states, as a 'cumulative process of learning and resistance', which constituted the social base for a political bloc of various subaltern classes. While different forms of mobilization, carried out by different social groups and classes—each with specific interests and dissimilar political imaginaries—collaborated to topple the hated leader; it is impossible to separate these events from their historical, economic and social context.

Just as Bouazizi's martyrdom was not the start of the revolution, just as much was Bin Ali's escape to Saudi Arabia not the end of the revolutionary process. On the contrary, the revolution is still going on. The first phase of liberation (the overthrow of the old regime) is currently being followed by a second phase of constitution (the creation of a new political order) as Hannah Arendt (1990 [1963]) would argue. While this episode of constitution falls beyond the scope of this contribution (Zemni 2014), it is important to state that a thorough understanding of the forces that made up 'the people' during a brief period, can also enlighten us on the how and why the alliance between these different social groups and classes has gradually disaggregated after Bin Ali's departure.

Therefore, in the following contribution I will narrate the events leading to Bin Ali's disappearance by elaborating a political sociology of the different forces mobilizing against Bin Ali. The transformation of social groups and classes in Tunisia is, obviously, dependent upon the economic developmental and social models instituted by the Tunisian governments since independence. I will show how, since the late 1980s, capitalist transformations have heavily influenced social class structures and how the extreme forms of a mafia-type of crony capitalism in the late 2000s affected the relationship between the state and the different classes.

The roots of local socio-economic struggle

The Tunisian revolution did not come out of nowhere. It has a history, a genealogy. While Islamist opposition had been severely repressed and crushed by Bin Ali in the early 1990s, the first forms of hesitant opposition to his rule can be traced back to the late 1990s after the death of Habib Bourguiba, the first president of independent Tunisia. Many Tunisians were shocked to find out that the funeral of 'the father of the nation' had to be watched on French public television because the Tunisian public broadcaster chose to program animal documentaries instead. The growing dissatisfaction of parts of the population with the authoritarian rule of Bin Ali led journalist Taoufik Ben Brik to start a hunger strike to attract attention to the muzzling of the media. Lawyers voiced their displeasure with a growing control of the ruling party, the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD), on the judicial body (Gobe and

Ayari 2007) and a largely co-opted labour union leadership rallied around the plight of the Palestinians and Iraqis trying to reconnect with its history of militancy and activism (Zemni 2013).

The immediate history of the present period of struggles, however, begins in early January 2008 when the Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa (CPG) announced the results of a recruitment competition (Amroussia 2011). The region of Gafsa, a small town in the south-west of Tunisia, has been, since colonial times, dependent on the exploitation of the richness of its soil, the mining industry accounting for most of the economic life of the region. Social protest in the region, which had been recurrent, is tied to the politics of economic development that Tunisia has implemented since the late 1980s.

Like many developing world countries, in order to avoid financial bankruptcy, Tunisia turned to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in 1986. In return for loans, Tunisia agreed to implement an economic structural adjustment plan. This constituted an important break with the political economy of post-independence Tunisia. While most observers are right to state that Tunisia already started liberalizing its economy under Prime Minister Hédi Nouira in the early 1970s, after the socializing experiment of the 1960s with its nationalization of industries and collectivization of agricultural lands, the Tunisian economy largely remained protected or, as Camau and Geisser (2003: 57) state, '*autartic*'. The introduction of an adjustment plan meant a mutation in the nature of Tunisian capitalism (Gherib 2011) from a largely protected and state-controlled economy into a more globally integrated economy. This policy was further deepened by the free trade agreement that Tunisia signed with the European Union in 1996 (White 2001).

While the state-led implementation of economic liberalization was officially designed to create an open economy and a free market, it is legitimate to question to what extent the integration of Tunisia in the global market was actually possible without heavily influencing class structures or without raising poverty levels. Even more problematic was the weakness of domestic capital – largely controlled by a rent-seeking pseudo-bourgeoisie (Camau and Geisser 2003: 56) – an underperforming banking sector and a fragile middle class striving for more state protection to thwart the growing international competition.

While these problems were certainly not unknown to many observers, President Bin Ali, who came to power after a so-called 'constitutional coup' in 1987, succeeded in branding Tunisia's economic policies as a regional success story (Murphy 2013) or even as a miracle (Geyer 2003; for a critique see Hibou 1999). Cavatorta and Haugbølle (2012: 180) go further by arguing that Bin Ali created 'three distinct mythologies (economic miracle, democratic gradualism and secularism) about Tunisia that prevented a clearer understanding of the political and socio-economic situation'. The economic liberalization was indeed designed to facilitate a gradual introduction of a more democratic rule. While Bin Ali implemented some token democratic reforms – largely window-dressing operations to beguile the international community – reality on the ground was much more grim, with authoritarian rule becoming more repressive and predatory.

Emma Murphy (2012) showed very well how the international financial institutions in conjunction with Bin Ali's regime were flawed in their assessment of economic success and how the reform agenda was constantly being distorted away from the goals it was supposed to attain. The question remains, though, whether this was solely

the consequence of Bin Ali's subverting of the economic agenda or whether it was the consequence of the neoliberal plans in and of themselves? What was sure, however, as Emma Murphy (2012) argued further, is that Bin Ali wanted to create an entrepreneurial class that would be integrated in the circuits of global capital while locating himself and his (extended family) firmly within this class. What ensued was a gradual introduction of a very perverse system of crony capitalism that for many observers turned Tunisian capitalism into a mafia-like economy (Hibou 2006). Under Bourguiba the Tunisian state controlled the economy and its resources while the private sector and the labour union dealt in a corporatist manner with the intrinsic contradictions of capital accumulation. Under Bin Ali, by contrast, the private sector assisted the state in designating the economic priorities (Erdle 2010). In the end, it was Bin Ali, his wife and their extended families (Bin Ali, Tarabulsi, Chiboub, etc.) who seemed to gain the most from economic reforms. These 'owning families' as the Tunisians called them, 'had no scruples whatsoever about coveting more assets and acquiring them through any form of shady dealings, be it cash, services, theft, money, property expropriation, extortion of bribes, money laundering or drug trafficking, illegal privatization of national assets and companies, and so on' (Gana 2013: 21).

To tackle the negative effects of the reform program and to counter any form of dissent, Bin Ali legitimized his economic policies as the only possible way forward for Tunisia by incorporating redistribution and social solidarity as important elements of social cohesion. As Tsourapas (2013) brilliantly showed, Bin Ali was able to continue the post-independence narrative on the necessity of economic development but in a redistributive manner. Indeed, at least since the 1950s (but perhaps even before), the continuous insistence of Bourguiba and his Neo-Destour party on the unity and homogeneity of the Tunisian people was used to repress the question of social class divides (Gherib 2011). The interclass approach of the different Bourguiba and Bin Ali governments worked as long as inequality levels were perceived as 'normal', as long as the meritocratic ideal of social mobility through education seemed to function and as long as blatant forms of corruption – betraying *as it were* the moral economy (Sadiki 2000) that rested upon reciprocal social norms and obligations of proper economic conduct – seemed more an exception than a rule.

As most of the economic investments were concentrated in the richer coastal areas, the southern and central parts of Tunisia lagged far behind. This is not to suggest that no attention was given to these regions, but that the envisaged land tenure reforms and local economic development plans did not deliver the expected results. On the contrary; these areas became examples of uneven economic development. In the rural areas 'neoliberal economic transformation led to the retraditionalization of local politics and the resurgence of clientelism. For most peasants the new market arrangements have increased risk but not opportunity. … The bureaucratic establishment and rural notables have promoted the revival of neo-traditional political and economic behavior emphasizing reciprocal moral obligations, Islamic values, and redistributive institutions, in order to head off equity concerns raised by economic reform' (King 2003: 3). To mitigate further these concerns, Bin Ali also established institutions such as the Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS) or the Fond de Solidarité Nationale (FSN). Officially created to eradicate economic poverty – through targeting so-called poverty zones of shadow – and to create easier access to funds for small business owners, so as to foster redistributive policies, the two institutions rather functioned, as

Tsourapas (2013: 29) shows, as a way to reconfigure authoritarian rule by inventing new means of surveillance and control of the population.

Whether in the poorer suburbs of the big towns or in more rural areas of the interior of the country, social policies under Bin Ali seemed to respond to a double challenge. First, the regime, without real historic and dwindling charismatic legitimacy, wanted to create a social base that would be consenting and, second, the regime looked for efficient ways to control populations and/or neighbourhoods that it deemed dangerous. To tackle these challenges, social policies (and mainly its redistributive features) shifted from a generalized, anonymous and indiscriminate character to a personalized, individualized and thus focused approach in which Bin Ali's party, the RCD played a crucial role. This entailed a further process of 'clientel-ization' (Ben Romdhane 2011: 259) and even more forms of corruption.

The Compagnie de Phosphates de Gabes (CPG) was one of the factories that had met with substantial difficulties; largely due to mismanagement, the ensuing 'restructuration' led to loss of jobs. From over 14,000 workers in the 1980s, the CPG employed only around 5500 workers in the years 2007–2008 (Amroussia 2011). The January 2008 recruitment results of the CPG were seen by the local population as further proof that even the few jobs that remained were not really open to meritocratic competition, but were being sold to the highest bidder or given to the most loyal individuals to the ruling party through nepotism or clientelism. The announcement of the competition results by the CPG triggered a revolt throughout the whole region. The result was a five-month long popular protest movement that was only crushed by police brutality, when after aborted attempts in April and May, in June, special police and army units raided the city of Redeyef and arrested numerous militants in the whole region (Allal 2010).

Today, in the light of its consequences, this event can be seen as a trivial incident; but it nevertheless laid the basis for a movement with a broad popular character. Despite the fact that the uprising had a relatively limited regional aspect, the movement was still a popular uprising in the true sense of the word. In the towns of the region (Redeyef, Moularès, M'dhilla, etc.) workers, unemployed, civil servants, merchants, craftsmen, students and so on joined the protests.[1] Two years later, however, it was in the same region that the popular revolt started. Before the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, on 17 December, protests were already simmering for months as 'undercover' journalist Olivier Piot (2011) convincingly described how, from November 2010 onwards, the western and south-western regions of Tunisia were in a state of unrest.

The uprising goes national

Even though small protests occurred during the summer of 2010 in the southern city of Tataouine and, later on during the fall, in the region of Gafsa, it was Mohammed Bouazizi's act of despair in the centrally located town of Sidi Bouzid that spontaneously triggered a larger revolt. The same day, the family of the victim as well as militants from the trade union marched to the prefecture to express their anger. Riots ensued and for several days clashes erupted between the police and a growing number of youths identifying with Bouazizi's plight. The repression did not exhaust the manifestations and resistance as they spread throughout the region to neighbouring towns and communes such as Menzel Bouzaiane, al-Maknasi, al-Mazuna and Suq al-Jadid. The response of the regime was twofold. On the one hand, it stepped up the repression

by using lethal force, on 24 December killing two youngsters by gunfire; on the other, Bin Ali remained silent as he delayed any official statement, thus trying to minimize and downplay the insurrection. Only on 28 December did he first address the Tunisians. The promises to meet the protesters' demands he made during the televised speech and his visit at the bedside of Mohamed Bouazizi could not prevent the further politicization of the movement.

The revolutionary process that started was, in its beginnings, very spontaneous in nature, which proves its grassroots foundations. It was obvious that during this phase (oppositional) political parties, civil society organizations and even the powerful Tunisian Workers' Union (Union Génerale Tunisienne du Travail, UGTT) were unable to control the masses. However, revolts do not just randomly happen. In order to become sustainable in the face of state repression, they must be organized in some way by the grassroots agents involved. Forms of popular organization and mobilization quickly emerged in order to direct the various instances of struggle. 'The tactics of mobilization used throughout this first revolutionary situation were in large part inherited from previous protest movements and seasoned UGTT activists', as became clear throughout the thorough fieldwork carried out by Hmed and Raillard (2012: 45). Thus the local union cells played a decisive and crucial role (International Crisis Group 2011) in the revolutionary events leading to Bin Ali's departure (Yousfi 2012). Local syndical militants provided the diffuse popular uprising with a more efficient organizational structure, thus securing its sustainability over time.[2] After Mohammed Bouazizi succumbed to his wounds, on 4 January 2011, the union's activities spread over the whole of the centre region.

The response of the national UGTT leadership was all but homogenous. Having downplayed most of its political role under Bin Ali's reign, the UGTT that had grown accustomed to playing an intermediary role between the state's institutions and the workers' demands was caught by surprise. On 18 December the Executive Bureau dispatched a mission to the city of Sidi Bouzid to meet with the governor and to listen to the grievances of the people, thus making obvious what Larbi Chouikha and Vincent Geisser (2010) have called 'the two UGTTs' (i.e. the syndical dissonance as a paradoxical vehicle of the dynamics of protest). The ambivalence and carefulness of the national leadership stood in contrast to the local sections that clearly chose the side of the protesters, thus revealing the complex and multifaceted relations between the national leadership of the UGTT and its local sections and federations. This ambivalence is not new, however, and constitutes one of the recurrent features of the labour movement since Tunisia's independence.

Besides the union's activities, it was the action of neighbourhood youths that further developed the revolutionary activities throughout the country. Sociologically, these youths constituted a very 'heterogeneous category simultaneously including young college graduates, unemployed individuals with no qualifications, and those with precarious jobs as well as temporary and non-status workers' (Hmed and Raillard 2012: 35). While the union seemed to be in charge of largely non-violent demonstrations, sit-ins and other types of protests during the day, the youth took over during the night turning the streets and neighbourhoods into places of confrontation with the authorities. More importantly, 'this local revolutionary process can be understood as linking, in a largely unintentional manner, the actions of political activists and local union members with the collective rioting of neighborhoods, where the young people itching for a fight finally confronted the police' (Hmed and Raillard 2012: 38).

As the protest spread throughout the countryside, lawyers played an important role in attracting attention to the uprising in Tunis and in gradually mobilizing the urban lower and middle classes. Since 2000 the National Organization of Lawyers has functioned as one of the few strongholds of opposition to Bin Ali (Gobe and Ayari 2007). Members of the bar organized a series of demonstrations in big cities such as Tunis, Sousse, Monastir, Jendouba and Gafsa on 31 December. A week later, on 6 January, they went on strike. In the meanwhile, the start of the new school semester after the New Year's holidays amplified the protests as students and pupils also went on strike. The protests grew further in intensity when, in cities such as Kasserine, Thala and Feriana, state symbols of power (police stations, party cells, etc.) were attacked and ransacked, prompting ruthless retaliation and repression by the authorities. Police repression in Kasserine and Thala caused several casualties,[3] and witnesses reported that snipers were firing randomly on the crowd.

In the poorer neighbourhoods of the big coastal cities – for example, Hay Ettadhamen in Tunis and Le Kram between La Goulette and Carthage – local youths emulated the tactics of the youth from the interior. Meetings were held in local cafés during the daytime to discuss tactics and weaponry (Molotov cocktails, burning tyres, etc.) that would be used during the night in clashes with the police and party militias. The police and other security agencies had trouble in dealing with so many places of riot and protest as the people mobilized throughout the whole of the country.

Many, but certainly not all of these youngsters were unemployed university graduates. The neoliberal policies implemented by the different Bin Ali governments led to a general decline in wages, growing job insecurity and increasing unemployment. Unemployment especially hit the youth in general and the graduates of higher education more particularly. A World Bank report of 2008 estimated youth unemployment at 30 per cent, reaching nearly 45 per cent for university graduates. These figures were the result of deteriorating economic conditions after the international financial crisis broke out; but they were also the consequence of poorly conceived educational reforms. Tunisia invested massively in increasing the number of people attending university. This focus on quantity, according to many university members, led to a rapid dwindling of the quality of the education and a growing mismatch between educational degrees and a job market unable to create enough employment. The private sector was unable to absorb the bulk of this skilled labour force while the Tunisian state, under the conditions of economic reform programs, was able to employ only a minority of these jobseekers. 'The sense of hopelessness and despair experienced by unemployed graduates fuelled massive resentment towards a government that raised their expectations but failed to generate jobs that would enable them to realize their aspirations … These disillusioned young men and women became the main actors in the Tunisian Revolution' (Honwana 2013: 65).

The growing connections and links between the interior of the country and the coastal cities meant that not only a geographical distance was bridged but class divides were also (temporarily) overcome. One of the elements that played an important role in turning the uprising into a national revolution was the use of multiple forms of media. Facebook 'alone was not adequate in facilitating mobilization … the significance of media in facilitating the movement in Tunisia was not situated in social media networks, but in a hybrid network where social media, big media (e.g. Al Jazeera), and "small media" (e.g. mobile phones, laptops, memory cards, and sneakers) converged' (Lim 2013: 9). Of course, it was not the media in and of themselves that

stimulated mass mobilizations; rather the images, ideas and narratives transmitted by the multiple forms of media of the ongoing struggle amplified the mobilizations. Importantly, the narrative of Bouazizi's death was built upon 'white lies' (Boauzizi was not beaten by a female police agent; he was not a higher education graduate) in order to make his ordeal more universal. Slogans shouted on the streets in Sidi Bouzid quickly turned from being focused on economic issues to broader themes touching upon citizenship rights. The very powerful slogan '*al-Tachgil istishaq ya isabat al-sorraq*' ('Work is a right, O you gang of thieves') – claiming work as a right for everybody while simultaneously criticizing the corruption of the elites – resonated in the streets of Sidi Bouzid even before calls were heard for '*khubz, karama, wa adala ijtimaiyya*' ('bread, dignity and social justice'). 'By framing the Bouazizi story as a death for justice, freedom, and dignity, the movement in Sidi Bouzid had built a bridge to connect with diverse social groups beyond its locale' (Lim 2013: 8).

Cyber-activists were important in sustaining mobilization throughout the country. These activists, who belonged mostly to the middle classes and were urban based, were mostly fighting for democratic rights such as freedom of expression or human rights while fighting censorship. Tunisia's internet usage is one of the highest of the African continent, some claiming that about one third of the population uses the internet (Honwana 2013: 49). What was sure, however, is that the Tunisian government (through its Internet Agency) monitored the usage of the net very closely and censored many websites. Besides, many identified bloggers were physically intimidated or even arrested. As repression in the country mounted throughout the 2000s, Tunisian internet activists very cautiously started to mobilize for more freedom. Online magazines such as *Takriz* were created as early as 1998, followed by *Perspectives Tunisiennes* and *TuniZine* in the early 2000s. More importantly, Nawaat.org was created in 2004 by Sami Ben Gharbia, a prominent blogger activist. The difficult work done during these years gave many young internet activists the opportunity to learn how to bypass governmental control. While making a difference on the streets was difficult for the activists – a planned flash mob protest on the Avenue Habib Bourguiba in May 2010 gathered only a handful Tunisians – they were very active in disseminating the news to the local population as well as the international public (helped in that by the many Tunisian diasporas throughout the world). It was the cyber activists who also contacted a secretive anonymous group to help them stage attacks on governmental websites and to publicize the WikiLeaks that dealt with Tunisia. The translation of the so-called TuniLeaks – cables of the US embassy in Tunis – by Nawaat.org into French and Arabic, further disseminated by Facebook pages, was crucial in documenting the corruption of Bin Ali and his close families.

Endgame …

On 10 January it became obvious to Bin Ali and his entourage that the situation had escalated from a local uprising to a national revolt. As the police withdrew from many cities, it was replaced by the army, which was welcomed as a liberator. It was only on the eve of 10 January that the president appeared for a second time on national television. In his speech, Bin Ali promised to create 300,000 jobs but also denounced the 'terrorist acts instigated from abroad', comparing the revolting youth with al-Qaeda operatives from abroad. These preposterous words brought the protests into a decisive phase as neither Bin Ali nor the government seemed apparently willing or able to offer

any credible solution to the situation. This pushed the protest movement into a direct and total confrontation with Bin Ali's regime.[4]

It is only from then on that the national leadership of the UGTT started fully to support the protest movement. The wait-and-see attitude of the union's national leaders seemed to become untenable while the pressure of local militants – mostly with a communist or Arab nationalist background – grew stronger. This late turn of the UGTT proved to be decisive. On 11 January the National Administrative Committee of the union recognized the right of local sections to organize (peaceful) protests and solidarity actions.[5] The section of Sfax, the second city of the country, organized a protestation on 12 January that brought – according to union estimates – more than 30,000 people to the streets. The demonstration was not only backed by the union but also by local businessmen and capitalists who were fed up with their marginalization in comparison to the entrepreneurial class of Sousse and Monastir (where the ruling families were well established). The demonstrators not only called for Bin Ali's departure but also introduced a slogan that became, from then on and until today, the rallying creed of the Arab revolt: *al-sha'ab yurid isqaat al-nidham* (the people want to bring down the regime). A day later manifestations in Kasserine, Monastir, Kairouan and Sousse repeated the slogan, while in the capital Tunis more and more people from the popular neighbourhoods as well as from the more middle class districts all converged towards the Avenue Habib Bourguiba.

In this revolutionary atmosphere, Bin Ali addressed the nation once more, on Thursday 13 January, in a historical televised speech, his last as would become clear a day later. The speech showed a tired and doubting president. Addressing the nation in the Tunisian colloquial dialect he vowed that he had 'understood' the Tunisians (*fahimtkom*) and promised jobs, food, oil, freedom and free internet. But these promises came too late: the general strike called for by the UGTT a day later, on Friday 14 January, mobilized a whole country united in its desire for change. In the afternoon, Bin Ali and his wife fled from Tunisia, seeking refuge in Saudi Arabia. What really happened on that day is still partly unknown; however, Bin Ali's departure was also triggered by a gradual disintegration of a part of the regime, a '*rupture in the oligarchy of power*', as Pierre-Robert Baduel observed.[6]

A moral economy of the revolution?

More than any direct material problem such as the high unemployment rates or the growing gap between rich and poor, between towns and countryside or between the coastal areas and the inner land; more than the direct devastating impact of the Tunisian neoliberal experiment with its uneven development and politics of dispossession is the perception of large parts of Tunisian society that Bin Ali, as head of state, its institutions and those occupying these positions had in a way betrayed the social ethic, turning the revolt into a national revolution (Beau and Graciet 2009). What clearly emerged in the revolution for dignity was a specific 'demand of state'. The image of Tunisians waving with loaves of bread on the Avenue Habib Bourguiba was mistakenly described as a demand for basic food supplies; instead, it was a message to Bin Ali that people would live only on bread and water instead of under a the mob rule of Bin Ali and his extended family. They were in it not for direct monetary reward or material compensation but for larger, albeit vague, political ideals.

The moral corruption of the regime was as important a factor as the corruption itself in understanding the revolt of the Tunisian people. This became all the more obvious

when Tunisians rejected the international, media-savvy Jasmine revolution for what they called their 'revolution for dignity'. If there was one rallying cry during this first phase of the revolutionary events, it was the demand for dignity. The slogan 'Work is a right, O you gang of thieves' shared by nearly all social classes reflects the idea that 'in a society where the state is a central actor and where there is a very strong demand of state, a demand seeking inclusion, well-being and/or protection; the "privatization" of the state' – in which a small group monopolizes the state as if it were a private object – 'was seen as a intolerable hold-up … the supreme theft is undoubtedly that of the state itself!' (Gherib 2012: 33).

The different forms of collective mobilization coalesced on just that point: that is, the idea that Bin Ali and his *nidham* had violated and betrayed the perennial contract between the rulers and ruled, between the oppressor and oppressed. Bin Ali's regime had become perceived as an authority devoid of ethics and morals perverting its task to work for the public interest; and this for nearly all social classes. The high unemployment rates of university graduates, for example, are not only an economic problem. The unemployment of well-educated youth makes the failure of the post-independence Tunisian narrative on modernization and development very clear. When access to work no longer depends on merit through education, it forcefully becomes linked to privilege and capital, to corruption and bribes.

In conclusion, the origin of the January 2011 revolution is to be found in the economically and politically marginalized areas of the country. Social protest had been recurrent and vital in the mining region of Gafsa and it is from there that the protest movement spread. The protests started out as spontaneous happenings and did not come together from a preconceived plan. The economic claims that the excluded and marginalized voiced were gradually politicized because of the attitude of the government and the unwillingness of the union's regional and national leadership to fully back the protesters. As the social movement grew in power, it also grew in its composition. The call for dignity and freedom of the Tunisian people united both liberal democratic demands for general freedoms and human rights, as well as economic demands of social justice, redistribution and equality. In the end the Tunisian revolution was supported by a very broad alliance of different social classes of Tunisian society. The combined force of workers, urban poor and marginalized, civil servants, middle classes and economic elites was strong enough to trigger Bin Ali's downfall; but it also became obvious that this alliance would confront internal disputes once the common enemy disappeared. Once Bin Ali disappeared, the different social classes and groups that rallied during the revolutionary events started defining dignity in very different ways. What Tunisia slowly and sometimes painstakingly is discovering is a conflict-ridden society.

Notes

1 There are several reasons why this mass strike in 2008 failed to become a nationwide movement. While the repression of the Bin Ali regime made it very difficult for the local activists to organize their struggle in other cities, the foremost reasons were the weakness of the (official) opposition parties, the silence of the intellectuals and, especially, the union's failure to openly support the movement.
2 The Teacher's Union (dominated by leftists and Arab nationalists) played a crucial role in politicizing the movement and confronting the regime.
3 According to the authorities, 21 people were killed between 8 and 10 January. Trade unionists and hospital personnel put the number at 'nearly 50'.

4 It can be hypothesized that this speech symbolized the end of Bin Ali's political formula. Even in Belgium where I live (and more so in Tunisia), for many (especially older) people, the speech seemed so outlandish that the wall of fear – meticulously created and sustained by the regime – fell as no one could remain silent anymore.
5 The official declaration can be found on the UGTT website and is dated 11 January (http://www.ugtt.org.tn/userfiles/file/D%C3%A9claration%20CAN%2011-01-2011.pdf). However, Sofiene Belhadj, a young Tunisian blogger and one of the cyber activists responsible for the translation and dissemination of the WikiLeaks on Tunisia, told the author that the UGTT leadership was pushed to rally the popular revolt as militants had issued numerous 'false' declarations and made Facebook pages showing the UGTT's support for the protests (interview with the author, Brussels, 14 September 2011).
6 See http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/02/10/tunisie-le-role-determinant-de-l-armee_1477640_3232.html.

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8

Tunisia's Revolution and the Domestic–International Nexus

Corinna Mullin

Introduction

On 14 January 2011, Tunisian society succeeded in gaining the upper hand in the seemingly unchangeable balance of power that was tipped for so long on the side of the repressive state, inspiring social movements across the region and even further abroad. The country-wide protests, strikes, sit-ins and occupation of public spaces that followed Mohammed Bouazizi's desperate act of self-immolation in Sidi Bouzid on 17 December, following his humiliating treatment at the hands of local officials, are credited as catalytic events. However, so too are the hundreds of 'bodies' made 'vulnerable' by their defiance, and whose deaths at the hands of state security apparatuses forced the 'legitimacy of the state [to be] brought into question.' (Butler 2011). As Lamia Farhani, one of the lawyers for the families of the 'martyrs' explained, in the days leading up to 14 January, 'it was inconceivable that Ben Ali would leave.'[1] Those who went to the streets during this period consciously chose to 'sacrifice' their freedom, and possibly their lives, believing 'they would either die or would end up in prison for a very long time'.

As dramatic and inspiring as they were, it should not be forgotten that these weeks of mobilization and resistance were preceded by years of more tedious activism, rendering the revolution's timeline much broader. This includes the decades of opposition to Bin Ali's illiberal rule by Tunisia's main Islamist political party, Al-Nahdha, which gained symbolic capital by mostly remaining outside the façade performance of pluralism that enticed many other political parties. There is also the accumulated 'cultural and critical intellectual capital' dating back, as Gana asserts, to the 'decolonial struggle against the French' (2013: 11). It also includes the formal and informal modes of resistance, from grass roots human rights, to youth and social media, activism that emerged during the 1990s and 2000s at a time of increasing repression (Chomiak 2011; Bellin 2012; Chomiak and Entelis 2012; Willis 2012; Cavatorta 2013). Additionally, in recognizing the victims of state violence employed against the Gafsa 2008 mining strikes as 'martyrs of the revolution', the transitional government acknowledged what many activists have long maintained – that trade unionists also

played an important role in laying the groundwork for the revolution (*WMC actualités* 2013).

This chapter somewhat unselfconsciously employs the term 'revolution' to describe the above events, entailing as they did a breakdown in material and symbolic forms of power linked to Bin Ali's rule, as well as to the reclaiming of public space through mass mobilization – two features often associated with revolutionary change. However, it is also aware of the controversies that arise in naming the forms and outcomes of 'contentious politics', especially in cases where there is as at least as much continuity as change (Tilly 2006). With worrying reminders that some authoritarian habits die hard, including excessive use of force by state security apparatuses, politicized trials and the manipulation of sensitive 'national security' issues for partisan ends, Tunisia appears to be one of these complicated cases (Marks 2013; Mullin 2013).

Nevertheless, as Judith Butler reminds us, just as 'there are many reasons to be suspicious of idealized moments … there are also reasons to be wary of any analysis that is fully guarded against idealization' (Butler 2011). The enormous transformations that have occurred in the period leading up to and following Bin Ali's ouster seem to warrant such idealization. Most notably are the new subjectivities, understandings of citizenship and forms of mobilization that emerged in the revolutionary context and have continued to influence state–society relations until today. These include not only a surge in political party and trade union activism but also thousands of new civil society organizations established in the post-revolution period. Such developments signify a reinvigorated public sphere in which different sectors of Tunisian society, from salafi youth to trade union activists, secular women's organizations to former political prisoners, seek to play a role in shaping the identity, institutional arrangements and policies of the post-revolution Tunisian state.

Though most analyses have focused on domestic factors, this chapter will instead examine the important international dimensions of the revolution and subsequent transition. In their demands for 'national dignity', protesters delineated a 'perceived breach in the post-colonial contract', berating the state for its failure to deliver on the economic and social promises of independence (Serres 2013). In expressing 'national dignity' grievances, Tunisian protesters also brought attention to the complex role played by the international context in contributing to their material and ideational malaise, and the alienation that came to define their experience not only with the state, but also with one another.

It is therefore vital to consider the international topography as integral to the context in which material and ideational grievances emerged and were mobilized. This includes an increasingly globalised neoliberal economic order in which dominant ideologies and practices must be understood in the 'context of capitalist market predominance and the absence of alternatives' (Wedeen 2013). Often associated with intangible and diffuse forms of power, expressed in Foucauldian terms of discipline and governmentality, this international economic order is also (re)produced through the intentional participation of tangible global liberal governance actors and institutions. It is not surprising that the latter, rather than more elusive forms of power, tended to be the focus of activists' mobilizing discourses, with protesters often directing their scorn towards International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or the (largely Western) states with whom their policies are associated. Likewise, though the 'national security state' paradigm that accompanied the infitah policies of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s entailed various forms of discursive and disciplinary power, it was largely the material manifestations of the state's coercive

power that were the focus of contentious politics. With rapidly expanding incarceration rates and the criminalization of ever-widening sectors of society, it is unsurprising that prisons and police stations were the focal point of many revolutionary mobilizations.

The perception of the West's culpability in this state of affairs was certainly not assuaged by the longstanding policy of the US and most European states to turn a blind eye to state repression in Tunisia so long as their economic and geo-strategic interests were safeguarded. Perceived Western complicity in Bin Ali's neoliberal authoritarianism was reinforced when the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Michèle Alliot-Marie offered support to Bin Ali's repressive security apparatuses to crush unrest on the eve of the dictator's ousting. In the US, it took a full month of sustained protests menaced by state violence for the Obama administration to finally acknowledge publicly what State Department officials had been quietly stating in their Annual Human Rights Report for years, and confirm in a statement made by the Tunisia's US ambassador as revealed by WikiLeaks: that Bin Ali's regime was patently corrupt and brutally repressive (Mullin 2011a).

Tunisia's uprising has often been compared in the literature to the 'colour revolutions' in its non-violent nature and the largely reformist and political nature of demands. As George Lawson has argued, the 'uprisings sit downwind' from the 'negotiated revolutions' that accompanied the end of the Cold War in 1989 in their focus on 'limit(ing) rather than extend(ing) state power' and 'because both sides of the struggle sought recourse via negotiation rather than armed conflict' (Lawson 2013). However, though liberal political concerns certainly did form a part of the grievances expressed in the Tunisian revolution, it is important to remember that more radical claims for structural social and economic change were present from the outset. That the latter justice claims have not been as effectively institutionalized in Tunisia's transition, is perhaps indicative of continuities in the constrained international context.

In light of the above, this chapter will assess the Tunisian uprising from the international perspective. Theoretically, it is guided by a view of the international as forming an integral part of the 'power and resistance' landscape in which domestic struggles unfold (Adib-Moghaddam 2013). As such, it will examine the co-constitutive relationship that emerged between exogenous and endogenous factors in shaping the context in which Tunisian protesters' grievances emerged, focusing on the economic liberalization and 'war on terror' years in particular.

The domestic–international nexus and *Infitah* polices: The origins and development of Tunisia's neoliberal governance

In the post-colonial period, the Tunisian state managed to achieve and maintain a hegemonic hold over society through what Gramsci (2003: 12) has referred to as a mixture of 'coercion' and 'consent'. As a dynamic and responsive form of power, hegemony, according to Gramsci (1971: 182), operates according to 'a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria', which 'presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised'. Upon his assumption of office in 1956, Habib Bourguiba went about implementing a political project based upon a French and Turkish inspired hyper-secularism, nationalist development and a pro-West foreign policy orientation. As Larbi Sadiki (2002) has noted, Bourguiba's strict ideology and 'patrimonial' governing style left little room for competing visions and alternative socio-economic, political or

identity projects. 'Colonial hegemony was substituted with an indigenous hegemony', which entailed the state 'banning rival centres of power'. Bouguiba's one-time confidante and fellow Neo-Destour activist Salah Ben Youssef became one of the earliest casualties of this power equation. Bourguiba's intolerance for Ben Youssef's more radical brand of nationalism, which embraced Tunisa's Arab and Islamic identities, resulted in his excommunication from the party and eventual assassination (Ben Samir 2005).

The assumption of power through a bloodless coup in 1987 of Bourguiba's former minister of national security signified a shift in the mechanisms and legitimating discourses upon which authoritarian rule in Tunisia rested. However, the changes represented by Zine Elabidine Bin Ali's governance were largely ones of style rather than substance. The new president's 'National Pact' intended to signify a political opening based on consensus between different political forces, rhetorically building upon Tunisia's historical 'reformist' and liberal trends, including the Fundamental Pact of 1857 and the 1860 constitution. Yet, as Hibou has pointed out, Bin Ali's political project was little more than an 'official discourse', expressing the myth of 'reformism', in other words 'the being and the appearance of power, what it is and what it would like people to believe that it is' (Hibou 2011: 216).

Distinguishing himself from the leadership style of his predecessor, Bin Ali sought to acquire religious legitimacy by co-opting the symbols of official Islam (Wolf 2013). The newly installed president made a point of public demonstrations of piety, having himself filmed at prayer in mosques and making the pilgrimage to Mecca. He also established a Ministry of Religious Affairs and had the call to prayer publicly broadcast. Perhaps as a result, Bin Ali's rule proved to be even more incapable of accommodating the increasingly popular Islamist opposition.

Bin Ali's 23 years in power came to be characterized by all of the social and economic pathologies associated with neoliberal authoritarianism, including excessive state violence, political repression, atomization, alienation, inequality and rampant corruption. At a structural level, it entailed 'the privatization of assets previously public, financialization and deregulation, and welfare-state retrenchment' (Wedeen 2013). Though he certainly employed disciplinary and coercive forms of power, Bin Ali's rule also depended upon the power of 'seduction'. As in other regional states that had similarly adopted quasi-liberalization policies throughout this period, this entailed the production of 'new enclaves of wealth, forms of sociability, affective connection, optimism, and pleasure' that the majority could aspire to, though only the few could actually attain (Wedeen 2013: 855).

Tunisia first began its process of economic 'opening' during Bourguiba's time in office, with the country receiving its first tranche of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans in 1984 (Paloni and Zanardi 2006). In exchange for the loans, Tunisia was prescribed the usual 'Washington Consensus' prescriptions for economic 'reform', including lowering tariffs, privatization, reduction in food and gas subsidies, focusing development strategies on the tourism industry and the creation of 'free trade zones' in which goods produced with cheap labour and exempt from taxes make their way to the European market.

The neoliberal policies adopted from the late 1980s onwards had the effect of destroying the 'social contract' implicitly agreed between the distributive, post-independence state and nationalist-minded society, in which the latter was expected to give up rights to meaningful political participation in return for generous social

provisions and the promise of national development. As would be expected, once the state violated its end of the bargain, society responded with increasing levels of resistance. Tunisia's first wave of 'bread riots' in 1984 were triggered by the government's elimination of wheat and semolina subsidies at the behest of the IMF and World Bank, resulting in an almost overnight doubling of bread prices (Prince 2011). Worker resistance increased over the next decade, as the IFI-mandated structural adjustment policies generated a range of socio-economic and rights grievances.

Though international loans were made for ostensibly economic reasons, including the pretext of plugging the gap in the budget deficit and reducing public debt, these loans had the opposite effect, increasing the country's debt 5.7 times, slowing productivity, and undermining the socio-economic well-being of the majority of the population (Paloni and Zanardi 2006). Despite promises of job creation, unemployment rose significantly from the mid-1980s onwards, with the informal sector absorbing an increasing share (65 compared 40 per cent) of new entrants into the labour market in the 1990s as compared to a decade earlier (El Gawady and El Din 2010). Factoring in regional differences and temporary employment, up to 45 per cent of the working age population in some areas of Tunisia were unemployed in the years leading up to Bin Ali's deposal (Mullin and Shashani 2012). Unemployment was particularly high (more than 30 per cent) among university graduates at the time of the revolution, demonstrating the low quality of jobs available on the market (Boughrara 2011).

In addition to the stated economic rationale, international institutions pushed neoliberal polices in countries such as Tunisia on the basis that economic liberalization would lead to political liberalization. However, in many cases these policies had the opposite effect of reproducing, rather than challenging, the power of the patently illiberal Bin Ali regime. In addition to the structural legacies of these policies, there were the less tangible effects of the 'everday practices' of neoliberalism. With its invocation of the 'language of efficiency, consumer choice, conspicuous consumption, cost-benefit calculations, and personal initiative', the commoditization of all aspects of life and the production of increasingly individualized subjectivities seemed inevitable (Wedeen 2013). These processes, which are cultural as much as political and economic, have been key to the (re)production of Tunisia's state power.

In the context of a deteriorating socio-economic landscape and diminishing workers' rights, one would have expected Tunisia's largest trade union, Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), to perform a vital function. UGTT has been considered one of the most formidable trade union organizations across the Maghreb. It played a key role in the anti-colonial struggle and periodically posed a powerful resistance to the attempts of both the state and private enterprises to limit trade union activism. Although the union was formally detached from Bin Ali's ruling Le Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique party (Constitutional Democratic Rally, or RCD) in 1988, it had been fully integrated into the state's corporatist structures through a mixture of incentives and repression from the mid-1980s on (Murphy 1999).

As Willis contends, though UGTT was initially targeted as a potential secular ally against the growing appeal of the Islamists, 'the UGTT was also kept close to the regime to avoid it becoming once more a pole around which opposition to the regime could gather' (Willis 2012). As such, the UGTT's ability to perform its civil society function as a countervailing power capable of challenging the socio-economic rights violations associated with *infitah* policies of the 1980s and 1990s, as well the increased state repression that accompanied their implementation, was severely limited. Although

the local and regional UGTT offices often demanded an independent leadership, in reality members of the RCD were present even on the union's national administrative commission and executive bureau. When the government could not control the union leadership it crushed them, arresting or removing them from office. However, its regional branches continued to resist the harmful impact of these policies on workers.

An example of the more radical activism of the UGTT's regional branches, as well as the government's hold over the union's national leadership, is the response to the strikes in the Gafsa mining region in 2008. The protests began among unemployed non-union workers and students demanding jobs in the mines. As was common in other sectors of the economy, the miners' union, together with the ruling political party, cooperated with the owner of the mine – the Gafsa Phosphate Company – to limit and control hiring practices. Protests by the unemployed erupted, supported by miners' widows and families, focusing on unemployment, the cost of living, nepotism and the unfair recruitment practices of the mining company. Local UGTT leaders supported the protests and hunger strikes which continued for months. There was little support – and often opposition from the UGTT regional and national leadership. As the protests ensued, 5 people were killed, at least 26 injured and nearly 500 people arrested, including several local leaders who were eventually prosecuted and imprisoned (Human Rights Watch 2010). The regional UGTT offices and activists would later play an important role in bringing the revolution to the capital, Tunis, employing 'protest networks' that had been established around the Gafsa mining strikes (Willis 2012: 243).

Tunisia continued to be praised for its economic growth up until Bin Ali's ousting, when gross domestic product (GDP) stood at approximately 26 billion Tunisian dinars (US$19 billion), driven by textile exports and tourism, as well as the country's formidable chemicals industry. However, Tunisia's strong economic record masked the significant disparities and structural problems discussed above, particularly the increasing levels of poverty (over 32 per cent) and regional inequality, as confirmed by a recent report revising Bin Ali-era statistics by the official National Statistics Institute (Kapitalis 2012). While much of the country's wealth was invested in the coastal areas and capital city of Tunis, the state's neglect of rural areas meant that their residents experienced poverty rates almost twice as high as in the rest of the country: the centre-west, south-west and northern regions were among the poorest (Kapitalis 2012). Loaves of bread carried by protesters were ubiquitous in the Tunisian revolution, symbolizing the growing unaffordability of basic necessities due to subsidy reductions, as well as the deleterious impact of structural adjustment policies on the country's agriculture and industry. According to Abderrahman al Hadhili, a UGTT leader involved in the Gafsa strikes, it is for these reasons that the 'Tunsian revolution should be seen largely as a call for social and economic justice.'[2]

The continued praise of US and European states for Bin Ali's 'economic miracle' also masked the ways in which these loans and policies were used to reinforce state power. In many instances, what appeared to be liberalization was rather a transfer of wealth from the state to individuals and networks of privilege linked to the state, underpinned by various enabling 'juridical arrangements'. Despite their connection to patently illiberal practices, these arrangements, which had the effect of 'legalizing' the 'distortions in openness', failed to provoke censure from the external actors responsible for promoting 'liberalization' policies (Hibou 2011: 233).

Many Tunisian activists have recognized the role of international actors and institutions in propping up Bin Ali's dictatorial regime through economic and military aid, as

well as the advocacy of economic policies that helped to reproduce state power. One of the first Tunisian organizations to make this link was the Rassembelement pour une alterantive internationale de developpment (RAID/Attac Tunisie-Rally for an International Development Alternative), which 'tapped into the symbolic resources' of the global anti/alter-globalization movement by making the connections between Tunisia's limited sovereignty and its inability to devise a nationalist economic policy. They also pointed out what they thought to be a strong connection between the liberalization policies proffered by IFIs and the persistence of authoritarianism in Tunisian (Hibou 2011: 225).

Considering the structural violence and associated rights violations entailed by the government's neoliberal 'reforms' during this period, it is not surprising that workers played a crucial role in the events leading up to the toppling of the Bin Ali regime. Despite its somewhat compromised past, activists within UGTT performed an important function in bringing about Bin Ali's downfall. This prompted Willis (2012: 244) to conclude that state repression was ultimately 'insufficient to bring the union to heel, as the rank-and-file membership and regional sections of the UGTT 'successfully revolted against the leadership imposed by Ben Ali as the revolution of 2010–11 gained ground'.

The domestic–international nexus and the 'national security state': Discursive and legal-institutional legacies of the 'war on terror'

About the only area of state funding that wasn't reduced as a result of the neoliberal reforms discussed above was that of security. At the time of the revolution, Tunisia had a 150,000-strong police force, the same size as Britain's police force, despite having a population one sixth as large. In the context of Tunisia's transformation from post-colonial distributive to national security state, no independent sector of political or civil society was completely immune from the wrath of the state security apparatuses. Tunisia's secularist opposition, including human rights activists, trade unionists and leftist politicians, experienced the travesties of a suffocated public sphere and rights violations associated with political repression. However, due to Tunisia's unique state formation process, it is has been those with Islamist leanings that have suffered if not the most brutal fate at the hands of the state repressive security apparatuses, then at least the most consistent.

Directed by the executive, the Ministry of Interior and related security apparatuses were particularly complicit in these violations and had a history of using excessive force to quell all forms of political dissent. Political repression of Islamists initially focused on established political parties, including the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI, 'Islamic Tendency Movement'), founded by the Islamist thinker and activist Rachid Ghannouchi, and its offshoot Al-Nahdha (Renaissance). Though portrayed as a violent threat during the Ben Ali years, Al-Nahdha is generally seen as adhering to a 'moderate' brand of Islamism, with movement leaders claiming to be more in the 'mold of the ruling German Christian Democratic Party (CDU) than the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood' (Gray 2013). As Hammadi Al Jebali, a former political prisoner and one of the 'pragmatists' within Al-Nahdha's leadership, explained, the movement does not seek to create and Islamic Republic, but seeks to be accepted 'just one party like the others' in Tunisia's political and social spheres (Wolf 2013: 567).

Yet the government crackdown that followed Al-Nahdha's strong showing in the 1989 parliamentary elections was relentless, with most of its leaders either imprisoned or exiled (Noyon 2003). Thousands of Al-Nahdha members were imprisoned during the Bin Ali era, mostly on charges linked to alleged acts of insurrectionist violence and conspiracy to overthrow the government (Willis 2012). However, many analysts have noted, at the very least, the 'exaggerated' nature of these allegations and the subsequent government response. The trials themselves were heavily criticised by human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, which concluded that many of those on trial were 'sentenced solely on the basis of uncorroborated confessions allegedly extracted under torture and consistently denied in court' (Willis 2012: 176).

The Ministry of Human Rights and Transitional Justice has collected approximately 12,000 dossiers of individuals affiliated with the Islamist movements, arrested and tried without due process and/or on trumped-up charges, often held for years on end and subjected to torture, including over 500 women, many of whom were also cruelly subjected to sexual violence (Mullin and Shahshahni 2012; Gray 2013). According to Murphy, the government's repression of Al-Nahdha was largely successful due to 'the combination of the scale of its assault, the weakness of the Islamists to withstand it and the latter's own tactical mistakes' (Murphy 1999: 200).

US and European reluctance to criticize Bin Ali's state violence and repression was only reinforced by events next door, in particular the 1991 Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)'s near-victory in Algeria and the increasing fears that the Islamist 'threat' might spread, challenging status quo forces across the region. The political, military and intelligence cooperation that emerged has been described by the grass-roots activist and journalist Zohair Makhlouf as the 'Bermuda Triangle of power in Maghreb, comprising the US, Tunisia and Algeria'.[3] In this context, many activists from across the secular and Islamist spectrum were targeted merely for expressing Arab nationalist sentiment, such as opposition to US foreign policy, in particular the US invasion of Iraq in the first Gulf War in early 1990.[4] This cooperation and the types of 'national dignity' resistance it engendered were to mount in the 2000s as US intervention in the region became more sustained.

Much has been written in the aftermath of the revolution regarding the various ethical and programmatic shortcomings of Western foreign policy towards the Bin Ali regime, particularly in the context of geostrategic and 'security' cooperation in the context of the 'war on terror'. Many have criticized the numerous shortcomings of US and European Union 'democracy promotion' programmes, considered the 'soft power' component of the 'war on terror'. For example, there is a growing body of academic literature on the subject that critically examines the 'paradoxes and contradictions' of these democracy promotion policies, challenging dominant narratives on both the levels of intent and impact (Pace 2009). These include discursive analyses that demonstrate how the language of various democracy promotion programs betrays a narrowly defined (neo)liberal understanding of democracy, based on time and space specific concepts, privileging civil and political rights, with the effect of 'marginalizing other possible configurations of "democracy", in relation to both social and economic goals', but also other 'characteristics of liberal democracy such as the public/private divide, secularism, etc.' (Teti 2013).

US 'democracy promotion' programmes have also been critiqued from a normative political standpoint, with some claiming their complete invalidation by their discursive and programmatic association with the 2003 Iraqi invasion (Kahlidi 2004; Cole 2009).

Others have pointed out the failure of these programmes to provide the type of support that was required by those grassroots movements and networks ultimately responsible for the downfall of several of the region's authoritarian regime (Zunes 2011). Close observers of the past work of democracy promotion initiatives would not find this surprising considering their often patronizing approach, in which geopolitical and structural context is often ignored, and the role of civil society and '"local" forms of knowledge relevant to reform' side lined (Sadiki 2009). Far from aiming to radically transform the Middle East, it often seemed the US and EU democratization agendas functioned as means to maintain, rather than challenge, the status quo (Hibou 2011).

In focusing on the distance between the stated aims and actual practices of Western policy vis-à-vis the Bin Ali regime, these analyses point out how international actors in many ways were complicit in providing cover for Bin Ali's repressive practices. However, they tend to overlook a more direct, though also more elusive, form of Western intervention that shaped the context in which Tunisia's revolutionary momentum would eventually emerge. This includes the 'migration' of a hegemonic legal-institutional paradigm for addressing the 'exceptional' nature of the terrorist threat represented by the 9/11 attacks, as well as the discursive constructions which enabled it.

The concept of 'institutional power' as expressed through 'constituted actors exercising control over others indirectly through institutions' can help to explain the 'migration' to Tunisia of legislation and practices that have come to characterize the US approach to fighting terrorism (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 51). Much of this has entailed the violation of standard constitutional protections, such as the presumption of innocence and due process. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, the US was instrumental in passing two paradigm-shifting United Nations Security Council resolutions. These included Resolution 1368, which declared the 9/11 attacks 'a threat to international peace and security', and Resolution 1373, which was a 'far reaching and essentially legislative resolution that for the first time in the Security Council's history, used binding authority under Chapter VII of the UN charter'. This latter resolution affected both the form and content of the counter-terror legislation adopted or adapted by states around the world, including Tunisia and other states in the region.

The litany of 'anti-constitutional effects' such legislation has produced are today well known to human rights and international law scholars and activists, and are often described as features of the 'national security state'. These include: expansive sovereignty under a declared (and often perpetual) 'state of emergency', the centralization of power in the hands of the executive; increased invocation of the state secrecy prerogative, use of surveillance, problematic jurisdictions and violations of due process guarantees; the targeting and criminalization of whole communities rather than addressing each instance of criminality on its own terms; an expanded role for the military and various intelligence agencies in civil life; and increased restrictions on individual liberties, including freedom of speech and assembly (Scheppele 2006). The national security state 'normal(izes) a condition of constant threat and transform(s) the emergency response into a disposition of the state and of everyday life' (Agrama 2012: 232).

Those deemed outside the realm of normal politics and, hence, the protections of the state are discursively constructed as 'exceptional' enemies. Tapping into orientalist tropes, the discourse that emerged around the 'war on terror' depended upon the construction of an Islamist 'other' as inherently violent and irrational. It was predicated on establishing a direct 'relationship between the active principle of secularism and

national security' in which 'religious terror' came to be seen as existential threat to the stability of secular states. (Agrama 2012: 223). Such discursive constructions enabled not only a securitization of political Islam, but of Islam and Muslims themselves (Cesari Botman 2014).

In 2003, Tunisia enacted the Anti-Terrorism Law in Support of International Efforts against Terrorism and Money Laundering in line with the post-9/11 counter-terrorism norms and concomitant political imperatives. This new law, coupled with a dehumanizing discourse of the 'exceptional enemy', led to the arrest, detention and torture, often without due process, of tens of thousands of young men and hundreds of women. In the aftermath of 9/11, Bin Ali was provided even more of a free rein to crack down on the so-called 'Islamist threat', though by this point the focus was no longer on Al-Nahdha after its near decimation due to the repression of the 1990s. The 'war on terror' years witnessed not only the further securitisation of Islamist activism, but even the criminalization of everyday displays of piety, including wearing the hijab or conducting *jum'ah* prayers at a local mosque, thus transforming such practices into forms of resistance.

Due to the West's perceived inaction vis-à-vis Bin Ali's crackdown against non-violent Islamist activism, many came to believe that the regime's most egregious 'war on terror' rights violations were committed with the knowledge, if not support, of Western actors. According to former Tunisian Judge Mokhtar Yahyaoui, a founding member of the International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners, who was fired in the early 2000s for challenging executive interference in the judiciary, US military assistance to the Tunisian government was conditioned upon Tunisia's counter-terror cooperation. Yahyaoui expressed his understanding of the power constellation behind this cooperation, asserting that the Bin Ali regime 'sold our sons to the Americans' (Mullin and Shahshahni 2012: 79).

One of the ironies of the 'war on terror', in both its domestic and international iterations, is the radicalizing impact it has had upon those largely young (with close to 80 per cent of the *salafis* arrested under 30) men targeted by its harsh policies and practices, an impact whose reverberations are still being felt today. In Tunisia, many of the *salafi* jihadists who went on to join more radical strains of the *mouvenance* in the aftermath of the revolution were ideologically incubated in the harsh confines of Bin Ali's prisons (Cavatorta 2013). One can find evidence of a similar trend that Agrama deciphered in Egypt, where entanglement of Tunisia's national security paradigm with secularist doctrine has paradoxically resulted in the increasing saliency of 'religiously rooted and resonant languages of justice', further exacerbating discursive tensions.[5] It is for this reason that many counter-terror analysts have highlighted the counter-productive implications of a rights-violating national security approach, pointing out its potential to produce the very threats it contends to seek to eliminate (Pape 2006; Mullin 2011b; Johnsen 2012; Scahill 2012).

Conclusion: Future prospects for Tunisia's revolution

The last three and a half years of Tunisia's history are replete with historical firsts and dramatic episodes, from the country's first democratic elections, to the assassination of two nationalist politicians. It also includes ongoing violent exchanges between security apparatuses and alleged salafi 'militants', the suspension and subsequent reconvening of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), the completion of the constitution and

electoral law, initiation of a 'national dialogue' and political agreement to replace the elected government with a body of 'technocrats', and the organization of new parliamentary and presidential elections.

Tunisia has received well-deserved international acclaim for achieving a relatively smooth transition to a more democratic polity, especially when compared to the plights faced by neighbouring states. However, high levels of unemployment, especially among educated and highly qualified youths, and persistently high levels of inequality and regional disparities, show that Tunisia is a long way off from addressing the social and economic justice claims of the revolution (Abi-Habib 2013). Furthermore, emerging consensus among Tunisia's political elite demonstrates a failure to break with the neoliberal logic responsible for producing many of these socio-economic pathologies. Though the transitional political sphere has appeared capable of accommodating Ennahda's moderate, (neo)liberal brand of Islamism, the incorporation of Tunisia's *muhammishin* (marginalised), many of whom comprise – at least in part – Ennahda's support base, seems far less assured (Merone and Cavatorta 2012).

Continuities also characterize the international political economy context in which Tunisia's transition unfolds. One example of this is the continued influence of IFIs, recently reinforced with the provision of the first tranche of the IMF's US$1.74 billion loan agreement to the country upon the 'technocrat' government's assumption of power (Saleh 2014). The 'inclusive growth' rhetoric that is now the mantra of IFIs, betrays continuity on the level of policy prescriptions, which continue to privilege privatisation and opening of the economy to foreign capital, the fostering of a 'business friendly' environment and promotion of 'labour flexibility' (World Bank 2012). Such conditioned loans may set severe restrictions on the types of policies the government can ultimately adopt to address Ben Ali's distorting socio-economic legacies (Soudani 2013).

Discursive and legal-institutional legacies associated with the 'national security state' paradigm have also proved difficult to dislodge. In the period preceding the establishment of the 'technocrat' government, consensus on the terms of an alternative national security approach seemed to be emerging, in which international human rights standards would figure more prominently. However, despite ongoing ANC discussions around a replacement, the 2003 anti-terror law is still very much in effect, with thousands of post-revolution arrests made of (largely) salafi men (Joyce 2013). These arrests appear to point in the direction of a continued policy of criminalizing communities and exceptional measures. Additionally, rights groups have documented the ongoing abuses and continued impunity of the police. As under Ben Ali, the excessive use of force and mistreatment during arrest and interrogation of suspects, occurs most prominently in cases of suspected terrorism (Human Rights Watch 2013).

The international context impacting national security concerns appears equally intransigent. Exogenous factors include the continued salience of the 'war on terror' discourse as well as the US's largely unreconstructed geopolitical agenda vis-a-vis the region (Mullin 2014). With an expansion of US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and US Army Africa (USARAF) activities, and the overall shift in focus of the 'war on terror' in recent years to the African continent, Tunisia will most likely continue to figure prominently in the US's regional 'national security' agenda (Bacevich 2013; Ford 2013). The 'war on terror' years featured US direct, as well as tacit, support for Tunisia's national security policies and practices, and the politics of fear they perpetuated. This chapter has demonstrated the impact of these policies and practices in further

entrenching authoritarian power. However, their impact on a newly emergent democratic polity is yet to be seen.

One of the most profound legacies of the endogenous and exogenous factors described above may be on the nature of the polity that emerges from the transitional process. In particular, there is still the risk that what Talal Asad calls 'democracy as the politics of the state' will be achieved at the expense of 'democratic sensibility as an ethos'. The former, focusing on formal institutions and processes, 'defines and protects the subjective rights of its citizens' and 'invokes a bureaucratic rationality in governing them justly'. Such a hollowed-out form of democracy, which is 'fundamentally exclusive' in nature, appears far from the ideals expressed by Tunisia's revolutionaries. The latter, in contrast, by focusing on 'the desire for mutual care, distress at the infliction of pain and indignity', more closely embodies the demands of revolutionaries for 'greater inclusivity' – not only for Tunisia's politically, but also socio-economically, marginalized (Asad 2011).

In other words, there is the danger that a (re)emergent culture of 'exclusivity' will stunt important discussions, not only on the process but also the substance of Tunisia's future democracy, notions of citizenship, the role of the state and national identity. The distorting impact of these legacies on intra-societal as well as state–society relations may also divert attention away from key questions raised by 'as shaab' in the context of the revolution: regarding what social and economic justice, state sovereignty and national security defined by and for the Tunisian people might look like in the context of continued structural inequality in the international system.

However, Tunisia's political sphere is alight with a reinvigorated activism that seeks to return the public debate to these questions, both within institutionalized and non-institutionalized spaces. Within the NCA, activist members have sought to keep alive the discussions around transitional justice, and institutionalizing revolutionary socio-economic justice demands through a development agenda that puts the interests of neglected regions and marginalized social groups ahead of those of foreign investors and domestic elites. Having been accused of stonewalling, in December 2013 the NCA achieved one of its most notable victories by adopting transitional justice legislation. The immediate aim of the transitional justice process is to establish culpability and redress for past victims of state crime crimes, with mechanisms created to provide 'institutional reform' and 'vetting of civil servants' (Human Rights Watch 2013). However, activists have also pointed out the 'cultural' significance of this process. In particular, its potential to contribute to 'national reconciliation' and to developing Tunisia's 'collective memory'.

Though it has been criticized for various shortcomings, the law and the specialized chambers it creates, are certainly a 'step forward' (Human Rights Watch 2013). Yet the success of the process is by no means guaranteed and remains heavily dependent upon political will. The latter may increase or decrease depending on the outcome of elections, in which former RCD and regime members are free to participate due to the ANC's failure to pass a 'lustration' law.

The NCA also succeeded in one of the most important and complex tasks, the drafting and adoption on 26 January 2014 of Tunisia's constitution. The NCA has been praised for creating one of the Arab world's most liberal constitutions, enshrining principles of devolved government and independent judiciary and media. However, the constitution also enshrines several social and economic rights, including right to work, to healthcare and to a clean environment, effectively making it 'more progressive' than several Western constitutions (Brown 2014).

Activists have also engaged the public and political spheres on revolutionary issues. Groups such as the L'Union des diplômés chômeurs (Union for Unemployed Graduates, or UDC) and Zwewla ('the poor'), a graffiti group that tags its 'pro-poor' messages on public spaces throughout Tunisia, are struggling to keep the focus on social and economic justice issues in the transitional period (Abrougui 2013). Mobilized during the Bin Ali era to challenge the state's monopoly on information, social media has once again provided a space for the expression of revolutionary aims otherwise marginalized from political debates. For example, the prominent Facebook campaign 'I Too Burned a Police Station' has used this 'alternative public sphere' to generate support for Tunisians facing criminal charges related to protests during the 2011 revolution (Smadhi 2014). Ad hoc movements such as the Sumud ('steadfastness') sit-in in front of the Casbah, comprised of a group of former political prisoners, have taken issue with the slow pace of transitional justice (Mullin and Patel 2014). Others include the youth activist group Sawa3ed, which demanded an end to the national security state paradigm and to the deep-state mechanisms that serve, and are served, by its interests (*Sawa3ed* Facebook 2013).

These forms of ongoing mobilization are a reminder that it is too early to make any definitive pronouncements on the fate of Tunisia's revolution.

Notes

1 Interview with Labia Farhani, 2 October 2013.
2 Interview with Abderrahman al Hadhili, 17 October 2012, Tunis.
3 Interview with Zohair Makhlouf, 18 September 2012, Tunis.
4 *Ibid*.
5 Agrama (2012: 223).

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9

Libya's Arab Spring

Revolution against a 42-Year Dictatorship

Anas Abubakr Buera

The former Libyan regime was one of the most ambiguous in the Arab world in terms of the lack of clarity in the constitutional and legal foundations that form all political, social and economic structures, notably its unstable policies towards development. In addition, understanding the general conditions that preceded the revolution is also crucial to gaining a better understanding of the catalysts that unleashed the Libyan revolution.

The nature of the Libyan regime

Tracing the historical origins and evolution of the Gaddafi regime reveals the increasingly authoritarian pattern of rule. Following the military coup against King Idris's constitutional monarchy, it became evident that the movement of young army officers calling themselves the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) had merely been a prelude to the rule of one man in this oil-rich country. Consequently, the Gaddafi regime pursued despotic policies, aimed at strengthening the grip of autocracy, in political, economic and social dimensions. In doing so, Gaddafi began to take specific actions in order to control every part of Libya's governance structure and society. In terms of political participation and political legitimacy, the RCC constitution was considered the highest legal reference in the country, based on what can be termed 'revolutionary legitimacy'. This process entailed dismantling the legitimacy of the constitution created at the independence of Libya in 1951 and the disruption of legislative institutions along with empowering RCC members to run all the country's ministries (Vandewalle 2006); as well as promoting Libyan sovereignty based on ending the presence of foreign air force bases. Another step towards entrenching its dominance of the political scene, the RCC enacted a law criminalizing the establishment of political parties in 1972. Additionally, Gaddafi announced his 'Zuwara five-point programme' of popular governance to radically change the political structure to fit his views of a popular revolutionary momentum.[1] In this context, Libyan historian Mohamed Al-Magariaf argues that the Zuwara five-point programme was a preliminary attempt by Gaddafi to deny the constitutional claims of RCC members to build constitutional

structures for governance. This call was explicitly obvious when in he ordered RCC members to return to their barracks and leave politics (Al-Magariaf 2008).

In January 1976, Gaddafi launched the first part of *The Green Book* (*al-Kitāb al-Ahdar*), which reflects his 'third universal theory' aiming to present a solution for the problem of governance in Libya and in the wider world. In the introduction, Gaddafi wrote: **'**Government is the first political problem facing human groups … the green book presents the final solution for the problem of democracy and governance.'

According to this philosophy, Gaddafi conceived of pillars of governance which seemed unusual and contrary to standards of governance and rule. He presented his philosophy for governing the state based on a set of specific determinants outlined in *The Green Book*. Gaddafi presented parliamentary assembly as a deceptive means of representing the people, stating that parliamentary systems are a false solution to the problem of democracy. Based on this logic, the existence of a parliament represents the absence of the rule of the people; and democratic tools such as the referendum are fraudulent.

As far as the establishment of a democratic state requires the presence of legal and institutional frameworks for the emergence and development of political parties and civil society organizations, Gaddafi tried to control its direction from the very beginning, taking advantage of the lack of experience in Libyan society. He viewed political parties and civil society organizations as the dictatorships of the modern era. In addition, his perspective on ruling the state considers the multiplicity of parties as devastating to the community. Gaddafi's conception of the process presents election as a process that is controlled by a monopoly over others' rights and affairs. Regarding constitutional principles, Gaddafi's asserts that these are merely fundamental positive laws, and do not provide the law that emanates from the legitimacy of the society. According to his view, a referendum on the constitution is not enough since it reflects the dominance of central authority in ruling and controlling the people.

This ideology reflected Gaddafi's method of controlling the governance structure and, in parallel, forming economic socialism and the idea of preventing any arrangements for freedom and economic openness in the country. In 1977, Gaddafi launched both the 'Declaration of the Authority of the People' and the 'Declaration on the Separation of Rule and Revolution' in 1979 as loose arrangements in the Libyan governance to present his political part of the Green Book (Mattes 2011). In fact, they applied his perceptions and ideology of governance based on the notion of 'the state of the masses' or *al-Jamahiriya*, which formed the essence of his style of ruling the country by actors, institutions and ideas linked to him. Accordingly, the General People's Congress (GCP) that emerged from this declaration controlled governance in Libya in accordance with Gaddafi's popular philosophy of ruling. This control of political life manifested itself in indicators of governance, showing that Gaddafi succeeded in dominating political decisions.

In terms of political life, Gaddafi's system had banned any political movements through the law of 'criminalizing political parties' issued in 1972 and based on the ideology of the 'revolutionary society'. Article 2 explicitly stated that forming a political party was against the revolution and considered high treason (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Ministry of Justice 1972). The prohibition of political parties was followed directly by the establishment of a one rule-party which arose with the formation of 'the revolutionary committees' in March 1979.

The regime had also tightened its grip on participation in political life through the limitation of the competence of leading positions. In the period from 1969–2006, 132 politicians acquired leading positions in the government apparatus. Additionally, Libya's governance literature shows that the elite power centres determining political participation were kept to a restricted group. According to El-Fathaly and Palmer, there were five centres of power that influenced and reflected the structure of the elite in Libya; these powers were: Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the remaining of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the leaders of the armed forces and internal security services, technocrats in government, and members of the General People's Congress (GCP) and the Libyan cabinet (GPC) (El-Fathaly and Palmer 1982). In this context, a study conducted by Obeidi (2011) asserts that political participation in decision-making was limited to a particular class of policy-makers located in the above-mentioned power centres in Libya. Accordingly, the study shows that specific numbers acquired leadership positions between 1969 and 2006 as members of the revolutionary committees were represented by 69 per cent, those with a technocratic background by 22 per cent, and army and internal security by 0.09 per cent (Obeidi 2011). In addition, Obeidi's study also provides an indicator of political participation in terms of gender equality, which clearly shows that women's participation in the decision-making process was very weak and represented only three positions from the 132 leading positions in both parliament and the government during the period from 1969 to 2006. Additionally, another study by El-Mogherbi (2004) provided a background of the regional political elite in Libya during the period of 1969 to 2000, showing some significance of the elite regional participation. The western region of Libya (Tripolitania) represented the majority of Libyan decision-makers, with 44 per cent, while the eastern part (Cyrenaica) has 30 per cent and the south (Fezzan) 5 per cent. Though these figures reflect the distribution of population in Libya, they are reflective of the standard of habitual residence in the territory irrespective of social and tribal background, which could lead to further analysis on issues such as balancing tribal alliances with the regime and political marginalization. Further, one should be cautious in analysing such political phenomena in Libya, taking into account the issue of political recruitment, which the Gaddafi regime used to choose leaders for political office that is mostly based on the revolutionary committees as an informal governance institution.

Concerning the human rights situation in Libya during the period of 1969 to 2010, the regime committed many violations, breaching international conventions and standards. In this context, Al-Magariaf argues that these violations of Libyan civil liberties were committed by Gaddafi's authority in the name of 'revolutionary legitimacy'. In terms of human freedom and security, revolutionary committees started repressive policies such as arrests and arbitrary detention of opposition figures, and subjecting detainees to ill-treatment and torture. Amnesty International reports during the 1970s and 1980s expressed concerns based on evidence received regarding incidents of torture and abuse of political prisoners, the abuse occurring in the centres of intelligence. Furthermore, the Gaddafi regime implemented death sentences against opponents outside the framework of justice and fair trial, under a full blackout. The international reports recorded developments such as torture and secret executions; public executions in public squares and universities; arranged accidents; civilian and military aircraft incidents; and firing on demonstrators in residential neighbourhood.[2]

The accumulation of crimes of murder and torture resulted in increasing levels of tension and frustration in the spirit of Libyan citizens. This tension reached its peak

when the sources of human rights indicators and a massacre on 29 June 1996 revealed that Gaddafi regime security forces bombed the Abu Salim prison in Tripoli, causing the death of approximately 1,200 prisoners from different regions of Libya. The Libyan authorities subsequently issued death certificates. When this crime was revealed, the families of the victims demonstrated and continued to demand information during the years prior to the fall of the regime. With respect to these demands, it should be noted that victims' families were one of the reasons that prompted the revolution on 17 February in Libya as their protests in Benghazi were the first spark of the unrest. In fact, Abu Salim prison families referred to the indicators of freedom and repression situation in Libya at the time of the revolution (2010–2011). Thus, it was important to observe the international and regional comparative perspective of democracy and freedom in the world and Libya's ranking. Freedom House provides its annual survey of 'political rights' and 'civil liberties', where Libya's low ranking was explicitly linked to the regime's despotic policies. According to the report, Libya's civil liberty and political rights status is 'not free' and Libya is among the worst countries (Freedom House 2011).

Internal affairs also revealed unclear images in governance, suggesting that the pattern of governance in Libya is 'a government of local division', demonstrating a pattern of administrative instability and a lack of clear vision in development. During the period of 1969 to 2010, the structure of local government changed dramatically. A study conducted in 2005 entitled 'The Project of Studying Administrative Divisions in Libya' showed that local government in Libya was marked by confusion as local administrative divisions had not been stabilized more than five years, and had changed several times during the period (Libyan Centre for Economic Research 2005). This confusion and instability led to a lack of clarity in many policies of economic and social development in Libya.

On the economic side of governance, the Libyan government apparatus put in place economic policies based on a socialist direction and its declared goals of reform. The Libyan direction of economic policies under socialist philosophy started to have an impact when Gaddafi launched the second part of *The Green Book*, entitled *The Solution to the Economic Problem*, in 1978. Gaddafi's philosophy of economic policy was based on specific tenets such as the self-management of public-sector policies; restrictions on the private sector under the pretext of monopoly and exploitation by the end of the 1970s; control of the distribution of land; limitations in the amount of cash; and the dominance of the state over all trade activities of import, export and distribution through a package of legislation and administrative measures which were implemented at the beginning of the 1980s (St John 2008). All these laws led to policies reflecting the state's control over factories, trade firms and agricultural reclamation land.

There were many indicators of economic decline: unequal distribution of wealth; favouritism in military advantages and transactions; and a shortage of goods and services. All of these policies resulted in social congestion due to marginalization and a lack of participation in economic decision-making. Hence, the regime faced challenges from tribes and Islamic groups in marginalized areas such as Cyrenaica, which led the regime to reinstate policies to address these issues. Based on the annual survey of 'Economic Freedom' that covers 183 countries through comparative methodology,[3] the report describes Libya as a 'repressive economy' which lacks the efficiency of a regulatory system, competition and equitable treatment besides other aspects of economic failure (Miller and Holmes 2010).

Table 9.1 The change in Libya's ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), 2003–2011

Year	*Ranking*	*Number of countries*	*Scale from 1–10*
2003	118	133	2.1
2004	108	145	2.5
2005	117	158	2.5
2006	131	180	2.5
2007	105	163	2.7
2008	126	158	2.5
2009	130	180	2.5
2010	146	178	2.2

Source: Transparency International, various reports of Corruption Perceptions Index, 2003–2011.

It is thus crucially important to review the status of corruption levels in Libya. This comparative indicator could help to understand the situation of 'distributive injustice' in the country, the prevalence of corruption and the lack of transparency in the government apparatus. Accordingly, Table 9.1 clearly presents the change in Libya's rank on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) launched by Transparency International during the period of 2003 to 2010.

Libya's rank on the perception index reveals the prevalence of corruption, reflecting regressive policies and a repressed economy. The media has also revealed the scale of corruption and its consequences on Libyans' standard of living. Reports on Al Jazeera and Al-An TV, key Arabic channels which covered the Libyan revolution, showed the extent of poverty in key cities such as Benghazi and Tubrok, represented by low income, poor service, the lack of distributive justice and so on.

Referring to the indicators mentioned previously, and the situation of governance in Libya in Gaddafi's era, it could be concluded that there was a significant failure of regime performance on all governance levels: 'the deterioration in management performance', 'the violation of political and civil rights' and 'restrictions on civil and political movements'. The revolutions in neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia were also key motivators of the Libyan revolution.

The Libyan revolution: A view of events during the country's democratic transition

The Libyan revolution was transformed from a pattern of peaceful demands calling for the elimination of corruption and nepotism in Libyan society to a bloody revolution towards the liberation of the country from tyranny. This revolution shifted from peaceful protest to military conflict when the regime dragged it onto the path that ended with international military intervention.

The spark of the Libyan revolution

Inspired by recent uprisings in both Tunisia and Egypt, the actual spark of the Libyan revolution came when a group of young people called for a day of action on 17 February such as there had been in Egypt. This call was actually triggered on 15 or 16 February by the arrest of human rights activist Fathi Terbel, who was a lawyer for the victims of the aforementioned massacre at Abu Salim.

As noted, the massive corruption of the Libyan governance structure was one of the main catalysts driving people in Libya to protest in parallel to the revolutionary wave of the Arab Spring. Accordingly, protests in the eastern cities of Al-Bayda, Derna and Benghazi in the Cyrenaica region arose between 13 and 16 January 2011, reflecting the people's rage at corruption in the housing sector. Many housing units were occupied when Gaddafi urged some upset people in the city of Sabha in the south to occupy housing units whose construction had been delayed. This was followed by several clashes in Cyrenaica at Al-Bayda, as police headquarters and Libyan government offices were stormed by crowds angry at the delay in the delivery of housing units. These enraged people described the Libyan government as a 'gang of corruption'. Despite the government's response to these protests, which was to launch a housing investment initiative to the tune of 20 billion Euros, the manifestations of upset and anger continued to communicate the aspiration for change in Libya – that it might no longer be governed by money or the distribution of financial resources, but rather become sensitive to issues of political rights, distributive justice and development by achieving efficiency in the existing institutions of governance.

Peaceful demonstrations and the reaction of the regime

Like its predecessors in the Arab Spring states, the Libyan revolution initially manifested itself in peaceful protests against the regime's economic and social policies. In this regard, the reaction of the Libyan regime corresponds to indicators of despotic and authoritarian policies shown in the previous section. The authority dealt with public demands with an excessive use of power which led to an extended military conflict. Following the use of live ammunition on protestors in the cities of Benghazi, Al-Bayda and Dernah in the eastern region of Cyrenaica, protesters liberated the eastern part of Libya, which led, in turn, to the spread of the revolution to the cities of Zintan, Misurata and parts of Tripoli.

Accordingly, it was clear that Gaddafi's regime was committed to responding to the demands of protestors – which extended to a call to topple Gaddafi from power – with a military escalation that created an extended military conflict and forced a foreign intervention. This reflects Gaddafi's intention to uphold his rule permanently; his statements are clear evidence of this inclination.

Political and military conflict

The establishment of the National Transitional Council (NTC) during the Libyan revolution had been intended to reflect the rebels' tendency to act at the political level and modify the stereotyped image of the character of the rebels' military defensive actions. Choosing 2 March 2011 as the date for the declaration of the NTC was politically symbolic: the Libyan people in the liberated areas had rejected the Gaddafi regime and the Revolutionary Committees which had been declared on the same date in 1979.

The Transitional Council's political establishment was immature in two ways: firstly, in its political performance and, secondly, in governing Libyan affairs in war and after the liberation. According to Sadiki, though the NTC was not the perfect political body to lead the revolution, the Libyan people and the international community were forced to accept it as a notable shift in Libyan political history, capable of leading the revolution

specifically in terms of gaining international recognition. On the other hand, this body has been criticized due to its inclusion of a number of Gaddafi's former political followers who switched their loyalty from the collapsed system to the new revolution.

Challenges of international recognition and foreign relations

Although there have been many failures in the performance of the NTC, many argue that it was successful in gaining international recognition; this was its most prominent achievement. First, it gained the recognition of the Libya contact group representing many nations which announced that they would deal with NTC as the legitimate governing authority in Libya. Consequently, the Arab League gave its political support to the council (March 2011). On 16 September 2011, the United Nations General Assembly voted to grant a seat to the new Libyan authority. Additionally, the European Union and the African Union officially recognized the NTC as the legitimate political representative of Libya. All of these steps entrenched the legitimacy of the Libyan revolution locally and internationally, paving the way for the definitive end of the Gaddafi regime.

The quick international recognition of the Libyan revolution within seven months had certain consequences:

1 The Libyan National Transitional Council was the only way to fill the political vacuum regardless of its shortcomings and errors in performance, and the presence of some officials who had defected from Gaddafi's regime.
2 It represents the intersection of the interests of the Libyan people and the international community.
3 Recognitions gained from the international and regional bodies signalled that the Arab Spring was important and carried influence. This was clear from the recognition after the toppling, escape or death of the absolute rulers in the Arab Spring countries.

The challenges of governance and democratization during the transitional phase

Since Gaddafi's death on 20 October 2011, and the consequent declaration of a liberated Libya, several challenges to democratic transition and the new governance have arisen in Libya. Therefore, gaining *de facto* legitimacy gave the momentum that helped the revolution reach its goals. In fact, the aspiration of the Libyan people for democracy and good governance standards after 42 years of absolute dictatorship has posed several challenges for the new transitional leadership.

The challenge of an interim constitution and the legitimacy of political representation

The issuance of the interim constitutional declaration from one party presented a basic problem for the new interim authority. Despite notable support from several parts of society, there have been several voices from civil society, including the coalition of rebels of 17 February, and also the federalism movement started on 20 July 2011; all explained their calling for transparency in declaring constitutional arrangements and

the election of a new authority after drafting the permanent constitution based on inclusiveness and consensus. In this regard, it is important to note that the constitutional declaration issued on 3 August 2011 states in Article 30 that the NTC is the highest authority in Libya until the early election of the General National Conference (GNC; also known as the General National Congress) on July 2012. Following the issuing of Law No 4 for the year 2012 concerning the election of the GNC, there were multiple protests in the eastern part of Libya (Cyrenaica) by civil and tribal groups that advocate federalism. It rejected this law based on unequal representation of regions in the seats in the GNC. Cyrenaica Transitional Council urged the Libyan people to reject an election of the GNC that would result in inequality, stating: 'We don't want to be part of the national congress. It's just another form of marginalization by the West.'

In terms of election indicators published by the Libyan authority, the number of registered people who voted in this election was 1,764,840, representing 62 per cent, while the number of people who boycotted the election was 1,100,000 (38 per cent of those registered). It is worth mentioning that the overall number of people who registered in the election was 2,865,937 (HNEC 2014). Based on the figures above, questions have been raised over the rush towards elections instead of reaching a consensus after the radical change. This argument was also raised due to the weak and deficient performance by the newly elected GNC in resolving a number of issues, particularly whether the Libyan constitution should be formed by 'selection' or 'election'. Based on pressures by the federal movement, GNC issued its new decision for the constitutional assembly to be elected based on the three federal historical regions (Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Fezzan), indicating that all past constitutional arrangements out of genuine consensus represented a flawed establishment of new democratic institutions (GNC 2013).

The challenge of democracy and freedom

On the level of democracy and freedom, the country is approaching a new era of freedom having left behind repression. In terms of the role of the authority, the NTC has initiated efforts to repeal laws that had shackled freedom and the democratic development of society. The NTC issued Law No 2 for the year 2012 on the criminalization of political parties, stating in Article 2 that Law No 17 of the year 1972, issued by Gaddafi to ban political activities in Libya, was abolished. This development, along with freedom of expression and other democratic values, led to a better freedom ranking for Libya as well as for its neighbours of the Arab Spring. In Freedom House's annual report entitled *The Arab Uprisings and their Global Repercussions*, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt gained points of improvement and jumped to +4 as a level of improvement (Freedom House 2012).

The challenges of governance and institutional capacity

Following the success of the Libyan revolution in ending Gaddafi's regime, the interim authority sought to form a new governance structure. Although the NTC gained recognition as the representative of the Libyan people, there was no clear evidence available regarding the existence of the principle of 'separation of powers' between the NTC and the Executive Branch, which echoes the formation of the RCC in 1969 and the GCP in 1979. In the first document establishing the NTC, there were no references

to any separation of power between institutions of the new Libya. Furthermore, the constitutional declaration itself had not explicitly mentioned separation of power among the main democratic principles, even in Article 30, which concerns electing a new interim authority GNC and its government. In terms of 'transparency' and 'combating corruption' and 'the misuse of resources', there has been huge controversy concerning the NTC and the existence of 'financial irregularities'. In this regard, the exceptional report of the Auditor General for the year 2011 refers to certain irregularities related to financial covenants and administrative laxity in some ministries.

The global CPI issued by Transparency International clearly shows that Libya's rank had fallen lower than it had been under Gaddafi. Libya's governance and transparency performance had declined from 146 to 167 out of 174 countries and from a range of 20 to 29 per cent. By 2013, the Libyan interim government is among the ten worst countries (172/177) on the scale (Transparency International 2012, 2013).

In analysing government capacity in managing the economy, Libya's ranks on the indicator of economic freedom remains low and show the result of a repressed economy with a percentage of 49 per cent on the scale (Miller and Holmes 2010).

The situation of local governance in Libya also presents a confusing image as it links directly to 'demands of federalism' in the east and has become one of the most sensitive and controversial issues in the country. According to Article 18 of the constitutional declaration, the NTC comprises local councils. However, the bylaws of local councils reveal that they have no clear powers or jurisdiction to steer local affairs in their regions and cities; in addition, their number is also unclear. This situation has resulted in extending the call for federalism, particularly in the eastern region of Libya (Cyrenaica), which is mainly related to the boycott of the Libyan election. These developments also led to an increased federal bloc demanding more share of control and self-autonomy in local governance.

The NTC amended the constitutional declaration one day before the elections to state that the new constitution should be drafted in accordance with the pattern of federal division, which represents a challenge to the newly elected authority (the GNC).

Alongside the challenges of democracy and governance in the new Libya, events such as street fighting in the Libyan capital, the killing of the US ambassador in Benghazi, the frequency of killings in Benghazi, and Libyan fighting in the south all highlight the Libyan state's inability to control, which hinders democratization and civil peace in the country. In another comparative indicator presented by 'foreign policy', the Failed State Index for the year 2012–2013 raises urgent questions regarding 'governance capacity' for the newly elected authority in Libya. The Libyan interim authority entered the list of 60 failed countries. Although many argue that this situation is a consequence of the transitional phase, others blame the Libyan Transitional Authority for the absence of effective policies and programmes for security, the collection of weapons, and building the Libyan army. According to foreign policy analysts, there are several reasons why a country might fall apart, which summarize most of the previous indicators such as a pattern of extractive economic institutions that destroy incentives to economic freedom. Another reason is linked to the 'prevalence of corruption', particularly the exploitation of wealth and resources. Government effectiveness in all regions is also crucial for avoiding a state's failure, as is the ability of the central government to exert control over security and provide high-quality public services (Foreign Policy 2012).

Two interim authorities: Initial failure in crafting the new constitution and transitional governance mission

Less than two years after electing the GNC, this elected body has failed to fulfil its constitutional entitlement. In this context, the following observations could be made regarding the recent developments of building the new governance and democratic institutions in Libya:

1 After 158 GNC sessions, no progress had been witnessed in the process of crafting the new Libyan constitutions after 18 months of electing the GNC. The reasons behind this failure could be attributed to flaws of the constitutional establishment based on 'the conflictual pattern' manifested in the rival parliamentary groups rather than consensus and balance among the different political actors (H2O Team 2013). In March 2014, the GNC had transferred this mission to the new elected 'constitutional assembly' based on the three historical federal regions (Cyrenaica, Tripoli, Fezzan). However, serious concerns arise since the percentage of those voting amounted to only 13.8 per cent of the population (HNEC 2014).
2 Based on the nature of conflict, interim government policy outcomes of expenditure and controlling resources have been marked by low quality levels. Based on media interviews with the former deputy prime minister linked to the Muslim Brotherhood party, Awad Al-Baraasi, a clear recognition of failure in governing the country's resources has emerged. According to national indicators of financial resource governance, 80 per cent of the country's budget is devoted to wages and subsidies. Moreover, there is an unjustified increase in the Libyan workforce from approximately 870,000 in 2009 to 1.5 million. Furthermore, a stark increase in salaries as part of the national budget has jumped from 9 billion in 2009 to 23 billion Libyan dinars in 2013.
3 A growing federal movement has extended its power by controlling oil resources and terminals since August 2013.

The future of the Libyan Spring: Conclusion

This chapter has compared some significant and key factors of two eras of governance in Libya: primarily, indicators of governance and democracy during Gaddafi's rule, which represent the main catalyst of the radical change of the new era initiated by the liberation of Libya. Although Libya witnessed a radical change in its political structure like other neighbouring countries of the Arab Spring, the following remarks can be made regarding the Libyan situation:

1 As reflected in international indicators, the Libyan people have gained freedom through revolution and won the recognition of the world as a whole. This requires consideration of the challenges that face democratic and governance transition in the country without overlooking determinants of the previous regime.
2 The arrival of democratic institutions of governance in Libya as well in the Arab Spring countries must be based on stability and consensus of constitutional arrangements, and not adjusted continuously in a confusing manner or based on rival interests such as GNC performance.
3 Federalism as the basic constitutional and historical system of governance must be put on the table as a main political 'form of consensus' between all Libyan sectors according to the 1951 founding constitution of Libya.

4 The challenge of governance success in the wake of the Arab Spring requires monitoring and improving indicators of governance for development in order to enhance delivery of services to citizens, improvement of transparency, public accountability and distributive justice – all of which can raise the standard of living, which must be at the forefront of the priorities of the governing structure.
5 Decision-makers in the economies of the Arab Spring (including Libya) must innovate and build on the foundations of new economic governance that is focused on the development of human resources, as well as prevent the monopoly of the few over the country's economy and resources.
6 As Libya makes its way towards practising democracy and good governance, and creates some sort of identification with international standards of democratic governance, the challenges of 'local specificity' in issues of democracy and governance should move in parallel with efforts of 'national reconciliation' and 'consensus' to develop an 'inclusive vision of the national interest' in all political and institutional arrangements.
7 The study of Arab Spring governance should move towards the new academic trends of exploring governance and policy change based on a new interpretive policy framework. In this regard, 'narrating the Arab Spring' based on new strategies of qualitative empirical analysis of discourse and narrative (mainly launched by European scholars in 2014) would help in investigating the real dynamics of Arab Spring governance and in analysing the genuine components of governance and democratic transformation.

Notes

1 The Zuwara five-point programme included the abolition of all laws in Libya; purging the country of people who conspire to revolution; the announcement of the Cultural Revolution, the declaration of the managerial revolution; arming people; freedom of the people; no freedom for the enemies of the Libyan people.
2 Reports issued by Amnesty International on Libya between 1975 and June 1997 confirm this pattern of torture.
3 This indicator was presented in 1995 to entrench Adam Smith's theories regarding economic liberty through combined efforts made by both the *Wall Street Journal* and The Heritage Foundation. The index covers ten freedoms – from property rights to entrepreneurship – in 184 countries.

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10

Libya's Islamists and the 17 February Revolution

A Battle for a Revolutionary Theology

Anas El Gomati

Religion and politics in Libya

The Sunni country has always had a strong history of the traditional *maliki* school of jurisprudence with an emphasis on the spiritualism found across North Africa. *Maliki Sufism* was at its peak with the Senussis, a tribal Sufi order and religious movement based in eastern Libya that has been prominent since 1843.

The Senussi leaders effectively inherited the status of monarchs after Libya's independence from colonial rule in 1951. The status of the *Senussiyya* as a religious order remained relatively untouched and King Idris al Senussi's government was essentially detached from religion. The creation of the modern kingdom and state coincided with the creation of the *Hay'at Al-Awqaf* – the board of religious affairs – under Sheikh Mohamed Abulsaeed el Jalem in 1951. Sheikh Mohamed played an influential role in providing religious legitimacy to the drafting of legislation, and even contributed to drafting the constitution, while simultaneously sustaining the king's religious authority in the country (interview with Abu Slim prison former inmate, 14 December 2013).

Religion under Gaddafi, 1969–1977

Mu'ammer Al Gaddafi's bloodless coup d'état on 1 September 1969 had very little impact upon religion and religious groups in Libya in the early days of his revolution (interview with *al Harakah al Islamiyyah* former member, 15 September 2013). Prior to the coup, Gaddafi had generally sought to find favour with political and religious exiles and opponents of the king, and had hastily found ways of bringing them back to Libya. One of those in exile, who opposed the king, was Sheikh Taher Ahmed Al Zawi. In 1969, he became *mufti*, Libya's highest religious authority in *Dar al Ifta*, which replaced the older *Hay'at Al-Awqaf* (interview with Abu Slim prison former inmate, 16 December 2013). This new role meant that Sheikh Taher scrutinized legislation passed by Gaddafi's *Majlis Al Thawrah*, a 12-man revolutionary committee. The mufti

at this time had substantial religious, and, by extension, social clout. He often used the media – newspapers and radio – to comment on religious affairs, declare religious holidays and issue *fatwas*.

In 1973, Gaddafi gave an infamous speech in the western city of Zwara in which he outlined five points of the Cultural Revolution or '*al zahf*' – the populist assault on state institutions – which he felt would outline and bring to life his vision of the 'state of the masses' (interview with the National Front Salvation of Libya former member, 12 December 2013). In reality, over the next decade Gaddafi destroyed state institutions, consolidated his political and economic power, and challenged the traditional legal and religious role of the *ulama* – Islamic scholars. Libya's social fabric had begun to be ravaged, and social instability began to take the form of political protest.

In 1977, after challenging Gaddafi's rule, the mufti and the ministry were essentially pacified and stripped of their power and influence. The mufti, for example, was no longer permitted to appear on television. Indeed, Gaddafi's growing totalitarian rule was being felt across the country by this time, as artists, poets and musicians began to come under tighter control of the regime. By the early 1980s, Gaddafi's revolutionary committees had infiltrated or taken control of all parts of public life. Student protests had begun to occur sporadically across university campuses. With political and social turbulence at its peak, Libya's population had no form of opposition to the regime, neither secular nor religious in nature. Its *maliki* and *sufi* scholars had all been pacified, faced public hangings or chose exile (interview with Burwein, 17 December 2013). The people were effectively left without a moral or religious compass to guide them. No one individual or group ever filled this religious vacuum. Instead, various different factions appeared, importing different ideas.

The Afghan War, 1986

In 1988, Gaddafi removed his police and army from the Libyan side of the border with Tunisia, effectively removing the border. Libyans could leave and enter with relative ease. In the same year, he announced the Green Charter of Human Rights and released hundreds of prisoners, many of whom immediately left the country.

Many young Libyans, and especially many of those who had been in prison, heard the regional call for *jihad* and travelled to Afghanistan in 1988 to participate in the Afghan–Soviet War. While Afghanistan was the scene of the military battlefield, it was Peshawar, in Pakistan, the first stop-over *en route* to Afghanistan, where Libyans began to come into contact with all strands of Salafi thought (interview with a Libyan former fighter, 10 September 2012).

Libyan fighters often complained at how fragmented the groups in Peshawar were, and how fighters and a seemingly unified people had splintered into so many different groups. For Libyan fighters, this was often the first contact they had ever had with prominent Salafis and Salafi-Jihadists. Libyans were in contact with Salafi scholars ranging from Abdullah Azzam to Salafi-Jihadists thinkers and leaders such as Ayman Al Zawahri and Osama Bin Laden (interview with a Libyan former fighter, 10 September 2012).

Many Libyan fighters remained in Peshawar, many others went on to Afghanistan, while some left for further study in Saudi Arabia. The varied experiences they had with Salafi thought and thinkers laid the foundations for religious discussion and propagation among Libyans. Regardless of their next destination, it was a markedly profound

moment for many Libyans, and one that was not purely characterized by warfare. A significant and interesting feature of the phenomenon was the process of reintroduction, when these Libyans began to return to Libya in the early 1990s, changed by their experience and intent on spreading their own take on religion back home. This was the main process by which Salafism was introduced to Libyan religious life. Three prominent branches of Libyan Salafism emerged:

1 Salafiya-Madkhaliya;
2 status quo (or 'mainstream') Salafiya;
3 Salafiya-Jihadiya (or Salafi Jihadists).

Madkhaliya

The Salafiya-Madkhaliya is a denomination of Salafis who follow the Saudi scholar Sheikh Rabee Al Madkhali, a professor at the Islamic university in Medina. Madkhali was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and follower of Sayyid Qutb until the late 1980s, when he broke away and became one of the brotherhood's fiercest opponents.

By the early 1990s, Madkhali had shifted his goals. He retained the puritan teachings of salafism, but substituted political opposition for servility to the political ruler. This change has never quite been understood, but many critics have noted the group's cult-like obedience to Sheikh Al-Madkhali (Ashour 2012). The group began to find wide acceptance, particularly from regimes facing stiff political opposition on their home turf. In Libya, Gaddafi's regime backed it heavily. Al-Saadi Gaddafi, one of the former ruler's sons, was a prominent member, and the group was often nicknamed '*Jama'at Saadi*' – followers of Saadi. The group's servility to the regime was a reason for its state backing and high proliferation – there are estimates that the group could number between 50,000 and 100,000, split between Tripoli, Benghazi and Misrata (interview with Hamouda, 19 December 2013). Their members are often young, and their most prominent local leader, known as Sheikh Abu Mus'aab, of Tripoli, at 38 years old, is young compared to other Libyan Salafi leaders. The Madkhaliya's defining hallmark is their extreme interpretation of the religious concept of *khurooj 'an al-hakim* – a religious tenet and point of creed which Muslims hold to believe means that even under tyranny, one may not overthrow a Muslim ruler.

During the 2011 revolution, the madkhalis took an extraordinarily strict view on obeying the leader of the country and were accused of supporting Gaddafi. They rejected the revolution on the grounds that it was not religiously permissible. As a result, they have generally not engaged in the post-revolutionary political process, and currently have no representation at the national or local government level.

However, while they have generally avoided the post-revolutionary political process, they have not remained inactive. They have used the growing focus on the political landscape – as opposed to the religious landscape – to gain religious prominence and to procure light and heavy weapons. The revolution has provided them with an opportunity to grow in numbers, and allowed them to be visibly more aggressive in their approach to occupying the religious space in Libya. They have created and broadcast speeches by Sheikh Al Madkhali on a post-revolutionary radio channel called *Al Tariq al Salaf*, which has steadily increased their members. They have created five religious schools (believed to be funded by Saudi backers) in Tripoli, Benghazi, Abyar and Misrata (interview with a prominent Dar Al Ifta member, 18 January 2014). Between

November 2011 and May 2013, they attacked, bombed and pillaged Sufi shrines and mausoleums in the cities of Tripoli, Tajoura and Zliten. They reserve their most stinging criticism for the Muslim Brotherhood and non-madkhali Salafi scholars who are involved in politics or government. They have often taken the position that secular rulers are better than the heresy of the Muslim Brothers and other Salafis. Their most notable activity in post-revolutionary Libya has been the threat and actual use of force, systematically targeting Libya's sufi minorities, to whom they pose an existential threat. With their views unlikely to change, however, it is yet to be seen how they will be able to sustain growth in the long term, especially as they continue to lose prominence at home in Saudi Arabia.

Mainstream Salafism

Mainstream Salafis can largely be understood as those who share the same methods of jurisprudence and focus on the scriptural literalism found in the work of popular scholars who were based in Saudi Arabia. The three Salafi scholars most prominent globally over the past 30 years have been Sheikh Ibn Baz (Saudi Arabian, died 1999), Sheikh Al Albani (Albanian, died 2009) and Sheikh Ibn Al Thaymeen (Saudi Arabian, died 2001). Many of Libya's Salafis were either direct students of these scholars in Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s or were influenced by their work through their Libyan students when they returned to propagate their teachings in Libya.

However, mainstream global Salafism is far from internally cohesive and lacks consensus, often falling prey to splintering amid political turmoil. A marked difference among the new salafi trends has been the emergence of reformist and activist scholars such as Sheikh Suliman al Ouda and Sheikh Nasser Al Omran in Saudi Arabia. The emergence of this pattern of thought of activism, which differed to the conventional salafi stance, began to find following with Libyan students as many Syrian and Egyptian salafi scholars began to flee domestic persecution, often arriving in Saudi in the late 1980s.

While Libyan mainstream Salafis all tend to have a discernible respect for Al Bani and Ibn Baz, the experiences of Syrian Salafis who fled the Hafez Al Assad regime in 1982 following the 'Hama massacre' that killed between 30,000–50,000 people struck a chord with the Libyans. Libyans had also fled similar political persecution, and their experiences were shaped by this new climate of oppression. Unlike the Madkhalis, this new strand of mainstream Salafis could not tolerate the concept of 'obedience in the face of tyranny' to the ruler. They felt reform and activism were essential to their survival (interview with a Ministry of Religious Affairs official, 10 January 2014).

This new trend of reformist Salafism had generally found quite an audience in Libya within a sense of contained and limited religious pluralism and debate. Mainstream salafis had posed little threat to Gaddafi's rule, but would often be put in jail for challenging Gaddafi on his frequent religious perversions. This radically changed, however, on the 25 February 2011, eight days after the beginning of the Libyan revolution. Sheikh Sadiq Al Ghariani, a Libyan scholar with substantial scholarly credentials among Salafis, had effectively given religious permissibility and legitimacy to participate in the Libyan revolution. Such a ruling gave the religious clarity and required response to mainstream salafis across the country who required religious justification before deciding a position on the revolution. Many local Libyan Salafi scholars across the country followed suit and the Libyan revolution was given the religious

venire it had been lacking (interview with Dar Al Ifta prominent member, 11 January 2014).

The post-revolution evolution of mainstream salafis

Libya's salafis had effectively been galvanized by Sheikh Ghariani's scholarly position. However, due to their flat leadership structure and lack of religious authority for almost 20 years, there wasn't a discernable strategy upon exiting the Libyan revolution in October 2011. This changed, however, as the National Transitional Council (NTC), the revolutionary body formed during the revolution, under pressure to provide further religious legitimacy, elevated Ghariani to the position of *Mufti*, of *Dar al Ifta* – the highest religious authority in the land, tasked with interpreting legislation, and issuing *fatwas* – religious law.

Salafis, while a sizable group across the country, were not ready for the revolution and the challenges of democracy would prove substantial.

Mainstream Salafis had little theological mileage from which to interpret an entirely new political landscape that encouraged citizen participation, and populist mechanisms such as the ballot box and referendum. The country would be negotiating its identity, aided by layer after layer of civil society, international development organizations and conferences discussing new a-religious concepts.

Libya's national identity was essentially 'up for grabs', and the majority of salafis had little experience to draw upon in using the newly introduced democratic culture. This fear had led many of their scholars and leaders to position themselves within the Mufti's office and the ministry of *Awqaf* – religious affairs. The strategy had been to consolidate religious power as strongly as possible. The Mufti's position is essentially un-democratic. He is neither elected, nor can he be replaced and has a position for life. The wide spread presence of Salafis across religious institutions and ministries has allowed the mainstream salafis a short-term strategy to introduce their religious lens into the democratic landscape and nation-building process. They are able to generally question the permissibility of laws being passed by the NTC and the General National Congress (GNC), Libya's first elected parliamentary body. However, this does not give them power of veto, but rather the position of forcing a discussion on the religious permissibility of the ruling government and the Salafi's own unquestionable religious legitimacy.

Salafiya Ahzabiya

The final post-revolution transformation is perhaps the most substantial in attempting to understand the Salafi movements. It marks the transformation of the mainstream salafi social and theological movement into a full political party. The *Asala* party, the 'authenticity party', is one of the newest currents to emerge from the post-revolution salafi mainstream. Their scholars, thinkers and political leaders can be best understood as part of the wider activist and dissenting voices of the Salafi mainstream. However, it should be renamed *Salaffiya-Ahzabiya* – 'Political Party Salafis' – as a way to track and understand the movement as it begins to evolve in extraordinary ways.

While mainstream Salafis have generally taken a quietist non-interventionist approach to politics in the past, this new current of activist Salafism differs in its pragmatic and highly rational approach and response to new political developments

and challenges. They are more than just opportunists. They are part of a wider trend of Salafis in the region who have had a reformist agenda and dissenting voice in the political and religious affairs of the region since the first Gulf War in 1991 and the intervention of American troops on 'Muslim Lands' (interview with Dar Al Ifta prominent member, 11 January 2014).

They often employ modern communication techniques including television and social media as a way of providing religious commentary on regional foreign policy and military developments, the results of which were to successfully penetrate different local political contexts and find following outside the Persian Gulf countries, particularly in Libya, by inspiring new voices across the global Salafi movement. This movement has particularly resonated with the founders of the Asala party. While it was previously thought that the Egyptian Salafi call group's Nour Party provided the leadership and theological 'green light' to form the Libyan party in early 2012, the evolutionary roots of this discussion started much earlier.

Discussions with leaders from the Asala party seemed to suggest the contrary. That the Nour party's close ties to Saudi Arabia's foreign policy in the region, and their subsequent position to support the 30 June coup d'état in Egypt and give vocal support to General Abdelfatah Sisi were reasons for Asala's growing difference to Nour. The Asala party posit that they source their inspiration from Sheikh Abdulrahman Abdul Khaleq, a prominent Salafi political candidate from the Kuwaiti Hezb al umma party formed in 2005 (interview with Asala Party founding member, 15 January 2014). The move into playing an active role in politics, fielding candidates for election and establishing political parties, is also part of a nuanced internal theological battle between the 'old guard' pre-revolutionary quietist camp among Libya's salafi and the new guard forged in an era of demands for human rights in a period when foreign and domestic politics have devastated lives. The leaders of this trend are personalities such as Sheikh Suliman Al Ouda and Sheikh Nasser Omran of Saudi Arabia. Locally this agenda is led by the likes of Sheikh Ali Siba'i, Sheikh Abdullah Ji'adi and Sheikh Abdul Basit Al Ghewla.

The theological decision to adopt this doctrine is one that emphasizes the view that while democracy is not a divinely ordained system, it is accepted by the majority of Libyans. Further to this, they take the story of the Prophet Yusuf, who became the equivalent of 'prime minister' under an apostate king, justifying a Muslim leader in a non-Muslim system. This has given the party salafis a theological backbone to play an active role in the new democratic chapter. However, this argument is superficial at best and is not one that changes core theological views on pluralism, the role of women and other key discussions surrounding the nature of Libya's democratic future. It is a first small step, crucially taken by a new young guard of Salafis eager to be involved in the shaping of the country's future. Sheikh Ali Siba'i has already fielded his candidacy at the time of writing for the elections of the constitutional committee of 60. While Siba'i stands alone in his patronage from the Asala party, other Salafis have submitted their candidacy, indicative of a wider trend of political participation. While the divide generally remains between the old and new guard, it seems for both sides that political non-participation is no longer an option. Salafis are seemingly unified, for the moment, by their vision and desire to implement *shari'ah'* law as the sole source of legislation in the new constitution.

Nevertheless, they face substantial issues and challenges, predominantly the legacy and history of religion in Libya. Their theological transformation is certainly

incomplete and as the transition to democracy matures the Libyan electorate, Salafis will generally struggle to adopt an inclusive approach that could widen their attraction and see them play a leading party role. Moreover, mainstream Salafism is prone to splintering at times of social and political upheaval, which could affect the cohesive appearance of the Salafis in Libya. A key challenge will be the finer points of jurisprudence and the depth to which they will seek to apply *shari'ah*, which could cause group factionalism. The main danger to Libya as a whole seems to be the legacy of colonialism and autocracy over the past century, culling the religious and scholarly class. Libya's religious scholars remain crippled by a legacy of almost a century of intellectual and theological lethargy, with the religious scholarly class unable to respond to the challenges of social change in the way they had done historically. As such their susceptibility to outside influence and lack of leadership will be of concern to the Libyan electorate, and could prove costly at times when answers are needed to questions on a new future. It remains to be seen how the Salafis in Libya will respond, but their evolution is far from complete.

Libya's Salafi Jihadists

The emergence of Salafi Jihadists and their formal introduction to the Libyan political landscape can be dated to around 1990 and the end of the Afghan–Soviet war. The experience of the war and the Libyan fighters' interaction with the myriad groups in Peshawar, Pakistan, where many groups had based themselves, created a new theological lens from which to galvanize the Jihadist theological base and recruit those dissenting elements to the Gaddafi regime. Their formalization as a paramilitary group came in 1990 with the creation of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). At their inception the group numbered only a few dozen, but many other Salafis with little to no fighting experience were later recruited. The group enjoyed a close relationship with members of the Muslim Brotherhood (interview with Abdesalaam, 21 November 2013, Tripoli), with neither group attempting to alter or interfere with each other's work. However, as the LIFG's numbers grew and the need to communicate became ever greater, the regime's intelligence service began to uncover and subsequently track their activities. By 1995, the group endured its most serious clamp down by the regime. A young member was arrested and subsequently gave up information on other operatives, key logistical and operational plans by the LIFG, and even information on the Muslim Brotherhood.

The remaining LIFG members would find refuge in the green mountains in eastern Libya. While the remote mountain terrain gave the LIFG refuge, they were logistically dislocated from the rest of the country, and their attempts to challenge the regime met with fierce response and little success (interview with the LIFG former member, 14 May 2013). The following decade they would wage a war of attrition against the regime. The Libyan military and airforce responded, launching large-scale aerial operations against the group, creating desperately difficult conditions for the members. These years of experience would prove vital during the revolution (Ashour 2012).

In 2005, the remaining leadership of the group, in prison with little access to the outside world, would enter into dialogue with the Gaddafi regime by way of Saif Al Islam. The dialogue involved senior members and would culminate with their release in

November 2010 on the condition that they would publish a seminal work revoking their previous beliefs. The work entitled *Corrective Studies in Understandings of Jihad, Enforcement of Morality, and Judgment of People* was heralded by Saif Al Islam Gaddafi as an evolutionary theological work and intellectual discovery that transformed the outlook of Salafi Jihadism in Libya. The new beliefs to be heralded were a renouncement of armed violence, embracing the notion of reform, discussing the ideals of a constitution, freedom of speech and questions of ideology (Ashour 2012). The Gaddafi regime, as it happens, was unable to guarantee or practise a form of tolerance of any of the contentions. The strategy was to bring forth a dialogue that at best would create a status quo salafi out of Salafi Jihadists (interview with Abu Slim prison former inmate, 21 January 2013). Less than six months after the publication, the leaders of the LIFG, Sami Saadi, Abdulhakim Belhaj and Ali Sallabi, had all vocally supported or taken part in a violent revolution to topple the regime. Whatever intellectual and theological ground had been made from the publication regarding non-violence was practically worthless. Its failure were the salafi jurisprudence techniques in their reading of the *Quran and Life of the Prophet* that could be used to justify both peaceful but also argumentative responses, which led to their violent action with the Libyan regime in the first place. The security services, academics and regime members involved in the work had believed they could use Salafism to defeat Salafism.

The new wave of Salafi Jihadism during the revolution

Members of the LIFG went on to play a crucial role on the front lines during the revolution, with Abdelhakim Belhaj taking up key strategic positions within the Tripoli Military Council. However, the LIFG was only a minor strand among Libya's abundance of emerging Salafi Jihadists.

In the early days of the revolution, it was the Salafi Jihadists who put up the fiercest resistance. Twenty-four hours before the United Nations-backed, NATO 'No Fly Zone' aerial operation began, the revolution appeared to be on the brink of being crushed. Gaddafi had sent a convoy to crush the uprising stationed in Ajdabiya, the last city to Benghazi, on 18 March. As many of the eastern city's citizens, protesters and revolutionaries fled their positions and returned home, bracing themselves for what Gaddafi had deemed the *cleansing* of the city from agitators,[1] a convoy of 300 men from Derna set off to resist the might of the regime. *Katibat Shuhada Abuslim* – 'The martyrs of Abu Slim (Prison)' Brigade – led by Commander Salim Derby were aware that they couldn't defend the city, but were intent on 'dying at the gates of Benghazi'(interview with Katibat Shuhada Abu Slim member, 17 June 2011), effectively *en route* to what would surely be a suicide mission. As the revolution gained momentum many of these men would play crucial roles on the front lines. The proximity and frequency to death as many militia men explained led many to reach out to Salafi sheikhs (interview with the Tripoli Martyrs' Brigade former member, 21 May 2012). They were a comforting presence, but simultaneously led many to the binary belief that this Jihad was only the beginning, and that they must continue to fight, even after the Libyan revolution: it was victory or death. It is thought that up to 2000 Salafi Jihadist fighters made their way to either Syria or Mali in 2012 (interview with Shuwail, 22 January 2012). Many more, however, remained, such as the *An-Nour* Battalion and *Nasr Al Mukhtar* Battalion, but disbanded in early 2012 under pressure from the NTC to formalize and come

under a quasi-official umbrella as a revolutionary police force: the Supreme Security Council (SSC) and a revolutionary army, the Libya Shield Brigades (interview with Shuwail, 22 January 2012). As some became integrated, other post-revolutionary Salafi-Jihadist regrouped and formed themselves as post-revolution battalions. Katibat Ansar Al Shari'ah Libya (ASL) was essentially formed through remnants of the *An Nour and Katibat Shuhada Abuslim* brigades, as well as from other new recruits (interview Benghazi Local Council's deputy head, 16 December 2013). In essence, these localized remnants would have to find a post-revolution *raison d'être* in the ashes of the old regime.

Ansar Al Shari'ah and Al Qaeda

Ansar Al Shari'ah are a Salafi Jihadist group with branches in the cities of Sirte and Derna, numbering at around 2000 members in total and in existence since approximately July/August 2011. They came to real prominence during a public display of force in June 2012, where they displayed hundreds of military vehicles and when members called publically for the implementation of *shari'ah*. They are today the most prominent Salafi Jihadist organization and paramilitary group in Libya. Upon the culmination of the revolution, and with no apparent enemy left to fight after the killing of Gaddafi, thousands of militias struggled to justify their continued existence. Those militias who didn't join the NTC and take a state salary in exchange for loyalty had very little choice but to go home. Salafi Jihadists had perhaps struggled the most. There was no substantive narrative for the post-revolution or strategy to battle a democratic discourse, and they lacked the theological underpinnings of other Salafi groups. However, they have retained their arms, and broadcast a clear ultimatum in a rare interview with an advisory council member to Libya's politicians: 'It's *shari'ah'a* or death, brother.'

Their theological underpinnings have since developed and their class of scholars have begun to attack the institutions and actors in the new state. They frequently issue statements and religious rulings regarding the heresy of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and even the Asala party for their involvement in parliamentary democracy.[2] Their critique is unparalleled across the Salafi spectrum of thought. While not promoting direct involvement in politics as the *madkhalia*, this new strand of Salafism in Libya is not quietist. Salafi Jihadists in Libya now believe there is more to resistance than just armed warfare. The ASL has begun to play active roles in creating a social welfare network aligned to the armed group in order to justify their existence and promote their worldview. The question begs itself. How are Salafi Jihadists evolving in Libya and what are their new aims since the death of Gaddafi and the end of the regime?

This particular brand of Salafi Jihadism both promotes and threatens the use of force, but is also careful to know when not to use it. It stems from both a local sense and mind-set from the roots of social and economic unrest in the region and is underpinned by a newer set of Salafi Jihadi arguments and narratives from the Arab world. The unstable socio-economic factors and worsening political features in Libya and the Arab world that led to the uprisings have also led to Salafi Jihadists scholars across the Muslim world appropriating the discourse of change. The discourse has been one of looking for emerging groups and countries where one may implement their salafi-jihadist

ideas of government, and the establishment of an Islamic state. Libya is no exception. Sheikh Al-Maqdisi, a jailed Jordanian cleric, has found a following and an implementation of his Salafi Jihadism teachings with ASL. Minor overlaps in this thinking can be found in the earlier writings of prominent Salafi-Jihadist leaders such as Al Qaeda's Ayman Al Zawahri. The infamous letter by Zawahri in 2005 to the prominent Jihadist Abu-Musab Al Zarqawi in Iraq, urging Zarqawi to not be so excessive in his use of force and to not stray too far from popular opinion, sent shockwaves around the world among Salafi Jihadists. Maqdisi who spent time in jail with Zarqawi in Jordan felt that more needed to be done than just killing, and that Jihad had become impure (interview with Abu Mohamed Al Maqdisi's follower, 13 August 2012). Popularity through social welfare activities is believed to underpin the ability of the Salafi Jihadists to establish an Islamic state. This was a minor route towards a higher goal, and not an objective in and of itself (interview with Abu Mohamed Al Maqdisi's follower, 13 August 2012). Work has been carried out in Tunisia, Yemen and Somalia under the theological guise of purifying the Jihad, which Maqdisi had felt became far too extreme, random and unnecessary. Libya's Jihadists have appropriated this desperate need for a long-term vision, the heralding of an Islamic state, ruled by *shari'ah*.

The ASL has faced a multitude of public relations and image crises since their inception, which have almost destroyed the group. The main challenge came on 21 September 2012, after the assassination of the American ambassador in Benghazi, when around 30,000 civilians protested at the presence of non-government militias in the city. They attempted to forcibly remove ASL and other non-government brigades from Benghazi, and were successful in removing them from their camps. ASL members either went home or fled, but regrouped shortly after as a national brigade with training camps in Sirte and Derna. Their work also expanded shortly after to free security at the hospital, free medical care clinics, distribute food on the Eid al Udha celebrations, and practice religious mediation during local religious disputes (interview with the mediator between the government and members of Ansar Al Shari'ah, 26 June 2014). They also began a national anti-drugs campaign across the country, hosted local youth organizations and members of the public in conferences in Tripoli and Benghazi, and were supported by local and national businesses. This topic and its effect gained massive buy-in from the community in Benghazi (interview with Zway, 2013). Those who attended did not necessarily subscribe to the jihadist worldview of Ansar Al Shari'ah, but were certainly sympathetic with the group's distinct lack of a political party line and factionalism, and their closeness to solving vital social issues in a conservative country suffering from modern problems.

Their social welfare work has led many to believe that they could be preparing for the announcement of an Islamic state (interview with Shuwail, 22 January 2012). Their ability to grow in numbers, despite a strong backlash from civil society, which has attempted to taint them, is miraculous. It remains to be seen how they will react as the political landscape changes. What will remain constant is how they continue to recruit other North African and potentially Western European recruits for the regional jihad in Syria or the Sahel. The training camps in Derna and Sirte have been used to train and send foreign recruits (notably Tunisians) to Syria and Mali.

Their evolution is certainly part of a wider localized trend of Salafi jihadist groups that do not necessarily fit into the strategy of groups such as Al Qaeda. What is certain is that over the next decade North Africa and the Sahel's Salafi Jihadists in countries

attempting revolutions or armed uprisings will look to Libya's maturing Salafi Jihadists to play a military or state-building role.

The Muslim Brotherhood – from doctrine to party

The Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has the longest history as an opposition group to the Gaddafi regime. Its emergence as a true force in the region was both a political response to colonialism and a theological response to the lethargic role of pro-government religious institutions and the destruction by the Gaddafi regime of the ground previously held by traditional Muslim *maliki* scholars. In this way, Libya's turbulent political history of conflict and dissent and its future in the fragile transition would be incomplete without understanding the role of the Muslim Brotherhood.

A history of violence

The Muslim Brotherhood's introduction into Libya via Egyptian members in 1949 is characterized by exile and refuge. Under the Gaddafi regime, its membership was made effectively illegal in 1973 upon the announcement of the 'Cultural Revolution'. The leadership was detained, and Gaddafi took the mantle from Gamal Abdel Nasser in a much more severe crackdown. During this period, as would occur in the future, members conducted their work in secret. Their activities were not overtly political, remaining mainly of a religious nature. They included:

1 memorizing the Quran;
2 studying *tafsir* – or commentaries on the Quran;
3 purification – techniques learned through Brotherhood publications.

The leadership structure in theory was similar to that of the Egyptian brotherhood, with a *Maktib al Irshad* – office of the supreme guide, accompanied by a *Majlis Al Shura* – advisory council. In reality, these structures were weak and the real strategy was to 'keep the idea alive' with basic activities. This strategy of survival characterized the 40 years of the Muslim Brotherhood's existence in Libya.

Gaddafi's strategy was to purge the group of its leadership almost every five or six years. In 1973, 1981, 1989, 1995 and 1998 the group's leadership was arrested and imprisoned (interview with Muslim Brotherhood's head in Libya, 3 August 2012). Outside Libya, many of the members who fled would end up in the United States and Europe as students, and reorganize themselves. By the early 1980s they began to work with the National Front for Salvation of Libya (NFSL), creating paramilitary organizations with the objective of assassinating Gaddafi and toppling the regime by way of military force. The group was fractured, due to doctrinal differences, with the Muslim Brotherhood establishing *al harakah al Islamiyyah* – the Islamic group – though they continued to work alongside the NFSL for some time in toppling the regime. These operations included Operation Algeria (1985) and the 1986 war in Chad. Ironically, the adoption of violence by members in 1981 came during the same year that the Egyptian brotherhood formally renounced violence in 1981, following the alleged assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Over the next two decades the Egyptian Brotherhood would adopt a social democratic welfare strategy in poverty-ridden areas, winning over

Egyptian society, fielding independent candidates in elections, and gradually participating in Egyptian politics as a quasi-political opposition. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood was not afforded any of the same avenues for direct political and social participation as their Egyptian counterparts.

The revolution was the first time members could talk and operate freely. It also provided opportunities for many members of the Muslim Brotherhood to finally participate in the front lines. However, their affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood never seemed to penetrate further than Islamist sympathies, and as such they never created an armed wing of the brotherhood. Their real expertise, it seemed, was the experience of building and maintaining an organization under difficult political circumstances. The Muslim Brotherhood played a stronger governing role during the revolution. They took senior positions in the NTC government and local government councils during the revolution, and would continue to consolidate political rather than military power. This new experience in government, but lack in social or political activity for over 40 years, would be a hindrance to their political aspirations by the time the revolution had come to fruition.

Justice and Construction party

By 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood had in essence followed the examples of Tunisia and Egypt by creating the Justice and Construction party. They established 20 to 25 offices around the country, and fielded individual candidates for the country's first democratic elections in over 50 years, which took place in July 2012. While typically thought of as highly organized with widespread and notable membership, their historical lack of social capital would see them fare differently than the Muslim Brotherhood's Tunisian *Nahda* political party and the Egyptian Freedom and Justice party, which won landslide victories in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

The Libyan Justice and Construction party was only able to win 19 seats from 80 of those reserved for political parties. From the entire 200 it is thought that by way of collation they had at best around 80 candidates with affiliation or loyalty to the party. This failure to win over the Libyan people at the ballot box was a shock. However, it would seem their history of secrecy and violence as a group, and lack of clear pragmatism in dealing with political foes played against them at the first elections. The country is also already distinctly socially conservative, with little signs of social groups or political parties willing to tamper with the social fabric. Libya has none of the supposed liberalism found in Tunisia or the religious divide in Egypt. Where liberals were fractured at the ballot boxes and spoiled for choice in Tunisia, and aligned to the previous regime in Egypt, they almost didn't exist in Libya. Mahmoud Jebril, the head of the 'liberal' National Forces Alliance (NFA), an alliance of 60 secular parties, was able to achieve two feats that his Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts were unable to do in defeating the Muslim Brotherhood at the ballot box. First, the NFA created a single liberal or 'non-Islamist' alternative for the Libyan electorate in order to consolidate the myriad number of possible voting choices into one direction. Second, the NFA was able to break the monopoly on Islam that the Muslim Brotherhood has enjoyed in the region for almost a century. Where this rhetoric would divide voters in Egypt and Tunisia, Jebril positioned himself as a devout and practicing Muslim with an economic vision. The Muslim Brotherhood's own previous collaborators during the resistance to

Gaddafi from *al harakah al Islamiyyah* and the NFSL would also field candidates and create political parties with a leading 'religious' component. As such the NFA was able to both co-opt and capitalize on the weaknesses of the group, defeating the rhetoric of Islamists in Libya, where Tunisians and Egyptians had previously failed.

Assessment and conclusion

Today the Justice and Construction party only remains capable of winning over a single demographic, which will most certainly decline by the next elections. Their leadership is weak, and their policy of not working with the NFA and recalling five key members from Prime Minister Ali Zeidan's cabinet in January 2014[3] reflects an entrenched position of unyielding dissent and opposition to political foes found in the Muslim Brotherhood's history. The transformation from social doctrinal movement to full political party of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood was spurred on more out of opportunism because of regional party success than a sincere intellectual discussion and internal evolution from within the group. Their political objectives remain unclear, and their vision lacking any clarity. The *coup d'état* of 30 June in Egypt ousting President Morsi, leading to a massive violent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood party and movement, has also inspired fear within the Muslim Brotherhood ranks in Libya. Where the Egyptian brotherhood has typically flourished, evolved and gone on to become more liberal and democratic in times of repression, the Libyans have had a different experience.

The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood has responded by pressuring former Prime Minister Zeidan to call for local municipal elections. These elections would bring in 'the second in line of political and economic authority', which were loyal to the Mubarak regime in Egypt and, by extension, the army. The Libyan Brotherhood believe this was crucial to the Egyptian 'catastrophe' and that they are organized enough to win these local seats in Libya. It is ultimately a preventive measure and part of a wider defensive strategy, should they come under a similar crackdown in the future. They have also suffered a great deal from the populist atmosphere that has coincided with the Arab Spring. The lack of programmes across North Africa for the transition, and renewed 'slogan chanting in the public squares of "*irhal and degage*"', have since turned to fear mongering and new anti-brotherhood sentiment. The Justice and Construction party and Muslim Brotherhood are aware of the dangers that accompany such a new turbulent political environment for the future. This leaves the movement and the political party at a crucial crossroads, with only a limited number of options they can take.

To regress in their movement's evolution, and to regroup in the way in which *al harakah al Islamiyyah* had done, would see the brotherhood employ violence through paramilitary methods or creating a new armed branch with a revolutionary militia as a short-term measure in the face of a similar crackdown, as occurred in Egypt. This hybrid model perhaps has some truth due to the group's alleged close ties with one of the most powerful revolutionary militias in the country from the city of *Misrata*.

Another alternative would be to continue to progress in their current form as a party. The Justice and Construction party realize they must adopt a more pragmatic line to working with other factions and parties in order to make these advancements. They currently refuse to do so at what they perceive to be a crucial moment in the country's transition, with the drafting of the constitution. They also understand that for the future, the need to buy good will is crucial to the party's success. This could accompany a

renewal of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's welfare-based social democratic activities, but the current leadership under Mohamed Sawan has so far been unable to do so.

Or, finally, the group could collapse and fracture into new parties defined by new realties. Under Sawan's leadership, the group has refused to deal with the NFA and leaders have not even met in private to talk. A meeting was almost brokered between Sawan and Jebril in 2013, but the plan collapsed because agreements could not be reached over the location and who would host the meeting. Such a policy has threatened to fracture the party, with senior founding members and crucial financial backers already claiming to have lost confidence with Sawan (interview with Justice and Construction party former members, 13 December 2013).

The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood will most likely retain a degree of distrust towards the emerging system, leaders and political groups such as the NFA. This is due to counter-revolutionary forces in neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia. In the short term, this will bring the Muslim Brotherhood members together. However, the group faces internal problems as it enters these crucial stages in its evolution, which will change the group and party in existential ways that could never have been thought of before the 'Arab Spring'. The transition in Libya will test the political skill of post-revolution elites and organizations, in general, and the Muslim Brotherhood's evolution, in particular.

Notes

1 Gaddafi, televised 'House to House – Zenga Zenga' speech on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriyyah Channel, 22 February 2011.
2 Sheikh Mohamed Al Tarhuni, a Salafi Jihadi scholar linked to Ansar Al Sharia', issues a fatwa on 'Democracy and the heresy of the political parties and the Muslim brotherhood' in November 2013.
3 He was voted out by the transitional parliament on 12 March 2013.

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11

The Uprising in Bahrain

Regional Dimensions and International Consequences

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

This chapter examines the regional and international dimensions of Bahrain's aborted revolution. It describes how the pro-democracy movement that erupted in early 2011 became entrapped in the crosshairs of regional and international geopolitics. This ensured that the burgeoning social movement in support of peaceful political reform was violently contained as Bahrain's international partners opted to look the other way. Yet, this occurred at a very high price economically and politically, and it shattered social cohesion in a country polarized as never before. Moreover, it shredded the image of 'business-friendly Bahrain' that had formed the cornerstone of the country's economic diversification and development programmes. Bahrain's unhappy experience has implications for the ruling families of other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, as they also struggle to adapt to greater participatory pressures and societal demands for political freedoms.

The opening section describes the uprising in Bahrain. It demonstrates how the current unrest forms part of a cycle of recurrent periods of contestation and predates the 'Arab Spring' revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. This leads into the second section, which examines how the range of governmental and opposition responses have redrawn the political landscape within the country. The third section explores the regional and international dimensions to the uprising and contextualizes it within an upsurge of sectarian rhetoric directed against Iran. This occurred as GCC governments sought to externalize the roots of unrest and to discredit oppositional elements within their own societies. It also highlights the very differing reactions from Bahrain's external partners and from international civil society organizations.

The Pearl Roundabout uprising

Bahrain has a long history of popular opposition to the Al-Khalifa dynasty rooted in policies of unequal and selective development. Periodic outbreaks of major social unrest have alternated with periods of détente in cycles dating back to the 1920s. Sustained and organized campaigns for more rights occurred at regular intervals in 1921–1923,

1934–1935, 1938, 1947–1948, 1953–1956, 1965 and 1975, with the 1950s being notable for the creation of a non-sectarian social movement that openly challenged the ruler, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, and his longstanding British adviser, Sir Charles Belgrave (Peterson 2001: 587–588). Feelings of popular anger against British policy towards Egypt and the Suez Crisis in 1956 and, subsequently, the appeal of Arab nationalism and socialism provided a platform around which disparate groups could coalesce. However, after 1979, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and alleged Iranian involvement in an attempted coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981, cast a shadow over such cross-sectarian mobilization (Alhasan 2011: 603). Under the Shah, the Iranian government had maintained a longstanding territorial claim to Bahrain, and while this was dropped following a United Nations-sponsored fact-finding mission in 1970, periodic statements by Iranian officials reiterating that Bahrain was Iran's 'fourteenth province' caused lingering tensions in Manama. During the 1990s, the longest sustained period of pressure on the Bahraini government culminated in an uprising between 1994 and 1999. It pitted advocates of political and economic reform against a ruling family determined to maintain the status quo and to avoid diluting or distributing its power (Fakhro et al 1997: 167–168).

The longstanding ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa died unexpectedly in March 1999 and was succeeded as Emir by his son, Hamad bin Isa. Similar to the case in neighbouring Qatar, the process of generational change of leadership was followed by a programme of tentative political reform. A series of constitutional reforms were launched in November 2000 that promised much but ultimately delivered little of substance. In 2001, the draconian 1974 State Security Law that had provided cover for the suppression of political opposition and massive human rights violations (under the charge of a British national until 1998) was scrapped. Constitutional changes were laid out in a National Action Charter that was overwhelmingly approved by 98 per cent of Bahrainis in a referendum on 14 February 2001. This paved the way for the return of an elected assembly in 2002, 27 years after the suspension of the previous short-lived (two years) parliamentary experiment in 1975. Also as part of the reforms, Bahrain became a constitutional monarchy, with the Emir taking the title of King (Ehteshami and Wright 2007: 919).

However, the initial promise of a unicameral elected legislature was subsequently diluted by the addition of an upper house of royal appointees. Low confidence in the sincerity of the political opening also led to a range of political societies boycotting the 2002 election. The significance of this move should be appreciated in terms of the broad range of political societies involved, which collectively spanned the ideological and religious spectrum. Although most societies subsequently participated in the 2006 and 2010 elections, the former were marred by allegations of systematic fraud and gerrymandering while the latter followed a heavy-handed clampdown on opposition members and human rights activists. During the run-up to the 2010 election, accounts of the arbitrary detention of opposition members and human rights activists, and allegations of torture seemed to herald a return to the repressive measures in place during the 1990s uprising. Meanwhile, socio-economic discontent was bubbling up, propelled by high levels of unemployment; the inability of economic diversification to generate sufficient jobs or economic opportunities for Bahraini youth; and popular anger at perceived corruption at the heart of the Government (Davidson and Coates Ulrichsen 2010).

Feelings in Bahrain were running high even before the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt rocked the Arab world. It was in this context of rising tension that Bahraini

organizers planned a day of protest on 14 February 2011. The focus of the planned protest aimed at securing greater political participation and accountability, rather than targeting the position of the king or the ruling family in Bahrain. The date was symbolic as it marked the tenth anniversary of the referendum that had approved the National Action Charter in 2001. It also followed in the wake of the popular uprisings that swept away the Bin Ali and Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The inspirational sight of largely non-violent demonstrations, defying political suppression and refusing to submit to the security regimes that had kept authoritarian leaders in power for decades, was transformative. Cafés in Manama that usually showed Lebanese music videos were instead filled with images from Tahrir Square in Cairo that transfixed their audiences; the same was happening elsewhere throughout the region. Emboldened protesters voiced their demands ahead of the 14 February day of protest for greater political freedom and equality for all Bahrainis (Lynch 2012: 109–110).

Although initially small in scale and predominantly confined to Shiite villages outside Manama, the demonstrations gathered momentum after Bahraini police killed two protesters on 14 and 15 February. They also migrated to the heart of the capital's Pearl Roundabout, close to the flagship Bahrain Financial Harbour. Ominously for the regime, the demonstrations quickly assumed popular overtones as Sunnis and Shiites alike gathered in unprecedented numbers and chanted slogans such as 'No Shiites, no Sunnis, only Bahrainis.' The rapid mobilization highlighted how quickly the lack of trust felt by many activists towards the government could assume a more radical stance. By the evening of 16 February, tens of thousands of overwhelmingly young Bahrainis were camped in Pearl Roundabout and shouting 'Down, down Khalifa!' These chants were aimed at the prime minister of 41 years, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, rather than at the ruling family itself, but the dramatic cross-sectarian escalation directly threatened the government's grip on power and domestic legitimacy. It panicked the regime into a violent response, as security forces stormed the roundabout in the middle of the night and opened fire on demonstrators (Coates Ulrichsen 2011a).

As the protests moved into a new post-clampdown phase, the government reacted by sponsoring counter-demonstrations to try to fracture the social movement confronting them. Thousands of pro-government supporters gathered at the Al-Fateh Mosque in Juffair on 21 February (and again on 2 March 2011) to declare their support for the regime. They formed The Gathering of National Unity (TGONU), consisting of a loose umbrella grouping of loyalist Sunni communities spanning a spectrum of Salafist, Muslim Brotherhood, tribal and urban communities, all loyal to the regime. In response, an estimated 200,000 Bahraini citizens (one in three of all Bahraini citizens) participated in a pro-democracy march to the Pearl Roundabout on 25 February, as two massive columns of protesters converged on the roundabout to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman. This represented a level of societal mobilization unprecedented in any of the Arab Spring movements in 2011 (Lynch 2012: 110).

With the position of the ruling family clearly in jeopardy, negotiations between the regime's leading modernizing figure, the Crown Prince, Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, and the largest opposition political society, Al-Wifaq, commenced in March. Despite coming close to an agreement based around a set of agreed political reforms (the 'seven principles'), the talks broke down when Al-Wifaq refused to enter a formal dialogue unless the government agreed to a new constitutional arrangement. Accordingly, the

offer of talks was withdrawn, and on 14 March the GCC sent in its Peninsula Shield Force to help restore stability in Bahrain. In reality, this consisted of 1000 men of the Saudi Arabian National Guard and a contingent of 500 military police from the United Arab Emirates. They provided the essential backbone while the Bahrain Defence Force pursued and arrested several thousand people across the country in a prolonged campaign of political repression and retribution (GSN 2011a).

A state of national emergency was declared the following day, 15 March, that lasted until 1 June 2011. There followed a crackdown as the Bahraini government pursued all forms of dissent, detaining doctors and lawyers for treating or representing detainees, suspending opposition political societies and arresting their leaders, and detaining a founder of Bahrain's major independent newspaper Al-Wasat, who subsequently died in custody (BBC 2012). Up to 2000 mostly Shiite public-sector and 2400 private-sector workers were dismissed from their positions for 'absenteeism' during the demonstrations. Widespread tactics of intimidation also included the destruction of Shiite shrines and the display by protesters of pictures of prominent Shiite leaders with nooses around their necks. Meanwhile, a relentless propaganda campaign was unleashed on Bahrain TV and through the state media, portraying dissidents as 'traitors' and inciting violence against them (D'Almeida 2011).

Simultaneously, the Bahrain National Guard embarked on a hasty recruitment drive in Pakistan to augment its limited manpower with non-Bahraini personnel with less direct connections to the civilian protesters whom they were charged with controlling. Although Bahraini Shiites were already barred from holding senior-level positions in the Bahrain Defence Force and the police, this reinforced the sense of exclusivity and partiality in the security services (Gengler 2012a). Meanwhile, the bulldozing of the Pearl Roundabout, with its iconic monument to Gulf unity, on 18 March represented a crude attempt to destroy the symbolic heart of the protest movement. With this act, the authorities hoped to prevent it from becoming an anti-regime equivalent of Cairo's Tahrir Square. However, it highlighted the darkly ironic nature of the emerging counter-revolution, as the Pearl Monument had been erected in 1982 to mark the creation of the GCC. Its six pillars represented each of the GCC members, yet it was destroyed just days after the entry of those same Gulf forces into the kingdom (Farmer 2011).

Martial law was lifted on 1 June 2011, and shortly thereafter the king convened a National Dialogue and created an ostensibly independent investigation into the springtime unrest. Through these initiatives, the government hoped to begin a process of reconciliation with the opposition. However, their flawed implementation widened the chasm between the Al-Khalifa and their opponents by casting serious doubt on the credibility of the commitment to reform. They also revealed deepening divisions within the ruling family as a hard-line faction emerged around the increasingly powerful bin Ahmed brothers – Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, the head of the Royal Court, and Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, the chief of the Bahrain Defence Force (Cockburn 2011).

Reconfiguring the political landscape

The National Dialogue convened on 2 July and ran until 30 July 2011. It began under a cloud following the 22 June decision of the National Safety Court to sentence 13 prominent opposition figures to varying terms of imprisonment. The majority were committed to non-violent protest and many had participated in the aforementioned

political liberalization process that had been launched by the king after the end of the previous bout of internal unrest in 1999. In addition to amounting to 'a who's who of the predominantly Shiite opposition', they included the head of the secular-leftist Wa'ad political society, Ibrahim Sharif. Their imprisonment illustrated the gloved-fist nature of the regime's approach, jailing some of its opponents while simultaneously reaching out to others. From the start, the National Dialogue suffered from a credibility gap. Despite winning up to 45 per cent of the vote in the October 2010 parliamentary election, Al-Wifaq was only granted 5 out of 300 delegates. This was consistent with the overall composition of the dialogue, in which delegates representing all Bahraini opposition societies only constituted 11.67 per cent of total participants. The remaining dialogue members overwhelmingly favoured keeping the regime in its current shape. Moreover, core opposition demands for redrawing electoral boundaries, greater proportional representation and creating an elected government were not on the agenda. Neither was any discussion permitted of the nature or extent of the ruling family's power (GSN 2011b).

Al-Wifaq withdrew from the National Dialogue halfway through, its own judgement to participate being called into question by its critics. The dialogue continued, and concluded with a series of recommendations, including one that the prime minister (rather than the king) would appoint the government. As the long-serving prime minister (in office since 1971) represented one of the key obstacles to reform, this hardly constituted a political concession. Nor did the dialogue come to an agreement over the electoral boundaries, another major opposition grievance. Far from drawing a line under the unrest, the flawed process reinforced existing divisions and signalled that critical issues of political contention were simply not open to debate (Coates Ulrichsen 2011b).

The National Dialogue partially overlapped with the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). This was established by King Hamad on 29 June to 'enquire into the incidents' in February and March and their consequences. Its chair was Egyptian Professor Cherif Bassiouni, who led the UN Security Council commission that investigated war crimes in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The BICI report was published on 23 November. In a televised speech in front of the king, Bassiouni stated that the authorities had used torture and excessive force during its crackdown on protesters. He pinpointed a culture of non-accountability among the security services operating during the state of emergency, and accused unnamed officials of disobeying laws designed to safeguard human rights. Furthermore, he argued that many of the protests did not fall outside the rights of citizens to participate in, and that he had not found evidence of any link to Iranian involvement, contradicting regime narratives that ascribed them to external intervention rather than domestic grievances. The 513-page report painted a detailed picture of abuses of power by the Bahraini security forces and elements of the regime, most damagingly in its finding of 'systematic practice of physical and psychological mistreatment, which in many cases amounted to torture' (BICI 2011: 298).

In response to the BICI report, the king pledged to initiate reforms, and established a national commission to oversee their implementation. Yet the measures that were taken largely failed to address the roots of Bahrain's political and economic inequalities. In addition, they took place against a backdrop of continuing clashes and daily low-level violence between protesters and security forces. Specific reforms included the revocation of arrest powers from the National Security Apparatus; legislative amendments that expanded the definition of torture and lifted time-limits for the prosecution of cases; pledges to rebuild Shiite houses of worship destroyed by the regime during the

crackdown; and, the reinstatement of workers dismissed on grounds of political expression (Coates Ulrichsen and Fakhro 2012).

However, a report published in November 2012 by the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) entitled *One Year Later: Assessing Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Report*, concluded that:

> … the Government of Bahrain has fully implemented three of the BICI Report's 26 recommendations. Two other recommendations were impossible for us to properly evaluate due to a lack of available information, and 15 recommendations have only been partially implemented. Finally, the government has made no meaningful progress toward six of the recommendations, which are precisely the most important steps that need to be taken – accountability for officials responsible for torture and severe human rights violations, the release of political prisoners, prevention of sectarian incitement, and the relaxation of censorship and controls on free expression.
>
> *(POMED 2012: 1)*

Tensions in Bahrain have continued to escalate in the absence of meaningful or credible reform initiatives either from the government or the opposition. Continuous announcements of impending reforms have failed to translate into significant action to redress the abuses of power and responsibility identified in the BICI report. Crown Prince Salman – previously the spearhead of Bahrain's reforming elite – remains sidelined by internal struggles for influence within the ruling family. A flight to the extremes has occurred among both loyalist and opposition groups as advocates of compromise and consensus become outflanked by radical elements and advocates of violence over engagement. Another BICI anniversary report, published by Amnesty International in November 2012, concluded that 'The legacy of the BICI Report is fading fast, increasingly overshadowed by ongoing impunity for torture, the jailing of activists, and the ban on all protests. In the face of what increasingly appears to be a defunct reform process, those who have championed Bahrain's record on reform must be increasingly forced to challenge the charade' (Amnesty 2012: 36).

Across the political spectrum, radical voices have been empowered while Bahrain's political middle ground has been marginalized. In this environment of mutual mistrust, the convening of a new National Consensus Dialogue in February 2013 and the naming of the Crown Prince as first deputy prime minister in March did little to raise hopes that a political breakthrough might be imminent. The Crown Prince was just one of five deputy prime ministers all subordinate to the continuing power of the prime minister, and he did not join the national dialogue, as members of the opposition had wished. Moreover, the dialogue was restricted to discussions over the agenda itself, rather than actual negotiation over issues of substance relating to changes in the structure or balance of power within Bahrain. Given these difficulties the dialogue never proceeded to the point where the sides could agree to an agenda, and in December 2013 it collapsed amid mutual recrimination and a new round of arrests of senior opposition figures (GSN 2013).

The emergence of radical splinter groups means it is no longer possible to speak of a 'regime-opposition' dichotomy in any case. Elements of the opposition are growing more violent with an increase in bomb attacks carried out by members of the 'February 14' youth movement, while extreme loyalist groups calling on the regime to crush

the opposition once and for all have also intensified. Together, these trends are redrawing the political landscape of Bahrain by weakening the moderate wings of the government and the opposition whose leadership is vital to building support for political reform and reconciliation. Of particular interest is the splintering of the Sunni community that hitherto provided the backbone of support for the Al-Khalifa regime. This has fragmented as the initial Gathering of National Unity has largely broken up, though in truth it always identified itself as a 'soft opposition' with reform demands of its own. In its place, rival factions and individual groups have become increasingly vocal critics of government policy and have started to make political demands of their own. Partially borne out of frustration at the government's seeming inability to resolve the issue, groups of vigilante squads have started to take local enforcement of law and order into their own hands (Gengler 2012b).

While the government can no longer rally the 'Sunni street' behind it, the same can be said of the predominantly Shiite opposition. Al-Wifaq and the established political societies have been damaged by their failure to show substantive results from their decision to engage the regime. They have been outflanked by the shadowy 'February 14', which emerged at the time of the Pearl uprising in 2011. Little is known about 'February 14': one article described them as 'a confederation of loosely organised networks … faceless, secretive, and anonymous', consisting of 'thousands of supporters [who] have abandoned the failed leadership of the country's better established, but listless, political opposition' (Jones and Shehabi 2012). It is likely that it is 'February 14' that constitutes the vanguard of the protesters who confront security services daily. However, it is unclear whether those who subscribe to its ideology necessarily organize themselves through coordinated networks. Instead, their effectiveness comes from the sporadic, uncoordinated and unpredictable nature of their tactics, and their capacity to mobilize and coordinate large demonstrations at short notice. Their decentralized nature makes it more difficult for the government to reach out to them, or to prevent individual acts of violence, which have included a bombing in the village of Al-Eker on 9 April 2012 that injured seven policemen and a car bombing ahead of the April 2013 Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix (Toumi 2012; Reuters 2013).

Bahrain's shifting political landscape holds significant lessons for both the domestic legitimacy of the ruling family and for its regional and international partners. The speed with which the initial demonstrations for political reform escalated into calls for regime change among a significant segment of the demonstrators testifies to the low threshold of confidence in the regime's ability to reform itself. Calls for regime change were once the preserve of extremists such as the splinter *Haq* movement, yet they have migrated dangerously close to the mainstream opposition. Having witnessed the previous cycle of revolt (1994–1999) and political opening (2001–2010) end with the crushing repression in 2011, Bahraini opposition activists will be loath to give the government the benefit of the doubt in future reform initiatives. Nor is it clear that there exists a powerful advocate of reform within the ruling family or the government, as evidenced in the continuing inability to reconvene a new national dialogue organized around commonly agreed issues.

Regional and international implications

Developments in Bahrain have a significance that far transcends the island's shoreline. Its dwindling oil reserves mean that Bahrain functions as a bellwether for charting the

speed of the winds of change in the Gulf, as well as the challenges of transitioning to a post-oil future. The country is caught between powerful geopolitical cross-currents that give domestic developments a regional and international dimension. Both the Saudi incursion into Bahrain in 2011 and Riyadh's thwarted attempt to create a Gulf Union in 2012 stem from acknowledgement that it has the most to lose from prolonged or major instability in its eastern neighbour. This is particularly the case when seen through the regional prism of the hegemonic competition for power and influence in the Gulf between Saudi Arabia and Iran. From an ideological perspective, the ruling Al-Saud family has twice demonstrated – in the 1990s uprising and again in 2011 – that it is prepared to use force if necessary to support a fellow ruling dynasty in the Gulf. In addition to exercising political and security influence over Bahrain, Saudi Arabia wields economic leverage through the sharing of the Abu Safah oilfield, which generates the majority of Bahrain's fast-depleting oil reserves and revenues (Mills 2012).

This influence notwithstanding, the collateral damage to ruling families throughout the Gulf, were one of their number to be forced into making major concessions to popular opinion, still less ousted from power, is magnified still further in Saudi Arabia's case. This arises from the fact that Bahrain lies off the coast of its oil-rich Eastern Province with its large Shiite minority. Like their Bahraini counterparts, Shiites in Saudi Arabia have long complained of systematic discrimination and marginalization at the hands of state authorities (Jones 2006: 213). Worryingly for Saudi officials, the Eastern Province has been at the epicentre of 'the largest and longest protest movement in Saudi Arabia's modern history', replete with declarations of support by Shiite demonstrators for their Bahraini brethren across the water (Matthiesen 2012: 629).

These regional and international dimensions to Bahrain's uprising influenced a very different response to popular calls for change than in other Arab Spring settings. Just five days before Qatar and the United Arab Emirates rallied support for UN Resolution 1973 authorizing the creation of a No-Fly Zone to protect Libyans demonstrating in Benghazi against the Gaddafi dictatorship, these same states formed part of the GCC intervention designed to put an end to protests in Bahrain. Moreover, the international community, led by the US and the UK, effectively turned a blind eye to the repressive measures that followed. Indeed, mounting criticism of the Al-Khalifa regime from international civil society and foreign journalists contrasted sharply with muted statements from Bahrain's external partners. Aside from toothless statements urging all parties to commit to a generic reform process, there was little follow-up from foreign governments to ensure implementation and/or monitoring of declaratory commitments to reform. This became clear in a speech made by Secretary Clinton to the National Democratic Institute in Washington, DC, on 8 November 2011, which highlighted the multiple dimensions shaping US policy towards the upheaval in the Arab world. Arguing that 'it would be foolish to take a one-size-fits-all approach', Clinton went on to state that 'Our choices also reflect other interests in the region with a real impact on Americans' lives – including our fight against al-Qaeda; defense of our allies; and a secure supply of energy … There will be times when not all of our interests align … That is our challenge in a country like Bahrain' (de Young 2011).

At a time of rising international tension with Iran over its disputed nuclear programme, the US is hardly going to abandon a key regional ally and the host of its Fifth Fleet. Gerges has noted how the Obama administration 'has consistently measured every Arab uprising by whether it plays into Iran's hands' (Gerges 2012: 110). Gulf

rulers know which buttons to push in Washington to get the administration's support and head off potential criticism of heavy-handed actions. This provides succour to hardliners within the regime who oppose far-reaching reforms, even if some of them, most notably the minister of defence, have suggested (bizarrely) that the uprising was 'by all means a conspiracy involving Iran with the support of the United States'. Indeed, Khalifa bin Ahmed (mentioned earlier in his guise as head of the Bahrain Defence Force) went on to add, in his interview to Egypt's *Al-Ahram* newspaper on 6 July 2011, that 'More important than talking about the differences between the US and Iran' are 'their shared interests in various matters that take aim at the Arab welfare.' His sentiments were repeated by other Bahraini officials and media outlets, which appeared to genuinely believe that US policy was aimed at undermining the Sunni rulers of the Gulf based on an apparent ideological affinity towards Shiism (Gengler 2011).

However odd these feelings may seem, in light of the longstanding US security strategy in the Gulf, they tapped into a deeper streak of rising sectarian rhetoric, as ruling elites across the GCC struggled to respond to the new regional zeitgeist. Immediately after the Bahraini uprising in February to March 2011, a plethora of participatory pressures and demands for reform hit the Gulf rulers at their most vulnerable point. These included petitions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, signed by prominent intellectuals and activists; weekly demonstrations and episodes of violence in Saudi Arabia's restive Eastern Province; deadly clashes between protesters and demonstrators in a normally placid Oman; and escalating public protests in Kuwait directed against the unpopular prime minister there (Coates Ulrichsen 2011c).

Yet, in response to these pressures, and despite the grassroots calls for change focusing not on regime change, but on a more equitable distribution of political power, officials in the GCC turned to an old tactic of blaming Iran for meddling in their internal affairs. This externalized the roots of dissent and deflected them from any possible domestic grievances, trapping them into a wider struggle for regional power and influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Thus, in addition to the Bahraini foreign minister's claim that 'We have never seen such a sustained campaign from Iran on Bahrain and the Gulf as we've seen in the past two months', the foreign minister of the UAE bluntly warned Iran 'to respect the unity and sovereignty of Gulf countries' (*Saudi Gazette* 2011). This tactic served two purposes: first, it enabled the (Sunni) regimes to de-legitimize any (Shiite-led) opposition activity or demand for reform by conflating the issues of Shiite loyalties and Iranian manipulation into one amorphous threat. Second, by portraying demonstrators as disloyal and/or potential extremists, the regimes played a classic divide-and-rule card by hindering the emergence of a unifying cross-sectarian opposition. Both tactics were heavily used in Bahrain and elsewhere in the Gulf in 2011 (Coates Ulrichsen 2011c).

Conclusion: A delicate balance

The Arab Spring presents a myriad of challenges to foreign policy-making at a number of interconnected levels. The contagious wave of popular rejection of authoritarian misrule that swept four Arab leaders from power may have ebbed, but the impact of the Arab Spring is ongoing and transformative. The powerful reaffirmation of support for universal values, such as human and political rights and social and economic justice, has demolished any perception of 'regional exceptionalism' in the Middle East.

This challenges the cosy inter-relationship that for decades existed between regional strongmen and their political and security partners in the West. It requires that officials both in Western and in regional capitals formulate a new approach that better balances geopolitical and commercial interests with greater concern for human rights and political reform. However, the radicalization of the initial protests additionally carries a cautionary lesson for regimes as Bahrain's experience demonstrates how rapidly positions can polarize and inflict immense damage on social cohesion.

Domestically within Western states, pressures from parliamentary and advocacy groups to make a principled defence of universal values frequently clash with commercial and strategic interests arising from the benefits accruing from regional and international partnerships and alliances. This is particularly so in the case of the hydrocarbon-rich Gulf States, which are sources of much-needed foreign investment (and concomitant job creation) at a time of economic weakness and austerity in Europe and North America. However, the rise of 'citizen journalism' and public empowerment across the Middle East and North Africa has changed the parameters of policy-making. Together, they constitute powerful new methods of holding governments and officials publicly to account for their actions. This is as true just as much for Western partners as it is for local regimes. Moreover, the instantaneous spread of information and sharing of uncensored, raw footage magnifies manifold the impact and reach of individual events and the reactions to them. The fact that there is no hiding place in today's interconnected world means that all governments are more vulnerable to public and political opinion than ever before.

Set against this are the structural ties that bind together countries in the inter-state system of alliances and partnerships. The strength of these connections and the sensitivity of countries to perceived external interference in domestic affairs have proved an awkward balancing act in the Arab Spring. Moreover, the conflation of the mobilization of Shiite communities with Iranian meddling demonstrates also how internal faultlines in the Gulf States intersect with external fissures within the region. This merging of domestic and international pressure is already – at the time of writing – being replicated in the deteriorating relationship between individual Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood. And while Bahrain has proven to be the sharpest clash between 'interests' and 'values' in the Arab Spring thus far, similar tensions may be expected to come to the fore should protests threaten other Gulf monarchies in the future, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

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12

The Arab Spring Comes to Syria

Internal Mobilization for Democratic Change, Militarization and Internationalization

Obaida Fares

The observer role: Participating in and narrating revolution

I must from the outset declare that I am writing this chapter as a human rights activist – and not as a trained academic. I was and continue to be involved in the events of the Syrian revolution; I cannot claim to be 'objective' or 'distant' from the narrative I present below. I am very much grateful to the opportunity given to me by the editor, Professor Sadiki, to tell my own 'story' of the Syrian revolution. As a kind of 'participant observer' my intention is to share some of my recollections and reflections with the reader by observing rules of ethics that other authors respect and abide by. The only difference is that my narrative is selective in the use of data as I am directly influenced by what I have seen, witnessed, heard and said, and the manner in which I conducted myself as someone who opposed the Bashar regime and believed my acting and thinking to be in support of Syria's quest for democratic change. The activist–observer role is not easy – I had to suppress names, leave confidential material out and had to constantly revise my ideas, in some instances, as I was myself learning in a situation that was constantly changing. My access to the data is partly informed by my membership of the pro-revolution voices in the Diaspora, and my acceptance in this margin of political existence depended on camaraderie, trust, friendships and personal relationships. Whether it is a sound judgement to write as an activist so close to the events and so biased, obviously against the Bashar regime, has depended on the support and moral courage of fellow activists as well as on their opinions of me as a trustworthy friend, and fellow of a wider fellowship of committed men and women, and youth groups, even children, who rose to champion one cause: freedom and dignity like fellow Arabs in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya, among other Arab states.

Historical background

In 1963, the 8 March Revolution took place, as the Military Committee of the Arab Socialist Al-Ba'ath party staged a military coup through which they managed to seize power in Syria. Following the coup, the committee started amplifying its influence and

expanding its network of supporters and allies within the Syrian armed forces. Led by Salah Jadid, the military committee overthrew the National Leadership of Al-Ba'ath party, which included Michel Aflaq, founder of the Baath party, and Amin al-Hafiz, president of the Republic. Shortly after the 23 February 1966 overthrow, Salah Jadid relinquished his military status to assert his dominance over the Al-Ba'ath party and Syria, and Hafez al-Assad became minister of defence.

In 1970, Hafez al-Assad led a coup overthrowing Salah Jadid and Nureddin Atassi, president of the Republic. He also imprisoned the leaders of the state as well as some of their comrades during what became known as 'the correctional movement'. On 21 November 1970, Al-Assad became prime minister and defence minister of Syria. Less than a year later, on 22 February 1971, he claimed presidential privileges. Following a referendum during the same year, Al-Assad was instated as the president of the Syrian Arab Republic, which made him the first Alawite president in the history of Syria. He was re-elected in consecutive referendums, which took place every seven years, until his death on 10 June 2000.

Hafez Al-Assad's times in power were not smooth as on more than one occasion people revolted against him. For example, during the late 1970s, Syria witnessed a revolution that was mainly led by the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and Al-Assad put a stop to it through what has become known as the massacre of Hama of 1982. This massacre was overseen by Hafez al-Assad's brother Riffat al-Assad, and resulted in the deaths of more than 25,000 people in the city of Hama, as well as the arrest of more than 70,000 others. It also resulted in refugee flows; it is estimated that around 200,000 people had to flee Syria (Batatu 1999: 274).

Following the death of his father, Bashar al-Assad took over the presidency. To be able to do so, the constitution was amended after an infamous session in the Syrian Parliament in order to lower the minimum age for presidency from 40 to 34.

During the first few years of Bashar's rule, Syria witnessed some openness and liberalization compared to his father. This period of liberalization was called the Damascus Spring, as cultural and political forums were established, and the first dialogues that shyly opposed the regime since the 1970s took place. This period of liberalization did not last for long and came to an end after a series of arrests and prosecutions (George 2003: 30–39). Despite the drawback, Bashar's rule had been generally described as more lenient than his father's, until the Syrian revolution of 2011.

Triggers of the revolution

Despite the fact that the revolution started spontaneously in Syria, there were several factors that paved the way for its inception. The Syrian government was aware of the potential spark of the people's uprising, and news from Damascus in February and March 2011 showed that Syrian authorities were exercising unprecedented kindness towards their citizens. For instance, several traffic and construction violations were pardoned. However, triggers of the revolution existed, despite the authorities' attempt to temper their behaviour towards the people.

The Arab Spring

The series of revolutions that took place in the Middle East certainly provided Syrian people with the motivation to initiate their own. The Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan and

Yemeni uprisings had a great impact upon the street in Syria, especially the Libyan revolution. The regional effect was greater than ever with the start of the Libyan revolution, as Libya's totalitarianism was comparable to that of Syria's under Bashar al-Assad's rule.

Syrian media also played a role through broadcasting news about different uprisings. The Syrian media was politicized as it focused almost completely on the Egyptian uprising, especially the tensions between Mubarak, the overthrown Egyptian president, and Bashar al-Assad. Damascus used the Egyptian revolution as an opportunity for revenge, and as a way to further demonize the pro-US axis in the region.[1]

This, however, had the opposite impact as it facilitated the spread of chants and phrases calling for the toppling of the regime. The most famous of those chants was '*Al-Sha'ab Yurid Isqat al-Nizam*', meaning the people want to topple the regime.[2]

World Wide Web

The rapid increase in the use of the Internet, generally, and social networking sites, particularly, have been major factors in sparking the Syrian revolution and in contributing to its continuity. The use of the World Wide Web facilitated the wide circulation of news, footage and videos. It acted as a unique platform for information-sharing between activists on the ground and media networks outside Syria. It also provided a channel for international media to have access to events taking place inside the country.

Social media has, to a great extent, helped Syrians to communicate securely and away from the eyes of security agencies, as communication between activists took place via Facebook and Skype. These means of communication also acted as the main platform for planning, implementation, follow-up and supervision for revolutionary and political bodies.

General public tension

The totalitarian state, maintained by the Ba'ath party since taking power in 1963, has created a state of silent anger and resentment among Syrians. During the long years of Al-Assad family rule, more than 70,000 Syrians disappeared after being detained by the regime, hundreds of thousands were displaced, more than 40,000 people were killed, and an estimated 20,000 people were imprisoned for more than a decade. This meant that the number of Syrian families who were aggrieved by the regime and anticipating the momentum to revolt was very large, and this constituted the base for the revolution.

Syrian expatriate communities

Many Syrians fled Syria due to political reasons under the rule of the Assad dynasty, and there are now many generations of Syrians living in exile (according to some estimates, there around 15 million Syrian citizens and expatriates living abroad). Many of them had never seen Syria, yet due to their family history resent the regime. Many of the Syrians living abroad have been exposed to good education systems and have thus obtained the skills necessary to be proactive. Moreover, and another important factor, Syrians abroad, especially those holding other passports, have freedom of movement and expression. Therefore, they are not subject to the same restrictions of average

Syrian citizens. Syrians living in exile, including those who have adopted the citizenship of their host countries, feared the long arm of Bashar's intelligence agencies. Those who had maintained contact with the homeland, including via visits back to Syria for business or family visits, were equally petrified that either they or their relatives back home could pay the price through imprisonment, torture or liquidation. Bashar's rule was noted for such tactics as collective punishment where relatives in the Diaspora engaged in anti-regime activism.

Syrian communities abroad have acted as the platform to lobby and influence public opinion around the world, which gave Syrians inside a sense of enthusiasm and hope. They have also become the driving force of humanitarian relief work, political lobbying, public relations campaigns and revolutionary media.

The start of the revolution

On 17 February 2011, a spontaneous protest in Souq Al-Hamidiya in the Al-Hariqa area in Damascus caused security forces to become fully alert. The protest erupted after a police officer assaulted a civilian in the area; a few hundred local traders and passers-by gathered to protest the assault. Protesters chanted for the first time: 'The Syrian people are not to be humiliated.' This chant and slogan has become one of the main slogans of the Syrian revolution. The interior minister at the time, Saeed Samour, showed up at the protest in order to address the protesters and calm them down. A video of the protest was quickly circulated among Syrians; it was the first protest to take place in Syria for decades. It was also the first time a high official appeared to address the public rather than repress them, even though he was seen telling protesters: 'This is called a protest; this is shameful!' (Turki 2012).

This gathering was considered a milestone on the road leading to the revolution, which started within less than a month. Syrians had not witnessed such a public gathering that was not organized by the state since Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1970.

On 26 February 2011, a number of school children in Deraa (southern Syria) drew graffiti on their school's wall (Arbeen School) in Deraa calling for the toppling of the regime. The children were arrested and tortured using a number of methods, including nail plucking. This brutality was overseen by Atef Najib, the president's cousin, and the head of the Political Security Branch in Deraa at that time, who told the children's families to forget about their children.

'The Syrian Revolution' Facebook page called for a protest on 15 March 2011 and identified Souq Al-Hamidiya as the starting point of the protest. The protest took place as planned with a few hundred joining. This was the first organized protest in the revolution, and was later considered as the first day of the Syrian revolution.[3] On 17 March 2011 the revolution page announced the first Friday of the Syrian revolution to be 18 March; this Friday was called the 'Friday of Dignity'.

Rumours about the beginning of the revolution emerged a few months after its start. People in Deraa claimed that the revolution began in Deraa and that the city witnessed the first and only mass demonstration on 18 March 2011. However, on the same day, mass demonstrations took place in Homs near Khalid Bil Al-Walid mosque, and in Baniyas demonstrations were led by Sheikh Anas Ayrout, who later became a prominent figure in the revolution. In Deraa, four people were killed by regime forces; they came to be known as the four first to have their names on the list of victims during the Syrian revolution.

Syrians continued to protest on a daily basis, and the protests started to spread swiftly across Syria. However, authorities dealt with these protests by force, which resulted in many deaths and injuries. Authorities started dealing with protesting cities in sequence, starting from Deraa, then moving towards the cities of Banyas and Latakia, which faced a large-scale crack down between March and June 2011. A few months after the start of the revolution, the whole of the Syrian army was unleashed against protesters, and amateur footage showed tanks and other war machines being deployed and readied in protesting cities.

Searching for identity

The main characteristics of the revolution were peacefulness and national unity. Slogans called for the unity of the Syrian people, freedom and the toppling of the dictatorial regime. However, the excessive use of violence against protesters, in addition to the indecisive response of the international community and its response with regards to the human rights violations by Syrian authorities, had negative effects on public opinion and pushed people towards religiosity, 'which gave them patience and granted them an opportunity for hope and justice' (author's interview with one of the leaders of the popular movements in Aleppo).

This religiosity has rapidly increased by the end of the first year of the revolution; Islamic flags were raised instead of the Independence flag.[4] On many occasions clashes and arguments broke out with extremists who wanted the Independence flag removed. Such arguments were not present during the first six months of the revolution; protesters used the official flag of the state in all their protests and demonstrations. However, in mid June 2011 calls were made to use a different flag, to be differentiated from the government's. These calls increased following the success of the Libyan revolution on 21 August 2011, which had boosted the morale of Syrian revolutionaries. Many were inspired by the Libyan model. Using a different flag was one of the most symbolic yet striking signifiers of how the Libyan revolution influenced the Syrian revolution. The flag was changed on 18 November 2011, following an announcement on the Facebook page of the Syrian revolution. That day, when the change took place, was called 'rise of the independence flag' and the same flag became adopted by all opposition groups. Following this all political, media and revolutionary institutions changed their logos and flags to reflect the independence flag instead of the old flag.

This religious trend became apparent in a number of ways, most importantly by revolutionary fighters growing their breads, giving brigades Islamic names as well as using a religious rhetoric in slogans and speeches made by armed groups.

In addition to the general increase in the religious rhetoric, political groups and movements with religious ideologies based in other countries started to organize and spread. These groups include the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, Hizb Al-Tahrir, Salafist groups as well as Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. However, in accordance with Law 48 issued by the People's Assembly on 7 July 1980, 'Any member of the Muslim Brotherhood is [henceforth] to be considered a criminal and be punished by death.'

The increase in the religious rhetoric can be explained politically through the following points:

- A strong reaction against the regime and everything associated with it became more intense. Syrians found an opportunity to express themselves in extreme and rebellious

ways against the Baath rule, which lasted for almost 50 years. A desire to reject and oppose the regime led many to express themselves in extremist ways. For example, blind sympathy with and desire to join the previously banned groups and parties emerged throughout the revolution.

- The lack of sustainable international community support resulted in a feeling among Syrians that they had been let down and left alone to face aircrafts and missiles. This has pushed many towards religiosity and spirituality, and even those who had never adhered to religious doctrines became more religious and spiritual.
- There is a general perception among leaders of brigades that the majority of influential donating individuals and institutions are of religious backgrounds and/or have a religious agenda. Therefore, many brigades chose to adopt a general religious outlook to secure funding and support by these donors.
- Joining and becoming affiliated with extremist groups has become a trend, even among secular activists for strategic reasons. This has been the case with many secularists who believe that extremist groups are well funded and are able to fight the regime efficiently. An activist from Deraa stated during an interview: 'I am an atheist, but I work with Jabhat Al-Nusra because they are well funded and very effective. It is a strategic choice I made. Also, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and they oppose the regime.'

The militarization of a peaceful revolution

As previously explained, Syrian revolutionaries have adopted a peaceful and patriotic narrative. It was clear that narrative in the early days was mainly inspired by other Arab experiences that preceded it, especially in terms of slogans and the general outlook. However, within weeks Syrians were able to develop their own slogans, their ways of protesting. as well as their way of documenting protests, etc.

From the first day of the revolution, authorities began arresting activists, men and women alike, and peaceful protests were faced with violence. On the second day of the revolution, during a protest infront of the Interior Ministry, the regime arrested more activists and included intellectuals, academics and artists. On 18 March 2011, security forces used live ammunition for the first time in the city of Deraa.

The use of live ammunition continued in different cities, while security forces and the army besieged Deraa at the end of March 2011 to force people to surrender. This siege resulted in the deaths of a number of children in the city due to food shortages and the lack of medical supplies. A number of artists and actors started a campaign which they called 'Milk for the Children of Deraa'. Other operations were also carried out against people; the city of Baniyas, for example, sustained a major invasion, which resulted in the deaths of many activists and protesters. Simultaneously, the number of detainees was systematically on the rise.[5] Before dawn on 8 April 2011, security forces supported by the army stormed the famous Clock Square in Homs, killing and injuring dozens of protesters, an incident that attracted international reaction at the time.

Authorities not only targeted activists taking part in protests, but also began taking the relatives of activists hostage, including women and children. This became clear by the end of April 2011 when authorities detained a number of children, tortured them to death and later handed their corpses to their families. In spite of the violence, activists continued with peaceful protests, and gave flowers and cool water to the Arab Syrian army soldiers. They faced bullets with peaceful protests, chanted slogans and performed

music. However, regime forces used brutality against peaceful protesters. For example Ghiath Matar, a young man from the city of Daraya in Damascus, who initiated the idea of giving flowers to army soldiers, was arrested and his body was returned to his family on 11 September 2011 with clear torture marks and a cut throat. Another example of the regime's brutality was Ibrahim Al-Qashoush. Al-Qashoush was one of the most famous singers of the revolution in the city of Hama, and was able to create a new style of revolutionary music. Ibrahim's body was found in a local river in Hama with his throat cut on 3 July 2011.

Pro-regime militias, called *Shabiha*, also started forming with help and support from the regime. The *Shabiha* became involved in several crimes, ranging from trying to stop civilians from protesting and taking part in a number of massacres in various cities and villages. For example, on 25 May 2012, Houla village in Homs came under heavy artillery shelling and bombardment, and *Shabiha* from neighbouring Alawite and Shiite villages entered al-Houla and carried out a massacre.

There are two type of *Shabiha* militias: Alawites and non-Alawite criminals. The Alawites belong to the same sect as the Assad family and high-ranking officials with in the regime. Alawites driven by sectarianism have been regime loyalist since the beginning of the revolution. Alawite-*Shabiha* are known for their full allegiance to the regime, and for having the ideological standing that motivates them to fight rebels.

The second type of *Shabiha* includes financially motivated criminals, who are hired by loyalist businessmen, particularly in the city of Aleppo. Some businesses feared losing their business interests, which are linked to the regime. Others also undertook the same role in order to demonstrate their loyalty to the regime, especially since some benefited from the regime turning a blind eye to their illegal business deals.

Authorities intensified violence towards protesters, in addition to the massacres carried out in various cities, prompting calls for arming the revolution four months after the outbreak of the revolution. These calls implied that the regime does not understand a language other than that of power and strength. Nonetheless, the initial signs of the armament of rebels appeared at least six months after peaceful protests.

Arming the revolution

By the end of August 2011, 691 people were known to have been killed by the regime, and the number of arrests was 20,000. This played a major role in pushing many soldiers to defect and desert the army in order to lead the formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Army defections started in the early days of the revolution. The first defection was by a soldier called Walid Al-Qashami from the Republican Guard, who defected on 23 April 2011 after being asked to fire on protesters in the city of Harasta in the suburbs of Damascus (a YouTube video of his defection is entitled 'Dissent recruits from the Republican Guard in Harasta, 2011'). Thousands of videos were later filmed by officers as well as soldiers, using the same presentation style. However, the majority of defectors either fled Syria or went into hiding. The turning point was the defection of Lieutenant Colonel Hussein Harmoush on 9 June 2011, who refused to leave Syria and formed a group called the 'Free Officers Movement'. He worked to reorganize army defectors to provide protection to civilian areas and peaceful demonstrations.

On 31 July 2011, Colonel Riyadh Al-As'ad declared his defection and announced the establishment of the FSA. The FSA became the umbrella body to include all

opposition fighters. Defections of soldiers and officers increased and with it more and more brigades were established. There were an estimated 2000 brigades in mid 2013. Some consist of thousands of fighters, while others are comprised of only dozens. Moreover, some include military defectors while others were formed by civilians who decided to carry arms against the regime. In December 2012, the FSA's chief of staff position was announced, and General Salim Idris was appointed in a move that received regional and international support.

The FSA's leadership, however, remains nominal; it does not have complete control over brigades, despite the fact that they all shared the flags of the FSA and its logo until mid 2012. In reality, FSA brigades operate independently; they have different sources of funding, different ideological orientations and different media platforms. This independence was caused by a number of reasons. First and foremost, different donors and sources of funding have different agendas, and political and ideological orientations. Leaders also have differing views and agendas, and they are the driving elements of the brigades.

As brigades attained more military gains, the outreach and impact of some leaders expanded, turning them into warlords. Other brigades stopped fighting against the regime only a few months after their establishment and focused on managing the areas evacuated by the regime. The rapid expansion of the power of some military leaders has become a major problem. An example of that is the establishment of the Free Syrian Brigade in mid 2012 by Ahmed Afsh and Ali Ballou, who shortly after became warlords. A 27-year-old, who worked as a construction worker before the revolution, Ali Ballou controlled 16 tanks, heavy weaponry and anti-aircraft missiles, and led around 3500 fighters in early 2013. He now travels in a convoy with around 20 personal guards (Ali Ballou, pers comm, 17 February 2013). Ballou and others from Syria ran and administered Syrian territories, and were influential in terms of political decisions made by political leadership.

Foreign fighters

Several reports have showed that since the beginning of the revolution, Russian and Iranian advisers were present to help the Syrian regime in managing confrontations with the Syrian people. As time went by, their role was not limited to advisory support; there were also fighters on the ground. During the two years of the revolution, it was reported that fighters from the Al-Quds Brigade (Failaq al-Quds) of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard were killed.

In addition to the direct Iranian involvement in the crackdown, fighters from Hezbollah have been actively taking part in the battle since mid-2012. Hezbollah made its involvement public in 2013 and the party's media platform mourned the group's dead fighters without explaining that they were killed in Syria. Hezbollah, however, often used the general term 'killed while carrying out his Jihad duties' to report on the death of its fighters.

In 2012, numerous reports and testimonies by army defectors and army officers arrested by the FSA provided evidence for the presence and involvement of Iranian and Hezbollah fighters in various operations with the regime, particularly in Homs and Damascus. On 25 May 2013, the secretary general of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, officially declared Hezbollah's involvement and support for the Syrian regime.

Similar to the regime, opposition forces received support from foreign fighters, who actively participated in the battles taking place across Syria. This resulted in a regional and international battle. Six months after the start of the revolution the name of Jabhat Al-Nusra appeared for the first time following a bombardment in Damascus. However, opposition forces claimed that Jabhat Al-Nusra is a myth created by the regime and that the attack was staged by Syrian Intelligence Apparatus to rally supporters.[6]

In January 2012, more foreign fighters began arriving in Syria, and on 24 January 2012 Jabhat al-Nusra made their presence known amid the Syrian public. Despite their denial of links with and Al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra fighters on the ground never denied links to Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda slogans and chants were being taught to Syrians living in areas that they controlled. The slogans and chants glorified Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and called for loyalty to the 'Leader of the Believers' Mullah Omar.[7]

Jabhat Al-Nusra became one of the strongest players on the ground, a few months after their appearance. They had access to considerable financial resources, compared to any other group. However, the source of their funding remains unknown. Moreover, Jabhat Al-Nusra fighters have great military experience, which FSA fighters lack. This is because Jabhat Al-Nusra fighters fought in the mountains of Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Iraq. They also have the linguistic, academic and cultural knowledge that enables them to adapt to and deal with different management and organizational circumstances. In different interviews with the author with members of the Free Syrian Army and Jabhat Al-Nusrah in the suburbs of Aleppo and Idlib, it appears that most foreign members of Jabhat Al-Nusrah speak at least two languages and some of them are well educated or university graduates.

The relationship between Jabhat Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda remained undeclared until 9 April 2013, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of what is known as the Islamic State of Iraq, announced the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) which pledges allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Al-Qaeda. Since the announcement, the ISIS has expanded, with Jabhat Al-Nusra receding into the background. By mid 2013, ISIS came to be considered the most powerful force fighting against the regime. It set up its own prisons, and was accused by opposition groups of imprisoning a large number of activists, such as Father Paolo, who was detained by ISIS in Al-Raqqa on 29 July 2013. ISIS had also been accused of killing and arresting a number of activists and FSA leaders.

The arrival of Al-Qaeda in Syria and its rapid growth remain unclear to political and military analysts, as it had been acknowledged that Al-Qaeda enjoyed a good relationship with Syrian intelligence agencies since the start of their operations in Iraq. In an interview with the author, a Syrian national who was member of Al-Qaeda in Iraq explained how he used to go to Syria in 2004 and 2005 to meet senior security officers, such as Asef Shawkat. The officers provided all kinds of support. Similarly, additional help was made available through Sheikh Mahmoud Agasi, who is claimed to be working with the Syrian Intelligence. Moreover, Al-Qaeda did not announce a position with regards to the situation in Syria for at least the first six months of the revolution. It had also been noted that Iran, a key ally of the regime and also thought to be a key ally of Al-Qaeda, had never been mentioned by the group.

Syrian authorities released a key Al-Qaeda strategist, upon the arrival of Jabhat Al-Nusra's. This poses many questions with regards to the role of the Syrian regime and its ally, Iran, and their relationship to Jabhat Al-Nusrah. It is worth mentioning

that Syrian authorities released Moustafa Sit Mariam Nassar on 20 January 2012, four days before the foundation of Jabhat Al-Nusrah. Known as Abu Musab Al-Suri, Moustafa Sit Mariam Nassar was handed over to Syrian authorities by the US during the Iraq war in 2006.

Civil movement groups

When the revolution began, Syrians were not sure about the next steps to take, as events in the country were unprecedented. Protests and demonstrations were surprising, and people could not comprehend the situation and were at the same time unable to react. That was the case of all opposition groups inside and outside Syria. Confusion and lack of clarity were reflected in the formation of different organizations and committees which emerged during the second month of the revolution. However, the establishment of such organizations and committees increased considerably in the fifth month of the revolution. It even became difficult for those following the revolution to tell the difference between the different groups and committees that emerged. This started to present a challenge to journalists and researchers, who confused political groups and committees, as well as the relationship between events and the groups involved. A database documenting the names all coordination committees and/or the FSA brigades remains non-existent.

Coordination committees were the first form of organizations that emerged inside Syria. They consisted of groups of activists working together discretely in villages or neighbourhoods for security reasons. The main role of coordination committees was to organize marches and protests, and they also provided media coverage of events. Media coverage included sending footage and videos to revolutionary media networks outside the country. Revolutionary media abroad, in turn, ensured a wide distribution of material. In most cases, communications between different coordination committees or with revolutionary media took place using aliases. The use of aliases has been one of the main characteristics of communication processes between revolutionaries regardless of their role. Aliases are still being used between some activists, for security reasons, and to ensure that if an activist gets arrested, the identity of those they are working with remains unknown to security forces.

Communication between coordination committees took place mostly using the internet and Skype. Skype has become the ideal communication tool between activists in Syria and abroad since it is also accessible on smart phones. Skype was even used for discussions on the formation of many field, political and military groups:

- Realizing the importance of networking and coordination, activists understood that there is a need to establish pan-Syria groups towards the end of the second month of the revolution. However, many field formations ended up disintegrating and decaying for several reasons, including the general lack of organizational skills among Syrians. The 50-year-old totalitarian regime ensured that organizing in all its forms remains largely a state matter. The only organizations present were those that belonged to the ruling party and the state.
- As for many activists, the revolution had been their first ever participation in public affairs; as a result there was a lack of skills and knowledge. In addition, many activists have never acquired organizational skills.[8]

- Security cautions, as well as the geographically scattered presence of activists, weakened all organizations formed during the revolution. Most activists participated using aliases, resulting in many infiltrations by different security agencies. Moreover, the presence of activists in different locations inside and outside Syria made arranging meetings difficult. Therefore, activists had to rely on the internet for communication.
- All work in groups and organizations that were formed on the ground came as a result of moral obligation and voluntary work. This, in addition to the use of aliases instead of real names, meant that commitment to these groups depended upon activists' enthusiasm and interest. However, firmly into its third year, many activists became demoralized due to the prolonged revolution and the difficult circumstances under which they live.

Local coordination committees of Syria

Secular activists established local coordination committees in Syria in May 2011. Despite the fact that their presence on the ground was weak during the two years of the revolution, as it was limited to raising banners in some areas, their media and political presence is strong due to their active media office. The role of the media office, which monitors news and communicates with media outlets, is effective and has become a main source of news for many channels. In addition, activists of the local coordination committees include the likes of Rima Flihan, Razan Zaitouna and Omar Edlbi, all of whom are members of important political opposition bodies.

Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union

The union was formed on 1 June 2011 by a number of coordination committees; among these committees were the coordination committees of Damascus and its suburbs, Deraa, Deir Ezzor and Homs (see Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union 2011). The union's main activists included Suhair al-Atassi and Amer Al-Sadeq. The aim of the union was to represent civil protests on the ground politically and on media platforms and to unify the fieldwork. However, the union's role faded with time due to internal division; as a result, its focus has turned to news and media monitoring.

Syrian Revolution General Commission

The commission was established on 2 August 2011 through an initiative by the Syrian Revolution Facebook page in order to create an umbrella body for all groups founded so far.

The commission's main founders included Obaida Fares, Suhair al-Atassi and Saleh Al-Hamwi. Upon its establishment, the commission represented the Syrian Revolution Page, Shaam News Network, Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union and more than 100 coordination committees, as well as other field formations. However, after a few months the commission was weakened by internal divisions and ended up being a media platform.

Political formations

At the beginning of the revolution, activists and opposition group members abroad were oblivious about the extent of what was happening on the ground. Therefore, their

efforts were limited to analysing developments, meeting other opposition figures whom they had previously known, and meeting diplomats and security officials in their countries of residence. It is worth noting that during the first three months of the revolution there was a lack of field and political formation. However, after a year, numerous formations existed. This delay was due to the fact that no one believed that the situation had reached a point of no return. This was not only limited to political class; it had also been the case among regional and international powers. No regional or international actor made a decision to support the ousting of the regime. Therefore, none of these regional and international powers had pushed the Syrian opposition to form such a political body; on the contrary, all security and diplomatic channels indicated the need for patience.

Existing political organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood movement, the largest opposition group, did not even have a clear vision and appeared reluctant to engage in the conflict. This could be due to the lack of belief that the revolution would last and succeed, in addition to the weak presence of the Muslim Brotherhood inside Syria and their deliberate choice not to seek attention, especially to the fact that the regime claimed that the revolution has been led by Islamists (Lund 2013).

However, within two months the shock began fading, and the political class were able to think strategically and to recognize the importance of political formations and groups that would unite individual opposition forces. Opposition groups have been stagnant for over 40 years, and have been scattered in over 50 countries around the world. This recognition resulted in a number of brainstorming and evaluative meetings that were held in May 2011, and connections between political activists started to grow.

The political groups that became active can be divided into four main categories:

- the politicized category, which includes the Muslim Brotherhood, Damascus Declaration, as well as other groups inside Syria;
- the businessmen category, which has the ability to influence politics due to their financial power, as no other funding was available as a result of the high costs of political activities (these businessmen include Ghassan Aboud, Kamal Sanqar and Mohamed Al-Hakimi);
- groups and individuals linked to regional countries;
- individuals who felt that the revolution would help them to pursue their political ambitions and that they might be able to drive change if they became involved at an early stage.

In early June 2011, all four categories realized the need for prompt action in order to achieve their interests, as the general perception at the time was whoever declared their project first would win the prize, or at least part of it. During June 2011, several competing political projects emerged; there were also frequent telephone consultations and hundreds of meetings between political activists. Istanbul has ever since become the main hub for these meetings, in addition to the countries that include large numbers of Syrian activists, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UK.

The *Antalya Conference* which was held on the 31 May 2011 was the first conference to bring together the Syrian opposition. The conference was supervised and funded by businessmen Ghassan Aboud and Kamal Sanqar, and was attended by 400 people. A few days later on 4 June 2011, another conference took place in Brussels funded by businessman Mohamed Al-Hakimi and was attended by 60 people.

The well-funded conferences did not result in the formation of a credible body. In spite of the hard efforts of delegates, the entities announced at the end of both conferences were weak and unsustainable. However, the conferences provided an opportunity for opposition figures to meet and to build networks that were be used to create coalitions later on. On the other hand, the media played a major role in introducing opposition figures to the world and to other opposition group members. For example, many opposition figures secured a position within the opposition and gained celebrity status through extensively speaking on popular TV channels and in regional and international newspapers.

After mid-August 2011, a group of around 20 political activists met in Istanbul to discuss the formation of a unifying political entity that later became known as the Syrian National Council. The author was a founding member of the group, and was one of those who called for the meeting and presented its first draft, which later became its manifesto. Discussions on the establishment of this Syrian National Council lasted for almost a month. Each of the 20 activists presented a number of names to the council, resulting in 77 nominated names, named the 77 group. The council was formally established on 15 September 2011. However, the Muslim Brotherhood Party chose not to announce its participation in the council. On 8 October 2011, the founding statement of the council was made officially public, declaring its structure and announcing that the Muslim Brotherhood had joined its ranks.

The Syrian National Council became internationally recognized as a representative of the opposition; this recognition was announced during the Friends of Syria Conference held in Istanbul on 1 April 2012. However, the council was not accepted by international and regional powers, especially the US, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Moreover, the council did not receive real backing from its main supporters, Turkey and Qatar, which did not allow it to carry out its political duties. The lack of recognition and backing resulted in heavy criticism of the council, and paved the way for a new political body to succeed it. On 11 November 2012, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was established in Doha. The coalition included in its ranks the Syrian National Council, and religious leader Ahmad Mouaz Al Khatib was elected as its president. On 12 December 2012, the Friends of Syria Conference held in the Moroccan city of Marrakech recognized the coalition as representative of the Syrian People. In December 2012, a number of countries, including France, the UK and Qatar, recognized the coalition's ambassadors and allowed them to set up offices.

Conclusion

The revolution broke out in Syria spontaneously and peacefully, following the current of change spread all over the Arab world, in addition to other factors. However, the excessive violence used by the regime against peaceful demonstrations resulted in the death of hundreds during the first months of the uprising. The international community's indecisiveness prompted many Syrian soldiers to defect and establish the Free Syrian Army. Composed of army defectors and civil volunteers, the emergence of the Free Syrian Army represented a shift in the revolution and pushed it towards militarization.

In line with the militarization, political and civil activism continued to create forums and entities to represent Syrians opposing the regime. During the early days, the opposition mainly consisted of Syrians living abroad, who were joined later by Syrians from inside the country, including those who had to leave recently and those who

resided in Syria. Most civil and political entities failed, and military actors have not been able to win the battle. This failure has been the result of the foreign and international intervention that started in early 2012. In all its forms, foreign intervention has undermined the will of the Syrian people and contributed to the prolonging of the conflict.

Notes

1 On 31 January 2011, the Syrian president's adviser Bouthaina Shaaban stated in an article entitled 'The Voice of the Masses':

> Today we hear the thundering voice of its people on the streets and know that they are making a new era. Is this the time for Arab masses to go the streets to force their will on governments which have, for decades, imposed their will, slogans, gods, failures, alliances and differences on their peoples without achieving any of their aspirations. Grievances, frustration, betrayal and political, economic and social failure accumulated, while the Arab ruling elites did not feel the simmering anger of the masses? The Syrian media and Hezbollah's media both broadcasted news about the Egyptian uprising in a continuous and celebratory fashion.

2 On 26 February 2011, kids from the governorate of Deraa wrote this slogan on a wall in their school; they were arrested and their fingers were broken. This provoked protests that became one of the milestones of the revolution.

3 'The Syria Revolution' Facebook page was set up on 18 January 2011 to become the first anti-regime page on Facebook. The page later became the official page of the Syrian Revolution, which decided the name of every Friday.

4 On Islamic Flags 'No God but Allah, Mohammed is Prophet of Allah' is written. These flags could be black, such as the ones used by Jabhat Al-Nusrah and Hizb Al-Tahrir, or white flags with the text in black, such as those used by Ahrar Al-Sham group, which is a Salafist group financed by some Gulf countries.

5 At the beginning of 2013 the number of detainees was estimated to be between 80,000 and 100,000, while the number of those detained since the start of the revolution is estimated to be around 200,000. Human Rights organizations face obstacles and difficulties in documenting detention cases due to unprecedented increase, on the one hand, and the current security conditions of the country, on the other. The lack of human rights access has resulted in an increase of kidnap cases, migration and refugee flows. This also reduced the ability of activists to monitor the disappearance of individuals unless families or witnesses provide testimonies with regards to their arrest.

   Other obstacles were present before the revolution, and they include the large number of different security forces and the disregard of all legal proceedings during arrests. Therefore, the tracking of detainees and those who had disappeared became impossible for local and international organizations.

6 For example, the attack that killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 featured in a recorded video by a group calling itself Jabhat Al-Nusrah and Al-Jihad. However, it is alleged that the person who was speaking in the video was Ahmed Abu Adas and Syrian Intelligence was the one behind the video.

7 Protests in the city of Bennish (Suburb of Idlib) in 2012 are documented on YouTube, Facebook, Al-Manara Al-Baydaa media production, and Al-Qaeda affiliated media platforms. Jabhat Al-Nusra's promotional videos were produced by Al-Qaeda media production platforms.

8 The author had regular meetings between 2011 and 2013 with activists and revolutionary institutions where discussions took place about the future of Syria. Many of these discussions had a regional and international dimension to them. However, many of those present at these meetings did not hold university degrees and had never discussed a political topic before. Strikingly, they were adamant about discussing complex topics such as holding the Syrian regime responsible in front of the International Criminal Court, appointing an interim government and referring the

case for the protection of civilians to the United Nations Security Council under the seventh chapter of the UN's charter!

Author's interviews

A. Ballou, Free Syrian Brigade founder, 17 February 2013, London [author's interview via Skype].
Abu Yasir, a leader of the popular movements in Aleppo, early months of the revolution, Aleppo, Syria.
Abu Nidal, an activist from Deraa, 5 January 2013.

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Yemen's Arab Spring

Outsmarting the Cunning State?

Elham Manea

Introduction

It is difficult to set a date for the start of Yemen's Arab Spring. The conflicting recollections of various participants reveal a great deal about the context within which the youth uprising took place, a context marked by tribal, regional and sectarian identities. It is precisely this political landscape – a Yemeni state that was created in 1990 out of the unification of North and South Yemen – that differentiates its uprising from its counterparts in Tunisia and Egypt.

In this chapter I argue that while the grievances of Yemeni youth arise from similar roots to those of Tunisian and Egyptian youth, the context within which this revolt took place was simply different. It was shaped by the politics of what I call the *cunning state*: a state run by ethnic core elites, who exploit the seams of international structures and capitalize on the fear of the international community over its perceived failure to perpetuate its grip on power.

In this chapter, I will first narrate several different recollections of how the Yemeni Arab Spring began. I will then move to explain the similarities between the grievances of youth in Yemen, on the one hand, and in Tunisia and Egypt, on the other. In the following section I will highlight the differences that set Yemen apart from the other two countries and then describe the features of the cunning Yemeni state. These features make it clear why it was not quite possible to fulfil young Yemenis' hopes for an end to the regime of former President Saleh.

The spark?

Ask people the starting date of Yemen's youth revolt, and you may be surprised by how conflicting their recollections will be.

Some, mainly youth and student activists, set the date in mid-January 2011, precisely one day after 14 January, when Tunisian President Bin Ali fled his country. That was the spark, they will say. Wameedh Mohammad Shakir, a leading female activist and human rights campaigner, explained to me that on the night when Bin Ali fled Tunisia,

she and some colleagues organized a demonstration in front of the French Embassy in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen: 'We wanted to tell them, take your hands off the Arab world's democracy.' It was a small demonstration, she said. 'A day later a huge demonstration started out of Sana'a University.'

Her account was supported by that of Tawakkol Karman, the human rights activist and joint winner of the Nobel peace prize, in her 28 April comment for the *Guardian*. She said that on 15 February a group of students from Sana'a University asked her to attend a vigil in front of the Tunisian embassy: 'The demonstration was astonishing; thousands turned up, and Sana'a witnessed its first peaceful demonstration for the overthrow of the regime!'

Others would set the date instead on 3 February, when the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), a coalition of six opposition parties which was part of the political establishment, decided to join ranks with the youth and demand 'reform' of the system (Elsyasi.com 2011).

The participation of the JMP would take a different turn after 20 February, when they called on their supporters to 'unite with the youth protesters and the masses of people in their protest activities, which reject the continuation of oppression, despotism, and corruption' (Al Jazeera 2011). Instead of 'reform', they started to use the Arab Spring's term 'leave', which called on Arab despots to step down from office.

Still other young people would insist that 11 February is *the* decisive date of the Yemeni 'revolution'. That was the date when Hosni Mubarak announced his resignation. In their celebrations, some students organized the first sit-in strike in Taiz, the most populous and fertile part of Yemen: 'We went first to the Tahrir Square and we were beaten [by security forces] and we had to move to Jamal Street and finally we withdraw to the Freedom Square. It was the first sit-in demonstration in the whole republic', Hisham Elribati, the coordinator of the Independent Youth of 11 February Revolution, explained to me later. Other youth and civil society activists organized demonstrations in Sana'a on the same day as well, but the main issue here is their affiliation with Taiz, the location of the largest Sunni governorate.

This youth movement insists on being 'independent'. They are 'sick' of the politics of political parties and were and still are 'afraid that it will interfere in the revolution and direct it towards partisan interests', as Elribati put it. Interestingly, its position was translated into one of the most popular slogans of the Yemeni youth revolt: 'No Partisan, no parties. Our revolution is a youth revolution.' Notwithstanding their slogan, it is difficult not to notice a leftist ideological streak in their statement.

Finally, yet another youth group would set the date as 16 February. Mohammad Ali Shaen died that day, the first protester to die in the Yemeni uprising. This group, the 16 February Peaceful Youth Revolution, is based in the southern part of Yemen, specifically the Aden governorate. Indeed, its main feature is its southern nature. Initially it was not politically affiliated with the Southern Movement known as *al-Hirak*, a loose affiliation of regional opposition organizations and activists in the southern provinces, which calls for an end to northern hegemony. In fact, Aden has often been a challenge for the Southern Movement: while it did not support the northern regime, it persistently refrained from joining al-Hirak. However, al-Hirak began to compete with the Islamist Islah Party, the strongest party in the JMP, to control this youth group. The two groups agreed on a ban on holding any flags, either the Unified Yemen flag or the Southern flag, during demonstrations. It was only after members of the old regime turned against Saleh at the end of March that al-Hirak was in a position to win

the 16 February youth group over to its side: 'the revolution, it was said, was hijacked. It was not a revolution any more. It became part of the old political system', Sami Ghaleb, editor-in-chief of the *Al Nedaa* newspaper, told me. Since then, in its protests and sit-in strikes, the group has specifically called for 'southern' demands.

Obviously, these conflicting dates reflect Yemen's complicated political landscape. Yet, regardless of which date sparked the revolt, one thing is clear. By 28 February 2011, the call for Saleh to step down had turned city squares into melting pots that managed to unify different groups that otherwise stood at odds to each other.

Same goal, same grievances, revolt expected!

If setting a date for the start of the Yemeni youth revolt is confusing enough, the goal of the revolt seemed to be clear, at least for the youth groups: 'Leave!' This one word captured the core of their demands. The country's dire conditions resulted from the politics of President Ali Abduallah Saleh and he should therefore step down. Young people I spoke to in Taghier Square in Sana'a on 28 February were sure about this much. They were convinced that 'when he steps down, things will be better' (Manea 2011c). And what would happen after that? That question seemed to startle them.

The slogans of the Yemeni youth were similar to those of their Tunisian and Egyptian counterparts. 'Leave' was the best known, but various posters called for 'employment', an end to 'patronage', a 'just state', 'accountability', and an end to the 'control of Saleh's family'.

Their demands were hardly surprising. Just like their Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts, young protesters in Yemen were demanding a future and a perspective in their own country. They wanted a country to call 'their own'. Of course, one can argue that the magnitude of poverty and problems in Yemen was not comparable to those in Egypt and Tunisia. But the roots are similar. With unemployment conservatively estimated at 35 per cent, more than 45 per cent of people living under the poverty line, 30 per cent of citizens without basic food security, and corruption permeating every level of the state's institutions, the revolt was hardly surprising.

Nevertheless, the issues that set the revolt in motion were not only economic in nature. Just like their Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts, the young Yemenis were disgusted by a 'pluralistic system' that resulted in neither accountability nor real alternation of power. All three Arab regimes seemed to follow to the letter the strategy of *controlled liberalization,* as defined by Daniel Brumberg (2003: 6, cited by Yom 2005: 23): 'a method by which governments give "opposition groups a way to blow off steam. The steam valve must meet opponents' minimal expectation of political openness … but prevent them from undermining the regime's ultimate control."'

In other words, all three countries had adopted the shell of a democratic legal organizational dimension, which calls for the 'legal existence of political parties and interest groups, and their integration into a constitutional legal order' (Leca 1994: 49). Conspicuously absent from their systems, however, was what Leca calls the normative dimension of a democratic system, 'the core of which is pluralism, where no single group or party enjoys a monopoly on the political truth. Pluralism thus entails tolerance, acceptance of majority rule, limited government, and protection of basic rights' (Leca 1994: 49).

The Yemeni political system certainly has similar features of this 'democratic shell', coloured as it may be by a specific local authenticity. Political parties were allowed to

work freely, and the Yemeni press was providing both critique and platforms for debates that made their counterparts in the Arabian Peninsula blush with envy. Meanwhile, the electoral system, with its bicameral legislature, allowed for some features of representative democracy, especially as voters have often been keen on exercising their right to select their lawmakers in every election to the House of Representatives.[1]

This ability to exercise features of a representative democracy was expressed in the report of the European Union Election Observation Mission (2006) on Yemen's 2006 presidential and local elections. They portrayed the elections as 'an openly-contested electoral process … that represented a milestone in the democratic development in Yemen'. Indeed, they said:

> The elections benefited from the full engagement of all major political parties and were notable for the degree of freedom enjoyed by all candidates to assemble and to express their views so that, for the first time in the political history of both Yemen and the region, an incumbent faced a real challenge at the polls.
>
> *(European Union Election Observation Mission 2006: 1)*

An active and open electoral process notwithstanding, Yemen's political and administrative structures had fundamental and systemic weaknesses that undermined the democratic nature of key aspects of the electoral process. The same European Mission report was clear about these shortcomings: 'the results process lacked credibility to the extent that it was not possible to have confidence in the accuracy of the final results, State resources were used unfairly by incumbents and women were comprehensively excluded from the process' (European Union Election Observation Mission 2006).

Most importantly, the president who competed with others in 2006 had, in fact, held that office since 1978. Constitutional legitimacy was made a farce through what I term the *unofficial sphere of politics*: 'a sphere were decisions are made that bypass the law and the constitution, sometimes with the specific aim of rendering more shallow the state's institutional reality' (Manea 2011a: 87). This phenomenon has allowed Saleh to change a law with a telephone call. It also allowed him and his closed net of core elites to change articles in the constitution with an ease that was staggering. This point was made even clearer by his former ally Sheikh Sadeq Abduallah al-Ahmar, the paramount sheikh of the Hashid tribal confederation, who stated in a television interview, 'We have a constitution that we turned into a duck game, every day changing five or ten of its articles' (interview with Sadeq al-Ahmar, 1 April 2011).

These fundamental flaws were not lost on young, educated Yemeni men and women. They had enough of this type of politics. Their revolt, while expected, took the political establishment and opposition parties and movements by surprise.

Different context!

The similarities between the Yemeni and Tunisian and Egyptian revolts end here. Indeed, while the roots of the young Yemenis' grievances were similar to those of their Tunisian and Egyptian counterparts, the context within which they were operating was fundamentally different. This is the primary factor that sets Yemen apart from the other two countries.

In fact, one can argue that Yemen and the other two countries belong to two different sets of countries, based on the age of their states:

1 Countries of old states and old societies are characterized by a long tradition of a centralized state apparatus and the existence of a strong national identity. This group includes Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, to a lesser extent.
2 Countries of new states and old societies are characterized by the newness of their states, and by the lack of a solid national identity, and the division of society along tribal, religious sectarian, linguistic and/or regional lines. Yemen, Syria and Libya belong to this category.[2]

The differences in the types of states are, of course, reflected in the types of challenges they face. In the first category, apart from the economic challenges, the issues at stake are connected with dismantling an authoritarian executive power, and strengthening the state's institutions and the separation of powers. In the second category, the context is volatile and marred by fear of civil war. The challenges therefore are inherently connected to building state institutions and keeping the state intact and unified.

A second line of differentiation between the contexts of Yemen, on the one hand, and Tunisia and Egypt, on the other, relates to the nature of their core political elites. For example, compare the composition of the political elites in Yemen and in Egypt, and the main difference between the two becomes clear: the core elites in Yemen tend to be members of an ethnic group (sectarian tribal), whereas those in Egypt are more diversified and less restricted by ethnic considerations. In fact, although Egypt's political system is highly centralized and authoritarian, the members of the ruling elite often come from different social backgrounds, and the criteria by which they are chosen have more to do with their party affiliation, education, military background, personal relationships and patron–client relations. This difference has shaped the outcome in the two countries and helps to explain why it was possible for the Egyptian army leaders to push Mubarak to leave his position. They were not members of the same clan or the same family, whose survival depends on his survival. He was simply one person – and he can be replaced.

The third, and most important, line of differentiation that sets Yemen apart from Tunisia and Egypt is that Yemen can be described as a 'cunning state'. The features of the 'cunning state' have shaped to a great extent the outcome of the Yemeni revolt and the solutions suggested by the international community. This concept is worth considering in some detail.

Yemen's cunning state

The term 'cunning state' as used by Shaini Randeria (2003: 4) to refer to states 'which capitalize on their perceived weakness in order to render themselves unaccountable both to their citizens and to international institutions'.

Modifying it to fit the Yemeni context, I define the term as *a state run by ethnic core elites, who exploit the seams of international structures and capitalize on the fear of the international community over its perceived failure to perpetuate its grip on power.* Yemen's cunning state is run by ethnic core elites, who play on the ethnic divisions within their own society; it functions according to a certain pattern of politics and survives through the fears of its own citizens and the international community. Three features of the Yemeni cunning state are worth describing, as follows:

First feature: A state run by ethnic core elites, who exploit the divisions in their own society

The regime that has controlled Yemen since 1978 is ethnic in nature. It has depended on the support and loyalty of a close network within its own sectarian and tribal group, at the same time playing on the sectarian, tribal and regional divisions within society. This exploitation of the ethnic divisions within Yemen has led to a constantly shifting interplay in which various political and ethnic groups are included at the expense of others at one point, only to be excluded at another point.

More specifically, two circles of power can be identified. The first, the inner circle of the core elites, includes immediate clan members and the larger tribal groups:

1 Immediate clan members. The clan that runs Yemen is the Sanhan tribe, based in the south–southeast corner of Sana'a, the capital. When Saleh, the former president, came to power in 1978, he systematically appointed close relatives and members of his tribe to key command positions, thus ensuring the loyalty of the army and the security apparatus. His clan's grip on those two institutions continued after the civil war of 1994, which resolved the power struggle in unified Yemen in his favour.

   This grip of the tribe continues today, even after he has stepped down. I will return to this point later. Suffice it to say at this point that rivalry and competition have characterized the relationships between Saleh's immediate clan members. In other words, relying on the inner circle of the clan is not the same as trusting them. The power struggle between Saleh and his half-brother Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, the commander of the First Armoured Division of the army, is but one example. Since 2000 Ali Mohsen has been seen as an obstacle to a smooth transition of power to Saleh's son Ahmed. The struggle turned to open hostility in 2011 when Mohsen decided to support the youth uprising in 2011 (Manea 2009).
2 The larger sectarian tribal group that Saleh has depended on is the Zaydi Hashid tribal confederation. It has ensured his survival during critical political upheavals, including the Sadaa civil war that started in 2004 and the civil war of 1994 when Hashid tribesmen were a pivotal part of the coalition that ensured Saleh's victory against the southern troops.

Again, interdependence between the two groups does not guarantee harmonious relationships. Often their ties feature multiple ups and downs and sometimes bitter rivalry that can border on open confrontation. One example was the power struggle between Saleh and the late paramount sheikh of the Hashid confederation, Abduallah al-Ahmar. This rivalry became open after his death, when his sons supported the youth uprising in February 2011.[3]

The second, wider, circle of the power base includes other alliances.

The resilience of the Yemeni political system, and its survival despite continuous crises, can be attributed to the core elites' dependence on traditional client-based alliances. At the core of this strategy is a Machiavellian strategy of divide and rule, which constantly adjusts and changes its alliances as the sands of Yemeni politics shift.

Yemen's core elites often make their alliances with members of social groups within the wider circle of their traditional base of power. This circle includes 'those religious, sectarian, tribal, or regional groups which are marginalized, discriminated against, or feel threatened within the larger system, or simply aspire to be part of the political

system and gain some of its spoils' (Manea 2011a: 122). This circle has proved vital for the elites' politics of survival: it has often played on the sense of victimization, fear or ambition among these social groups, and then played them against other competing political powers or against each other. This strategy has one clear purpose: to weaken competing political groups that prove threatening to their authority.

Sometimes alliances include tribal confederations, such as the Bakil, known historically to be at odds with the Hashid confederation. Other times they include members and groups of the Sunni middle region (*al-manateq al wousta*), who have often resented the Zaydi tribe's control of power. At one point the Saleh regime engaged with the Zaydi Huthi movement – which later launched a rebellion against Saleh in the northern city of Sadaa. Saleh showered the movement with money and privileges and encouraged it to propagate its own line of faith through preaching and schools. At the time, Saleh was trying to counter the growing influence of his former ally, the Sunni Islamist Islah Party.

Most significantly, alliances within the wider circle of power have included dissatisfied southern groups. Among them are army commanders and political figures, mainly from the southern regions of Abien and Shabwa, who were defeated in the 1986 southern civil war and later fled to the north and were allowed to reorganize their defeated army brigades in what was later called the Brigades of Unity. These brigades were instrumental in supporting Saleh in the 1994 civil war. The new President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who came to power in February 2012 as part of the Gulf Initiative provisions, and his defence minister belong to this group.

While this complicated web of alliances and ties may seem confusing, one key point should be emphasized here: the survival and resilience of Yemen's cunning state can be attributed to its exploitation of the divisions within its own society. In other words, Yemeni social divisions along tribal, regional and sectarian lines have, in fact, been accentuated and strengthened by the Yemeni leadership itself.

Second feature: A state that is constantly engaged in the politics of survival

Survival has been the main concern of the Yemeni ethnic core elites. The word 'survival' here means the need of the ruling elites to undertake whatever is necessary to keep their hold on power and to survive in the moving sands of Yemeni politics. I use the term here to indicate core elites' 'shifting alliances with various political and social groups and their allocation and channeling of resources to these groups to ensure their hold on power and to survive in a hostile political environment' (Manea 2011a: 108). The Yemeni core elites juggle a collection of different and sometimes competing interests, and simultaneously direct these strategies to the ultimate aim of this politics: staying in power. It should be emphasized here that this feature is not unique to Yemen; it is common among Arab authoritarian regimes.

In addition to the regime's shifting alliances, it uses two other strategies for survival:

1 It takes advantage of the phenomenon of political Islam. Here the core elites endorse certain Islamist groups rather than others and forge political alliances with them. The main aim of this strategy is political: to deploy the support of these groups as a means of legitimizing the regime's rule in a religious sense, and/or to delegitimize its rivals. The tactic has also been instrumental in undermining rival Islamist groups that pose any real challenge to the state's leadership, and in side-lining, or even

gaining the reluctant support of, other political groups that fear the rise of political Islam in their societies (Manea 2011a: 109).

2 Corruption. Salah's regime encouraged corruption as a means of controlling those included within the system. According to Sarah Phillips (2011: 61), 'Saleh was explicit in his distrust of people who "did not steal"'; and he 'kept relatively reliable records of the corrupt activities of influential elites', which were used as 'a way of "putting a knee into the backs" of those who were disloyal to him through the threat of prosecution.'

Clearly, then, the politics of survival have meant that the state's resources were often not directed towards the country's development and its population's well-being. It has also meant that mismanagement and waste of those resources were a natural outcome.

Third feature: A state that is constantly engaged in the politics of blackmail

By the politics of blackmail I refer to the Yemeni cunning state's constant exploitation of its perceived imminent failure or collapse to avoid real reform of the system and to continue the core elites' grip on power. It has entailed a constant engagement in what Phillips correctly described as the politics of permanent crisis and it has two dimensions, local and international.

The local dimension entails a 'promise of relative stability within a heavily armed society and of being the provider of "safe" and gradual processes of political and social change' (Phillips 2011: 56). State collapse has often been used as a threatening monster that will be unleashed from its cage if, and only if, the regime of the cunning state ends. Saleh's speech after winning the 2006 presidential elections illuminates this strategy:

> The People of Yemen said 'yes' to security and stability … Which is better, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship or today's democracy in Iraq where massacres happen every day? … which is better, the dictatorship of Mohammed [Siyaad] Barre or the situation in Somalia now?
>
> *(Quoted in Phillips 2011: 56)*

The international dimensions entail exerting pressure on the seams of regional and international structures. The Yemeni foreign policy realm was and still is the area where the Yemeni leadership has been able to manoeuvre and strengthen its position vis-à-vis regional and international actors. During the Cold War, the leadership of North Yemen used this method by exploiting the superpower rivalry: every time it felt humiliated or mistreated by Saudi Arabia or the US it turned to the Soviet Union! It has also used it since Yemen's unification in 1990 and after the civil war in 1994. The method is hardly new. Many developing states have chosen this strategy to counter their weakness within the international community (Manea 2005: 118–123). However, a particular feature of the Yemeni cunning state's foreign policy is its growing ability to hold hostage its regional and international allies. It has used two tools in this strategy: the international war on terrorism and the international fear of the state's imminent collapse.

The first tool relates to the role Yemen has played since 2001 in the US war against terrorism. Isa Blumi (2011: 143) correctly asserts in his book *Chaos in Yemen* that in the context of the 'global war on terror, Yemen's status as a "frontline" state has given the regime a strategic option that simply expands instability in order to reiterate the fundamental value of the regime to this larger concern of the United States and its allies'.

In fact, the regime has often deliberately expanded instability – and I am not alone in holding this opinion. Experience has taught Saleh and his regime that 'foreign governments will offer more money with fewer strings attached if the threat posed by Yemeni militancy is credible' (Phillips 2011: 139). Naturally, the 'credibility' of the threat has often been produced by Saleh's regime itself. Examples are plentiful: they start with pardoning known terrorists, releasing al-Qaeda suspects from prison, and allowing Islamist militants to 'escape' from prison, and extend to utilizing 'Islamist threats' in the southern regions.

The second tool relates to the fear of regional and international actors that the Yemeni state will collapse at any moment. This fear is understandable given Yemen's close proximity to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and its control over Bab al-Mandab, where an estimated 3.3 million barrels of oil pass by every day. Chaos in Yemen would also provide a safe haven in the Arabian Peninsula for al-Qaeda, which already has a presence in Yemen and is intent on destabilizing the Gulf regimes.

The potential failure of the Yemeni state is not exaggerated. In 2011 the country was ranked 13th among countries most at risk of failure (Failed State Index). In fact, applying the Failed State indicators reveals that the state is, indeed, failing its citizens: it is incapable of delivering public goods and unable to exercise control over the legitimate use of force in its own territory.

Interestingly, though, Yemen's core elites were not alarmed by their country's rating on the index. It simply states what has always been obvious to them. What they have done, though, was masterfully manipulate this sense of alarm among Western governments to get more financial aid and military assistance. They used that aid for their politics of survival and rarely employed it to tackle the social grievances of their population or to combat terrorism.[4] This strategy of blackmail proved very useful when the youth revolts broke out in February 2011.

Conclusion: Outsmarting the cunning state?

It was within this context of Yemen's cunning state that the youth revolt took place. The politics of the cunning state have produced three zones of conflict, operating behind the backdrop of the youth uprising:

1 A power struggle between two factions of the core elites. The first faction consists of President Saleh and his son and nephews. The other represents the wing of Saleh's half-brother Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, together with Sadeq and Hamid al-Ahmar, the sheikhs of the Hashid tribal confederation. This wing was supported by the Islamist Islah party, which is headed by Sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar.
2 A regional Southern movement rallying against Northern hegemony. This movement started in 2006 because of social grievances connected to the 1994 civil war between North and South Yemen. It is not homogenous and is divided between two main factions; the first calls for total separation between North and South, and the other seeks a federal system, which would allow autonomous status for South Yemen.
3 A Huthi rebellion in the northern region of Sadaa. This rebellion, which has led to several wars and the displacement of more than 200,000 persons since 2004, was an expression of a combination of social and economic grievances. It was also a reaction

to the rise and encroachments of Sunni Islamist Salafi religious teaching, supported yet again by the cunning Saleh state.

The youth uprising became a stage upon which all these conflicts could play out. The Huthi and Southern movements joined the youths in their sit-in strikes and the calls on Saleh to step down. In this uprising both movements saw a chance to air their own regional grievances.

But, in fact, it was the support of the second wing of the cunning state's core elites that ultimately changed the nature of the youth uprising. That change came days after the 18 March 2011 massacre by snipers of more than 52 peaceful protesters in Taghier Square in Sana'a.

Gradually the rules of the 'revolt' started to be dictated by this wing, allied with the Islamist Islah party of the JMP. One by one, control over the squares fell into the hands of the Islah party's militia and supporters. Those who protested were beaten or defamed, or chose to move to a different square. Women who defied social norms and participated in the uprising were reminded that traditional structural inequalities still persist.[5] Not surprisingly, both the Huthi and Southern movements felt alienated by this development and left the squares.

As the nature of the uprising changed, so did its objectives and the solutions that were suggested. The aim was not a change of the regime. It became restricted to purging the Saleh faction from the regime. But the regime itself, and its cunning nature, were never placed in question.

In fact, the Gulf Initiative, issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council on 21 and 22 May 2011, clearly avoided shaking the Yemeni boat. It made it possible for Saleh to step down. But it left the power structures intact and recycled the core elites. This is evident in the provision that led to the creation of a 'national consensus government', divided on a 50:50 basis between the government (Saleh's faction) and the opposition (al-Ahmar's faction).[6]

Real reforms were avoided for many reasons. Chief among them was the international community's fear that such reforms would lead to the 'state's collapse'!

Fear of 'rocking the boat' has been also evident in the manner by which the national dialogue has been so far conducted. The national dialogue conference – a corner stone of the Gulf Initiative – started on June 2013 and concluded on January 2014. Its purpose has been to address and resolve in an inclusive manner core Yemeni conflicts (among others: Southern issue, Saada issue, national reconciliation and transitional justice, the form of the new state, good governance, role of the army and security apparatus, etc.) (Technical Committee for the Preparation of the National Dialogue Conference December 2012: 12–13).

The Gulf Initiative did create a framework for peace through the NDC. The conference provided a political participation platform for groups including women, youth and new political parties, which were often excluded from the informal elite power-sharing agreement. This was imperative given the alienation many youth and civil activists experienced because of the lack of transparency and elitist manner through which the Gulf Initiative was reached (Hill et al 2013: 14; Manea 2011b). The importance of a sense of empowerment among these groups should not be underestimated. Yet the limits of what the NDC could achieve were clear to many. Put simply, the problem remains that what has been done and discussed within the halls of the conference was removed from a reality dominated by cunning state logic and a shaky power equation between old rivals.

Arwa Othman, the head of the Rights and Freedom Committee within the conference, explains it in clear terms:

> The same powers (tribal/religious/military) are taking part in the dialogue; you find them sitting together on the same table and discuss with smiles and blessings. But outside (the conference) their hands are on their guns' trigger. And that is why, every time we come with serious decisions, and the decisive hour (of implementation) approaches, obstruction starts, and the smiles turn into a waving (threatening) with the streets stick.
>
> *(Arwa Othman, pers comm, 23 October 2013)*

This context reflected on the transitional justice process that took place during the last months. Abdul Karim al-Khaiwani, a member of the transitional justice team in the NDC who has conducted research on human rights violations and was himself imprisoned and tortured, captured the essence of this process:

> The basics of a transitional justice process require a transitional situation and that those who committed human rights violations step down from their positions of power. Both are absent in Yemen. We do not have a transitional situation and the perpetrators are still holding positions of authority and the parties that committed violations are in power.
>
> *(Interview with the author, Sana'a, 12 November 2013)*

The logic of the cunning state seems to have won the upper hand and the youth were left with a bitter sense of betrayal. Pushing Saleh to 'leave' was easy, as it turned out. But outsmarting the cunning state was not only difficult. It was impossible.

Notes

1 The bicameral electoral system consists of two parts: (a) 301 members of the House of Representatives (*Majlis Annowab),* elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies to serve six-year terms; and (b) the 111 members of the Shura Council (*Majlis Alshoora*), who are appointed by the president. For an account of how Yemeni voters exercised their rights in the 2003 elections, see Carapico (2003).
2 On the formation of Arab states, see Anderson (1987).
3 This discussion of the Yemeni power structure is adapted from Manea (2011a: 95–101).
4 For more on how the language of failed states obscures the way in which 'regime incentives to build state institutions can be incompatible with regime incentives to survive', see Wedeen (2010: 2).
5 Arwar Othman, a pioneer activist who objected to the Islamists segregating males and females on 16 April 2011, is one famous example. Because she insisted on participating on an equal footing without discrimination based on her gender, she and 18 of her male and female colleagues were beaten. The attack has drawn sharp criticism and condemnation from many political and civil actors in Yemen.
6 For a critique of the Gulf Initiative, see Manea (2011b).

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14

A Process of Perpetual 'Uncovering'

The Syrian *Thawrah* in Its Fourth Year

Layla Saleh

O Assad, inform [Rami] Makhlouf,[1]
The game has now become uncovered,
The infiltrators have lined up
And they want you to leave, whatever happens … .[2]

The dramatic 'baptism by fire' of the Arab Spring gave birth to a new phrase in Arab political discourse: 'the barrier of fear has been broken'. More than three years later, how does one reconcile the euphoric chants of 'O! How Beautiful is freedom!'[3] with the image of an opposition fighter, one hand on his rifle, prostrating to kiss the rubble of a neighbourhood in Homs before evacuating the 'capital of the revolution'? The people's unfulfilled calls for change in Syria – for substituting *dhul* (humiliation) with *huriyyah* (freedom) and *karamah* (dignity) – breaking to the surface in early 2011[4] with the diffusion of mass protests in the neighbourhood – have clearly taken a trajectory different from the other 'Arab Spring' countries. No other Arab country in the current transitional bloc has remotely approached a death toll of at least 150,000,[5] or seen as extensive an arming of the opposition, as many child victims and participants, or, most importantly here, as much foreign intervention in its abundant manifestations as has Syria. *In medias res*, the Syrian 'revolution' in its fourth year appears to be a popular movement co-opted and transformed into a battleground for the alliances, strategic concerns, and interests of regional and global powers in the theatre of international politics; the Syrian *thawrah*[6] is not just about Syria. It is not 'just' a social movement demanding democratization 'from below', as in Costa Rica in the 1940s (Yashar 1997). While the various positions (discursive as well as material) of external actors in Syria are a focal point of this analysis, the absence of a clearly framed and discursively articulated ideological 'enemy'[7] makes it markedly different from the Cold War context, when US and Soviet interventions in the Third World bloodily entangled proxy wars and regime change as part of a larger ideological and military conflict (Clement 2003; Pei and Kasper 2003; Mamdani 2004; Grimm 2008).

Neither can the current situation in Syria be dismissed merely as a civil war,[8] despite the abundant willingness to do so in media and 'expert' coverage.[9] It would be a mistake to sum up the situation in Syria today as a mere military stalemate where the

regime, through its so-called 'scorched earth' strategy,[10] has wielded unthinkable human, urban and civilizational destruction to stave off the 'opposition' in both its civilian and military incarnations. A concrete outcome in Syria is much more complex than any change in the so-called 'balance of power' on the ground might portend. This chapter is an attempt to give analytic shape to what appears to be yet another example of Arab (in this case, specifically Syrian) 'exceptionalism'. Considering the 'void of power' and state of uncertain 'liminality' as a potentially democratic '*faragh*', a site of contestation to fill the void forsaken by the state with the possibility of negotiating some level of political pluralism (Sadiki 2013), in the Syrian case[11] we must further complicate the picture by paying particular attention to external actors and their revealed interests in the country.

If diplomacy and international agreements are a 'two-level game' (Putnam 1988) where domestic and international politics interact, the situation in Syria can, at a very general level, be thought of as a two-level game[12] between external interests and Syria within – the regime and its supporters, the armed as well as the 'civilian' opposition – and without – refugees and displaced Syrians and the formal opposition. The result of such thunderous interactions has become a 'revolution' scarcely recognizable from its origins in early 2011. Examining these interactions through their discursive practice[13] reveals a process described here as *kashf*, 'uncovering', or 'exposure' of both the regime's and external actors' preferences and interests, often met with clear discursive responses to such *kashf* by Syrian activists and opposition fighters. Building on Said's (1981) concept of 'covering Islam', a discursive process of knowledge production through which the US media and 'experts' treat a generalized, 'monolithic', Orientalist version of 'Islam' as consistently alien and problematic to the US, the focus here is on a process of 'uncovering' various realities in Syria as its revolution has unfolded over the last three years. The lid has been blown off the realities and interests of the regime and external actors, 'covered' for so many years in the public discourse, in some cases by the regime itself, in other cases by activists and opposition fighters, and in still other cases by external actors.

As the excerpt from the protest song above indicates, the regime's 'game has been exposed';[14] but the response of the opposition 'revolutionaries' goes beyond mere uncovering. The tongue-in-cheek, self-reflexive rejoinder of the song's narrator quickly adapts to the 'uncovered' reality of Iran's vested interests in preserving Assad's hold on power; he adopts the regime's own language, 'infiltrators', a charge levelled against the protesters, in its own purported 'uncovering' of a foreign plot to destabilize Syria. Cheekily, the song's narrator expresses an actual demand of the 'infiltrator', warning Syria's president, 'they want you [Bashar] to leave, no matter what happens'.

The intervention of external actors, including Russia, the US and Iran, examined here through their discursive practices, has hindered the potential of filling the 'democratic *faragh*' with any stable sort of political pluralism as the humanitarian crisis and daily slaughter take on a painful urgency. And yet, part of the power of this 'uncovering' of foreign interests in Syria is the awareness among the people of the depth of the foreign interest in the country – much has, in fact, changed in Syria. The 'covered' truth – discursively 'uncovered' in the *kashf* process – has involved actors beyond the geographic borders of the pulsing heart of the Levant. If the democratic potential of the void has thus been overpowered by external interests, in the best case scenario, the awareness of this *kashf* may in turn 'uncover' the opposition's persistence, precisely what may lead to the culmination of the democratic potential of the *faragh*, as Syrians seek to emancipate themselves from the shackles of external intervention.

The discursive theatre of elections

Four years into the Syrian revolution, with more than 150,000 killed, the millions displaced, the 242,000 people living under siege (Amos 2014), the upcoming elections in Syria have become the discursive focal point through which many of the developments 'on the ground' are framed. Their mere scheduling can be seen as the latest instalment through which the strategic interests of external actors to keep the regime in power, or at least prolong the struggle for its removal, have been 'uncovered'. For 'revolutionaries' or activists, the presidential elections in June 2014 in which Bashar al-Assad ran against two other candidates was a farce blessed by a convergence of Russian–American interests for which the 2012 Geneva Communiqué first paved the way[15] in its language of 'free and fair multi-party elections' (United Nations 2012).

The spectacular failure of the Geneva II conference in early 2014 'uncovered' what activists inside the country saw as wilful US–Russian obliviousness to the regime's disingenuous commitment to a 'political solution,' as Foreign Minister Waleed Mu'allem sat at the negotiating table while 'barrels of death' rained down on Homs. Pre-Geneva truces even generated the naming of a Friday and a hashtag '#Breaking_the_Siege_Not_Evacuating_the_Besieged' in a clear discursive refusal of the internationally brokered agreement for women and children to evacuate Homs[16] (The Syrian Revolution Against Bashar Al-Assad 2011 Facebook page, 31 January 2014). Geneva II also 'uncovered' for activists inside the country the sober reality that at least some members of the external opposition no longer represented Syrians on the ground;[17] one photo shows activists in Kafernabel holding up a poster juxtaposing an image of a globe featuring Syria with an image of a ringed planet on which 'Geneva II' was labelled (The Syrian Revolution Against Bashar al-Assad Facebook page, 31 January 31 2014)!

Given such a background of discursive 'uncovering' of the preposterousness of Geneva II amid the unceasing onslaught of regime violence, holding elections in which Bashar al-Assad is defiantly 'running', have 'uncovered' US Secretary of State John Kerry's comments at the World Economic Forum that 'Bashar al-Assad cannot be part of [Syria's] future' (Kerry 2014) as hollow remarks. In effect, the US–Russia–Iran[18] agreement on the theatre of elections in Syria is the latest 'exposure' of external interests in keeping al-Assad in power, in line with Rami Makhlouf's comments to the *New York Times* early in the uprising that 'if there is no stability here [in Syria], there is no stability in Israel' (10 May 2011). Such a forthright statement linking Israeli and, by extension, US interests to the 'stability' of the Syrian regime was the inaugural exposure of the investment of external actors in the outcome of the Syrian uprising[19] and the regime's blunt discursive address of that particular 'audience'. Having long portrayed itself as the only remaining bastion of 'resistance' against Israel, Assad has been renamed *hami el hudud*, 'protector of the borders' of Israel.[20] Clearly the failure of Syrians to realize the potential of the 'democratic void' (Sadiki 2013) can be understood as an interaction between external actors – here, Russia and the US – and the Syrians, in this case, the regime.

Still, the election fanfare is not 'business as usual' and can be read as a discursive adaptation to an audience of both internal supporters and external actors who have 'blessed' the elections, whether through staunch support of Assad (Russia) or through a lack of diplomatic action lending any credible threat to the warning that Assad must depart. A comparison to Assad's 2007 're-election' to the presidency he inherited is telling; seven years ago, he was the lone candidate in what was called a 'popular referendum',

where eligible voters (of whom 95.86 per cent participated) had the choice of 'agree' or 'disagree'; 97 agreed, according to official results (Sakr 2007). Now in the fourth year of the uprising, Syria's election drama has a decidedly changed discursive character, as the Constitutional Court declares that out of 24 nominees, Assad has been 'accepted' as a candidate, along with two others, an MP and a former minister (*Al Jazeera*, 5 May 2014). If, amid the regime-imposed carnage and ruin of Syria, the performative rules and expectations of 'the game' have evolved, Assad has revealed himself as quite adaptable.

Amid such theatre, the discursive responses to the presidential 'campaign' by opposition groups reflect a collective awareness of 'uncovered' external stakes and the regime's ruthlessness – even when Assad 'wins', the situation is far different from his 're-election' in 2007. Here, at least, the opposition outside Syria is in step with the activists inside; the National Coalition of Syrian and Opposition Forces recently released a parody of an ad campaign poster: an image melding Assad's face with Hitler's surrounded by phrases such as '146,000 killed', '680,000 injured' and '2.6 million refugees' underlined by a question: 'Would you vote for him?' (Syrian National Coalition Facebook Page, 3 May 2014). Inside Syria, military defeats have not stymied the insistence of activists that the election theatrics be 'exposed' as hypocritical; their discourse is, by turns, tragic and mocking. In one 'Presidential Campaign' video, a man who appears to be an opposition fighter declares: 'Al Assad remains and is expanding',[21] as he and several others alternately strike pictures of Hafez and Bashar with worn slippers against the musical background of the pro-regime song 'We love you!' After Assad's father and son take a literal beating, the fighter returns, announcing sarcastically that 'the percentage of votes is 60 per cent' (The Syrian Revolution against Bashar al Assad 2011 Facebook page, 3 May 2014). These apparent fighters[22] took the time to record and share this video; 'speaking' intertwines with fighting on the ground.

Mockery and sarcasm are not the only discursive responses to the upcoming elections. As part of their continuous 'uncovering' of the cognitive dissonance that the elections in Syria, for a president who has, in the understated words of John Kerry (2014), 'wreaked havoc' on his own country, activists in Idlib with signs declaring, in English and Arabic, 'To all those who were killed, emprisoned [*sic*], shot or [forcibly] immigrated from Syria given the chance to vote they would eliminate the most tyrant [*sic*] in the world … ' (The Syrian Revolution against Bashar al-Assad Facebook page 2011, 3 May 2014). Read as a response to the Geneva Communiqué's insistence on 'free and fair … multi-party elections' that are 'democratic and pluralistic' (United Nations 2012), the message highlights that the only Syrians who will vote (for Assad) are those not killed, imprisoned and displaced by the regime; surely the latter would 'eliminate' him. Further, their bilingually expressed statements consciously address a global audience, boldly communicating an awareness of the converging regime–external actor interactions that they are 'uncovering';[23] they will not be fooled. Such a response to the 'uncovering' process demonstrates a refusal to submit to the externally backed regime repression, despite the gaping hole of chaos and human suffering standing in the way of the democratic potential of the 'void'.

The high stakes of 'uncovered' interests: The military angle

Nowhere is the impact of external intervention in Syria as keenly visible as the military front. Russian, Iranian and Hezbollah's backing of Assad forces, supplying the regime with fighters and weapons, has been extensively documented (Wezeman 2013), but

foreign intervention is also apparent in the ranks of the opposition on two levels. On the one hand, the external arming, funding and training of opposition fighters has been an increasingly public and open affair. Moreover, a deeper examination reveals a process of discursive 'uncovering' of how Gulf money and Western discourse have intensified and prolonged the military front of what began as a peaceful, grass-roots 'revolution', preventing the actualization of the pluralistic potential of the democratic void, *à la* Sadiki (2013). Disjunction, discord and competition permeate the armed opposition groups in Syria today; the Supreme Military Council, largely funded by Saudi Arabia, presumably heading the Free Syrian Army[24] and affiliated with the Syrian National Coalition, does not even loosely control the ever-expanding number of armed opposition groups inside the country (Sayigh 2014). Some prominent 'Islamist' groups, including the Islamic Front, previously known as the 'Army of Islam', have joined the ranks of the Supreme Military Council; further along the ideological spectrum, 'moderate' groups include the prominent Syria Revolutionaries' Front led by Jamal Maarouf of profiteering notoriety (Sayigh 2014).

Tactically, the Syrian National Army (often derisively referred to by the opposition as 'Assad's Army', denoting its apparent mission to protect the regime rather than the people) has been making considerable military gains on the ground and staving off opposition fighters. In both parts of Aleppo and Ghoutah, east of Damascus, the opposition that had held off regime advances for months effectively surrendered control by December; they also recently ceded the Qalamon region near Damascus in early April, significant because of its proximity to Zabadani near the Lebanese border (Sayigh 2014). In the regime-blockaded 'capital of the revolution' Homs, fiercely contested but 'resisting',[25] a recent cease-fire agreement has been reached, and opposition fighters agreed to hand over Iranian prisoners to the regime, evacuating themselves, their weapons and the remaining occupants of the city. The decisive fall of Homs, the first major city in Syria to 'rise up' in large-scale protests filmed against the background of its now-fabled clock tower, cannot be overstated as an enormous tactical loss to opposition fighters as well as a blow to 'revolutionary' morale.

Military developments on the ground in Syria can also be examined as the unfolding and culmination of the process of *kashf* – 'uncovering' the influence of external interests that have thwarted the 'success' of the Syrian 'revolution' and thus the democratic potential of the void of power. Iran's military backing of the Assad regime, as well as the abundance of Hezbollah fighters among the ranks of Assad forces, runs parallel to the discursive 'uncovering' of the sectarian vision, loyalties, aspirations and perhaps ambitions of the Iranian leadership and its Arab delegate, seen in the leadership of Hassan Nasrullah. Declaring in a recent speech broadcast on *Al Manar* that Hezbollah's military involvement in Syria was a 'belated' one, Nasrullah emphasized that the group's 'political position' was more important; Hezbollah had only sent 'tens' of fighters to Western Ghoutah 'about a year and a half ago' to protect the hallowed shrine of *Sayyida Zaynab* from being destroyed, and to 'prevent the conflagration of sectarian *fitnah*' in the region, in a wider effort to avoid the destructive wrath of the 'storm' of the Arab Spring (29 March 2014). Even this defensive posturing by Nasrullah is discursively framed along sectarian lines, 'uncovering' the long-believed 'cover' of Hezbollah's interests in Syria – framed as a commitment to its continual 'resistance' of Israeli occupation in Lebanon, Syria and, eventually, Palestine itself – as rather disingenuous.

At the same time, the sectarian rivalries seen in Syria today cannot be understood as unidirectional. Saudi Arabia entered the fray of the Iran–Gulf proxy war in Syria in

arming the opposition fighters, responding to the sectarian positions of Shi'a Iran and Hezbollah, in turn mobilizing Sunni sectarian fears in the Gulf and 'uncovering', perhaps, the primacy of its strategic regional interests over any realized military victory of the opposition fighters in Syria.[26] In the words of one activist inside Syria, 'the fighters were so desperate for weapons that they [engaged] in the sectarian language and assumed sectarian positions', accepting money and arms from Saudi Arabia, to the detriment of the revolution, as stalemates, infighting and heightened sectarianism has ensued (Skype interview with author, Salamiyyah, Syria, 25 April 2014). Even practically speaking, the partial arming of Syrian opposition fighters – as reflected in ensuing debate over whether and to what extent the US will supply the Syrian opposition with 'non-lethal' as opposed to 'lethal' aid[27] – is clearly insufficient to meaningfully change the balance of power between opposition forces and the regime with its Russia/Iranian backing, engendering a 'security dilemma' of sorts. The cycle is by now familiar: opposition fighters declare military victory and 'liberate' an area (Rastan, Aleppo, neighbourhoods of Homs), only to have the regime lay siege to it or bombard it with air strikes. Not only is the resultant human death toll steep and the destruction chillingly thorough, but forced mass displacement along sectarian lines has become a pattern, as Sunni neighbourhoods adjacent to Alawite ones are emptied out[28] in a process horrifyingly reminiscent of the massacre and expulsion of Palestinians leading up to the formation of Israel.[29] If we constrict our analysis to such events, any potential for democratic pluralism in what has become a sharply divided country appears to be a mere pipe dream.

Yet, perhaps the collective shudders of revulsion by activists and opposition figures both inside and outside Syria to the emergence of yet another external actor on the scene, the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham/Levant (ISIS/ISIL) – often referred to by its Arabic acronym *Daa'ish* – represents the heightened consciousness of the 'revolutionaries' as they respond to their own discursive 'uncovering' process. Its control now cemented over the northern city of Raqqah, ISIS bears the notoriety of an extremist ideological strain of 'Islamism', so much so that since December 2013, it has been battling not only 'moderate' and 'secular' armed opposition groups in Syria,[30] but also the al-Qaeda offshoot *Jabhat al-Nusra*, on the US 'terror list' since 2012, after a very public split with al-Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri. Most recently, al-Zawahiri called for a truce between ISIS and Al-Nusra, arguing that in-fighting between 'jihadists' was destructive; the two groups continue to battle it out against one another, with reports of tens of casualties (*Al Jazeera*, 6 May 2014).

Several issues are of note here: first, the call for a truce between the two groups is reminiscent of Osama bin Laden's apology in October 2007 that al Qaeda had 'made mistakes', particularly in killing fellow Muslims (quoted in Gerges 2009). The current overtures for peace-making between Al-Nusra and ISIS can thus be seen as a response to the 'uncovering' of their claims to righteousness as they take prisoners, carry out capital punishment, and clearly stymie the armed resistance against the Assad regime in Syria. Further, as Gerges (2009: 290) argues about a different yet related context, 'America's war on terror has become a key factor keeping bin Laden "in business", for a number of reasons, including imbuing Osama bin Laden with an elevated anti-hero status.' The recent focus on American and European fighters heading to Syria and the threats they will pose to their countries of origin as they return home[31] can be read in that light, discursive self-fulfilling prophesies of sorts, and an 'uncovering' of how the strategic interests of Western countries, framed as 'homeland security' concerns

reminiscent of the War on Terror, appear to be converging with the anti-Western posturing of groups such as ISIS, ultimately serving to prevent a successful process of a democratic filling of the power void in Syria.[32]

More important, perhaps, is the 'uncovering' of the catastrophic effects – and humanitarian impact – wreaked by groups such as ISIS in Syria. As one activist, a self-described 'non-religious person', expressed quite clearly, '[Generally], there are no extremists in the revolution. The problem is with *Daa'ish* … . It is not a part of the *thawrah*, but a part of the regime' (Skype interview, Salamiyyah, 24 April 2014). Even in Raqqa itself, activists staged protests against ISIS, chanting, 'Syria is free, free! Daa'ish leave, leave!' (*Sham News Network*, 25 September 2014). The main external Syrian opposition body, the Syrian Coalition, engaged in similar 'uncovering' of the anti-revolutionary position of ISIS, claiming in a press release that the Free Syrian Army had 'uncovered secrets of *Daa'ish*'s cooperation with the Syrian regime' (Syrian National Coalition, 10 January 2014). Whatever the exact nature of the relationship between ISIS and the Syrian regime, the group has been 'uncovered' inside and outside Syria as a hindrance to the revolution,[33] rendering the discursive gloating of Assad's regime and its media about proof of 'terrorists' among the 'infiltrators' increasingly incredible. In the 'two-level game' that is the Syrian uprising, ISIS's foreign fighters have deliberately bloodily attempted to fill the power void with their own decidedly non-pluralistic, non-democratic 'Islamic state' in waiting.

Responses to the *Kashf* process: The 'original' revolution persists

Part of the Arab Spring's genius has been its alternatively *moral* power – the peaceful protests that diffused across several Arab nations – that at least began to fill what Sadiki (2013) calls the void of moral power in the Arab Middle East. In the midst of the carnage and ever-deepening bloodbath of Syria, parts of the 'original' revolution[34] and its methods – protests, Facebook posts with people holding up creatively worded signs, humanitarian work – persist, if diminished in quantity as thousands of activists were killed, detained and displaced. Here, I examine the persistence of such methods and movements as a response to the discursive process of 'uncovering' various levels of regime and external interests and their detrimental effects on the emancipatory movements of the Syrian people, as well as an indication that a glimmer of possibility remains for the eventual success, however amorphously conceived, of the 'revolution'. Such a pattern is promising amid the obvious and glaring truth that military victories alone, even if such a prospect existed, do not build states or 'consolidate' democracies (see Karl 1990; Linz and Stepan 1990). Certainly the innovative conception of a potentially democratic 'void' utilized here demands a plurality of voices, a space with room for dialogue between 'thesis' and 'anti-thesis' (Sadiki 2013); applied to Syria, it will be built on the foundations of the 'original' revolution.

Syrian opposition activism that continues the processes and methods of the 'original' non-violent movement is sometimes carried out by military activists themselves, as discussed in the election parody above. One recent Facebook post features a photo of a boy in Saqba holding up a sign that reads, 'Victories in besieged Ghouta … Not an *E'tilaf* [Syrian Coalition] Dollar … Nothing … It's All Local, Humble Work … and God is the Sustainer' (The Syrian Revolution against Bashar Al-Assad Facebook page, 3 May 2014). Here we see a discursive interaction of military opposition activity (the 'victories' in Ghouta) with the non-violent methods that were the norm during the

early stages of the Syrian uprising. Further, the reference to independence from the National Coalition and its 'dollars' discursively 'uncovers' the failure, if not disingenuousness, of its and the US's attempts to effectively arm the opposition. This instance of discursive 'uncovering', at least, is simultaneously a declaration of independence, a bold response to the exposed 'reality'.

Even now, some protests persist, including one on 5 May 2014 in support of besieged Homs falling back into regime control (The Syrian Revolution against Bashar al-Assad Facebook page). Facebook pages of opposition groups, once overflowing with videos of protests, however, are more likely to feature footage of destruction, or scenes of fighting or haunting images of corpses than buoyant (or even subdued) demonstrations. What may be termed the 'activist drain' in Syria today is a direct effect of the militarization of the conflict, as many activists (mostly male, Abelbaset Saroot, former Homsi footballer turned celebrity revolutionary) have joined the ranks of opposition fighters, or have been killed, displaced or detained. Razan Zeitouneh, a prominent lawyer and activist even prior to March 2011, whose voice in its halting English intonations became recognizable among Western audiences during her punctuated phone calls with CNN anchor Anderson Cooper early on in the revolution, has been detained since December, with the culprits assumed to be ISIS or affiliated groups. Her Facebook page is flooded with lamentations over the loss of this 'icon [in its feminine form, *aykunah*] of the revolution', as well as discursive responses to the 'uncovered' reality of the calamitous effects of foreign interventions. One post shows activists in Kafernabel – a town by now famous for its inventive and saucy protest signs – holding a sign that reads, 'Razan Zeitouneh and all those abducted! It is impossible for us to forget; with every dawn you give birth to a sun within us, and your abductors will not flee from punishment' (Razan Zeitouneh Official Facebook page, 2 May 2014). 'Uncovered' here is the cold fact that the regime is not the only hindrance to freedom and democratic filling of the 'void', an awareness accompanied by a self-described response of 'resistance and steadfastness' of the Kafernabel activists.

Another factor, this one more clearly reflecting the foreign intervention 'level' of the 'two-level game' of the Syrian uprising, may help to explain the 'activist drain' in the country, although numbers are impossible to verify. A great deal of rhetorical hubbub has emerged in debates about US military intervention in Syria since the chemical weapons attack carried out by Assad forces in August 2013, with attendant discursive 'uncovering' of the flimsiness of President Obama's so-called 'red line' over which he had promised the US would launch air strikes. Clearly responding to the US–Russia agreement requiring Assad to hand over his cache of chemical weapons to the UN, a caricature features the figures of Uncle Sam and Assad jointly riding a tank, with Uncle Sam shooting at 'chemical weapons' as Assad shoots in the opposite direction, presumably at the Syrian people; the caption reads, 'Neither ancient nor modern history has known the condemnation of a criminal followed by the capture of the weapons, except when it comes to Bashar al Assad' (The Syrian Revolution against Bashar al-Assad Facebook page, 18 September 2013). The US is discursively 'uncovered' as complicit in Assad's war against his people, (wilfully?) distracted by the chemical weapons as Assad continues his onslaught.[35]

While the US has not engaged in wide-scale military intervention in Syria, the State Department has boasted of other efforts, declaring that it has 'trained and equipped thousands of local leaders and activists' – with 'women and minorities' clearly identified as among their number – from over 100 Syrian opposition provincial councils' and

'graduates' of such programs 'are empowering local committees and councils' throughout Syria to meet the needs of their communities in the revolution (Melia 2013). The Orientalist overtones of such discourse and practice hearken back to Said's (1981: 25) words explaining 'coverage' of Islam: 'The Orient could be seen, it could be studied, it could be managed.' More specifically, US 'training' of Syrian activists can be compared to the socialization and training of colonial subjects by European imperialist powers in the 'Modern Legal and Governmental Module' based on Western-style political and economic institutions (Tully 2012). Yet, activists have 'uncovered' what one called the 'negative impact' of such training, as Syrians participating 'never come back', so fewer and fewer activist remain in the country[36] (Skype interview with author, Salamiyyah, 25 April 2014). Here foreign intervention is reminiscent of US 'soft power' efforts by lending its dollars and expertise of its citizens to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in various countries implicated in the 'War on Terror' (Collins 2004; Lake 2010; Azam and Thelen 2010). In the Syrian case, the added dynamic is the outsourcing of activists to locations across the country's borders, rendering them almost useless to those inside.

Conclusion

When Mouaz al-Khatib, the widely popular Syrian cleric, resigned his post after a few months as the president of the Syrian National Coalition, he described his disillusionment with the interventions of foreign countries hindering the Syrian people's long, bloody march to freedom, darkly referring to attempts to 'abort the revolution'. Today the Syrian revolution is not completely 'aborted', but it is a far cry from the optimistic, perhaps naïve euphoria of its early days, when Assad's fall was repeatedly described as 'imminent'.[37] Playing off of Said's (1981) concept of 'expert' and media 'coverage' of the reality of Islam, this analysis has presented an account of a process of discursive 'uncovering' various realities in Syria, namely, how the intervention of foreign actors in all their shapes and sizes – Russia, the US, Iran, Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia, ISIS – has considerably distorted and slowed, if not blocked, the attempts of the Syrian revolutionaries to realize the potential of the democratic *faragh* (Sadiki 2013) blown open by the Arab Spring. The situation in Syria today, its death toll mounting so exponentially that activists struggle to document the names and numbers as the UN has abandoned the effort entirely; its millions of internally displaced citizens and refugees; its civilizational ruins, from the storied Aleppo souk to the centuries-old minaret of the Umari Mosque in Deraa; and its still-persistent 'original' revolutionaries, if diminished in number, can be understood as a 'two-level game', an interaction between external actors and Syrians within and without.

Still, in the words of John Donne, 'No man is an island entire of itself; every man/is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.' Just as the revolution in Syria was directly inspired by its Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan neighbours in the Arab and Islamic 'main', so the process of the revolution itself, and the outcome, holds significance beyond Syria itself. Syria stands apart in the *obstacles* to democratically fill its power void, paramount in which, I have argued, has been extensive external intervention. Viewed from the other side, however, an eventual 'success' of the Syrian revolution can bode well for the region, and for countries in the Global South struggling to remove themselves from the vestiges of authoritarianism more broadly. The argument made here is not meant to suggest that if only left to their own devices, unperturbed by

regional and global powers, the Syrian people would swiftly find a path to freedom and wrestle to pluralistically fill a democratically transformed 'void'. This analysis is not an attempt to dislocate agency from the people of Syria, to render them helpless but for the ominous 'foreign powers' who will not let them become free. Rather, the suggestion here is that like much in the history of Middle Eastern politics, agency is being co-opted, if not torn from, the Syrians, Orientalist-fashion, by a number of actors, even and perhaps especially in (material and discursive) interventions that reek of what Anthony (2008) has called 'racial paternalism'.[38] Yet the Syrian subaltern continues to 'speak' – if only to 'uncover' the long-'covered' realities of converging external stakes and interests in the country and the Assad regime, perpetually exposing the 'international letting down'[39] of the Syrian people. This discursive 'uncovering' is perhaps accompanied by the ensuing recognition that the Syrian people must in the end forge their own emancipation, however conceived, however executed, finding their way back to the potential of the 'void' and out of its destructive capacity.

Notes

1 Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's cousin, widely reviled business tycoon.
2 From Syrian opposition song, 'Fallen, Fallen, O Bashar!'.
3 Video of Hama Protest (YouTube, 24 July 2011).
4 See video of first protest in Damascus, (YouTube, 17 February 2011).
5 The United Nations stopped counting the death toll in Syria when it reached 100,000 a few months earlier. The 150,000 number has been reported by the British-based Syrian Observatory of Human Rights (*New York Times* 2014).
6 The still-used Arabic term for 'revolution'. In the words of one activist from Salamiyyeh, 'It's still a revolution, because we continue [in it]. … This is a war of a regime against its people, not a sectarian or civil war' (Skype interview with author, 25 April 2014).
7 Unless, of course, one looks at the recent shift in US and European discourse to the returning spectre of 'terrorism' as it haunts the Syrian revolution; see note 30.
8 See note 1; even amid the *harb,* the discursive framing of events in Syria as a 'revolution' persists. For the literature on civil and 'ethnic' wars, see Sambanis (2001); Reynal-Querol (2002); Fearon and Laitin (2003); Blimes (2006); and Bhavnani and Nooruddin (2009), among others. Explanations of civil war onset and duration are explained by factors ranging from ethnic and religious fractionalization and polarization, population size, economic development, to 'neighbourhood' effects, insurgency, etc.
9 See, for instance *ABC News* (2014); *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2014); Chenoweth (2012); Boyne (2013). Such 'coverage' of the 'Syria story' by media outlets but especially by academic 'experts' is the latest example of what Said (1981) has called 'the intellectual equivalent of crisis management' that in their discourse and knowledge production treat the Islamic world as a strategic problem for the US, or 'the West' more broadly.
10 See, for instance, *BBC News* (2011).
11 An example of a 'power void' in Syria is evident in its neoliberal economic reforms, and eroding the Baa'thist state's legitimacy as a social service provider as a 'hybrid of privatization and authoritarianism' has materialized (Abboud 2013: 160).
12 The irony of analysing a 'people's revolution' as an interaction between these two sets of actors, 'Syrians' and 'external actors', in the way of the foreign policy or international relations literature, is not lost on the author.
13 This analysis is consciously different from other process-oriented approaches in the so-called 'transitology' democratization literature (Linz and Stepan 1990; Karl 1990; Kitshelt 1992), among many others. My argument is rooted in a Foucauldian (Foucault 1972, 1978) analysis of language and narrative, as power dynamics are revealed and reinforced by the 'rules' of discourse.
14 The term *kashf* used in this chapter is derived in part from the colloquial expression '*saaret* '*al makshuf*' ('has been uncovered' or 'has been exposed') used in the song; various conjugations

of the term *kashf* are frequently employed in discursive revelations about developments in Syria by both the regime and opposition.

15 Exiled Syrian Abu Layla predicted as Geneva I was announced: 'They [the US and the Russians] will have Assad run, and win, in 2014 … just wait and see' (pers comm with author, 30 June 2012).

16 Holding Geneva II as the regime continued to massacre Syrians was referred to as *maskhara*, 'a joke', by opposition Syrians within and without the country, for instance, by Abu Bilal (pers comm with author, 1 February 2014).

17 Despite the 'will they or won't they?' saga of whether and who from the external opposition would attend Geneva II (*New York Times*, 8 November 2013).

18 Given, of course, that Russia and Iran have been Assad's staunchest allies and suppliers of weapons and fighters. The awkwardness of involving Iran in negotiations was discursively 'uncovered' in the controversy of which Iranian officials would attend Geneva II as reported in the *New York Times* (19 January 2014).

19 Prominent Syrian activist Nawal Sibai, exiled in Spain, has consistently 'posted' about this theme on her Facebook page, referring to 'new colonizers' (including Russia and Iran) seeking to protect, among other interests, Israel's security, and for whom Bashar al-Assad is a mere pawn or puppet (see, for instance, post from 11 May 2014).

20 See, for instance, opposition activist Haitham Al-Maleh's comments that father Hafez 'sold the Golan Heights' to Israel while son Bashar 'protects the borders and security of Israel' (*Al-Wafd* 2011).

21 This is a slogan used by the so-called 'Islamic State' to describe its growing reach – here, the man in the video (presumably) mockingly applies it to Assad.

22 The identity and exact role of the figures in the video is impossible to verify independently.

23 Still others, particularly local religious authorities within Syria, 'don't see it as worth their time' to make public statements on these 'illegitimate' elections, in the words of Abu Samir. They would rather capitalize on their credibility among the 'liberated' populations in Syria by taking positions on more pressing issues such as dealing with external actors (pers comm with author, 10 May 2014). Such a 'silence' on the elections 'uncovers' their utter irrelevance for some activists.

24 The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was initially formed by soldiers defecting from the Syrian National Army in late 2011. Activist Abu Samir described it as 'an outdated term', indicating the fragmentation of opposition fighters (pers comm with author, 10 May 2014).

25 See, for instance, song dedicated to besieged Homs, 'Resistant', by revolutionary singer Wasfi Maasarani, released in early 2012.

26 Indeed, Saudi Arabia's strong support of the Sisi-led coupe in Egypt, and its recent declaration of the Muslim Brotherhood as a 'terrorist organization', further 'uncover' its goals and interests far removed from the support of fledgling democratic movements in the region, if an authoritarian monarchy could claim such a position.

27 See, for instance, Landler (2014).

28 See, for instance, Barnard (2012).

29 As Owen (2004: 73) points out, by 1949, 'the new state of Israel had been purged of all but 160,000 of its original Palestinian population of some 850,000'.

30 As opposed to battling the regime itself.

31 See, for instance, *BBC News* (24 December 2013); *Al Jazeera English* (3 May 2014) and *France 24* (23 April 2014), another example of Said's (1981) 'crisis management'. This can be thought of as literal 'coverage' that 'uncovers' strategic preoccupations and interests in Syria as a 'breeding ground for terrorists'.

32 The same can be said for the repeated comments of former US Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford that Syria will become 'cantonized', presumably along sectarian and ideological lines (*Christian Science Monitor*, 2 March 2014). As Doty (1993) points out, the power of discourse is such that repeated statements make particular foreign policy positions 'how-possible'.

33 Zainah Erhaim, journalist/activist in Aleppo, spoke of her 'revolutionary role [against] *Daa'ish*' and not just the regime (pers comm with author, 15 May 2014).

34 Lovingly described by activist Umm Mahmoud in Al-Zabadani in rural Damascasus as *thawrah insaniyyah*, 'a humanist revolution' (pers comm, Skype interview with author, 11 May 2014).

35 The 'uncovering' of such a truth was accompanied by some activists' insistence that they didn't *want* outside 'help'. In the words of once-imprisoned opposition activist Baraa Sarraj, 'When we

said [in protests] "O God! We have nobody but you!" we meant it' (pers comm with author, 5 February 2012).

36 Recent activism within Syria has become increasingly focused on humanitarian work (Skype interview with 'Wardah', Salamiyyah, 25 April 2014; pers comm with activist in Zabadani, 7 May 2014).

37 Also seen in protests, with chants such as 'Mother, Mother, O, Mother! Bashar is at the end of his days!' (Talbiseh, Homs, 6 September 2011).

38 Anthony (2008) was describing US Wilsonian-era Third World interventions, evident in both policy and discourse; the term appears fitting here.

39 An expression most recently uttered, for instance, as an opposition fighter from Homs bade farewell to a number of 'martyrs … of fighting, of shelling, of hunger' in a makeshift graveyard before departing his Homs neighbourhood (YouTube, 7 May 2014).

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15

Pro-Regime versus Oppositional Media

During the Revolution, 2011–2013

Obaida Fares

Official media

Background

In democracies, media is considered as a 'Fourth Authority' due to its role in monitoring all authorities, including the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Media also often plays a role in monitoring governmental performance, and seeks 'truth' when public interest demands it. However, the situation in Syria is completely different. Since the 1963 Ba'ath party military coup, the media has become a tool of regime propaganda. It has been controlled from the presidential palace and security services headquarters and ever since Syria has not seen any kind of independent media.

Nevertheless, Syria had gone through a very small period of openness during the Damascus Spring. Under Bashar Assad, little room was given to media and freedom, particularly after the government passed the Publications Law No 51 of 2001, which allowed for the establishment of independent media outlets. However, this period of relative liberalization soon ended and it became clear that it was not a genuine attempt to grant freedom. The organizations that were established as independent in accordance with this legislation turned out to be owned by regime-affiliated individuals. For example, Addounia TV and the *Al-Watan* newspaper, the most prominent 'private' media outlets to discuss current and political affairs, which were allowed to continue operating, were owned by the cousin of the president, Rami Makhlouf. During the revolution the regime relied on Addounia TV more than the official television channel. On the other hand, other private media outlets, established in accordance with the same law and that were not owned by the ruling family members or security forces, were soon closed.

Journalists and media personnel in official and semi-official media outlets are appointed on the basis of loyalty. Special reports on the situation of the media in Syria indicate that security forces have been monitoring journalists and censoring their

publications throughout the ruling years of the Assads. Syria is considered by all international human rights organizations as one of the worst countries with regards to its media freedoms. In the 2011 Freedom of the Press report issued by the Freedom House, Syria was ranked no 181 out of 191 in terms of media independence.

Pro-regime media and the Syrian Revolution

Similar to anti-regime media, the pro-regime media has played a major role in the revolution; it has helped to deliver the message of the authorities successfully, to Syrians and to the wider Arab public.

It is worth noting that media outlets, which have adopted the regime's narratives, were not exclusively regime-affiliated Syrian media outlets. Some Lebanese media outlets that support the Syrian regime (Hezbollah's media outlets and the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun), in addition to the Arabic and English language Iranian media outlets, have also been playing a role in supporting the regime.

Whether these outlets receive centralized directions or not has not been confirmed. However, the commonalities in the address and the messages in these media outlets are very apparent; therefore, for research purposes these media outlets will be assessed collectively.

The emergence of Lebanese commentators delivering the messages of the Syrian regime during the Syrian crisis on different media outlets more than pro-Syrian regime commentators has also been notable. This phenomenon had never been witnessed during other crises. Moreover, Pro-Syrian regime media outlets were able to play a better role in comparison to the official Syrian outlets due to some problems facing the official media, covered in the next section.

Challenges to official media outlets

Official Syrian media suffers from a generally weak performance due to many issues, the most important of which are summarized as follows.

Lack of freedom

Freedom of the media enables journalists to exercise their work professionally, and helps in improving performance through creating a competitive media environment. The fact that news, whether political, economic, social, cultural or even sports, is subject to censorship by security services leaves no room for media outlets to add their own perspectives, and to carry out independent investigations, surveys, reports and news stories. This affects many aspects of 'telling' the news. In most cases, only the news stories approved by authorities are broadcast. For this reason, broadcast news in its different forms is similar across the different Syrian media outlets.

Favouritism and the lack of professionalism

Syrian media, similar to most other sectors in the country, is affected by favouritism and lack of professionalism. This is due to the direct interference of security agencies in all aspects of social and political life, especially in sectors that directly involve decision-

making. In official and semi-official Syrian media agencies, positions are filled by security agencies, and are based on lists of recommendations provided by different security officers. At the same time, favouritism is rampant in all state apparatuses as a result of the high levels of corruption prevalent in the country. This is reflected in the media sector and its recruitment policies. Therefore, there is a general weakness in the performance of journalists, especially among those responsible for news in relation to politics and economics, as they are required to be completely loyal to the regime above everything else. Equally, reporters and journalists appointed based on regime favouritism, their loyalty and political affiliation do not face any professional or personal development challenges, as they feel secure in their jobs and have no desire to improve their performance or develop their abilities.

Legislation

The Syrian media is still governed by laws that limit it and prevent it from having a real role. Although legislation governing the media has witnessed a remarkable development over the past decade, it has not lived up to creating an independent free media sector. In addition, legal institutions play a very weak role in public life. Press Law No 51 issued in 2001 represented a quantum leap, as it officially abolished state ownership and monopolization of all media. This has paved the way for the legal entry of independent media platforms. In 2011, Legislative Decree No 108 (SANA 2011) relating to Media Law was released after the breakout of the revolution, and stipulated significant changes from a legislative perspective, giving more space and freedom to the media, including access to information.

However, these legislative reforms that started in 2001 have not truly been reflected in the media, as the state, represented by the Ministry of Information, has continued to exercise control and censorship over all media platforms. This control has been installed as part of the Ministry of Information's mission. The third article of the ministry's mission (2013) states that the 'use of all media is to enlighten public opinion and consolidate trends of Arab nationalism in the country, and to support links with Arab and friendly countries, according to the principles of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and the policy of the state'.

Similar to other segments of Syrian society, Syrian journalists completely disregard legislation, as authorities lack credibility. For example, while bribery is considered a crime by law, it is almost impossible to deal with any official matter without a bribe. Moreover, when it comes to freedoms and political work, they are treated in the same way, as decision-makers and officials in most security agencies in the country do not alter their performance based on legislation, and always show a public and blunt disregard for them. This has negatively influenced citizens' perceptions of law and order and their importance with regards to public life. For example, the state of emergency was lifted on 19 April 2011, yet most extrajudicial killings and other abuses occurred after that date.

Official media strategies in the revolution

The performance of Syrian official and semi-official media is a reflection of the state, as it has been managed in the Soviet way of controlling a state.

During the course of its coverage of the revolution, the official media has adopted several strategies to deal with the events of the revolution. Some of the important strategies adopted by the Syrian media include:

- The systematic reporting of false information about events on the ground. For example, denying the existence of demonstrations and falsifying the alleged motivations for these demonstrations have reoccurred continuously on official media platforms. At the beginning of the revolution, on 24 April 2011, the semi-official Addounia channel announced that the demonstrations in the Al-Midan area of Damascus was nothing but citizens going out on the streets to thank God for the blessing of rain. In another instance, Reem Haddad, the director of the Syrian Television at the time, told the BBC in an interview on 13 June 2011 that Syrians in Turkish refugee camps are there to visit their relatives.
- Raising suspicion about the ethics of opposition figures, and accusing them of being homosexuals, spying for other countries, or being paid in exchange of their opposition to the regime. Syrian television and the Addounia channel have broadcast several shows discussing the homosexuality of some opposition figures.
- The use of religious discourse to enhance the legitimacy of the president and to criminalize his opponents.
- Questioning the credibility of other television channels, especially Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and the BBC. The Syrian media utilizes this strategy frequently; time slots during daily broadcasting were often dedicated to this purpose. The Syrian media has also discredited itself to achieve this result. On many occasions, the Syrian media talked about models built in Qatar that are analogous to buildings and places in Syrian and Libyan cities, and what is being broadcasted about demonstrations in Syria is filmed in these models. When Tripoli fell to the rebels, Syrian TV announced that was one of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) lies, and that Tripoli did not fall, and what was being broadcasted on Al Jazeera was just a model of Bab al-Aziziya (Gaddafi's headquarters) in the Qatari capital city of Doha (SANA 2012)!
- The continuous repetition of the regime's discourse, with special focus on particular phrases. For example, there has been a narrative that a number of conspiracies are being weaved against Syria, such as the universal conspiracy, the conspiracy of Bandar bin Sultan, the conspiracy of Saad al-Hariri, and armed gangs targeting Syria as it is the last fortress of Arabism, and the head of the axis of 'resistance and opposition'.
- The use of speeches of support by pro-regime Arab and international personalities, and also by unknown ordinary people to give the impression of popular international support for the regime.
- The use of false information about other countries that are against the Syrian government. This primarily targets Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other countries to a lesser extent.
- Attacking politicians in countries that do not support the regime (almost all governments, with the exception of Russia, China, Iran and some Lebanese politicians), and accusing them of Zionism or immorality, especially homosexuality.
- Showing public Syrian support for the president and his policies through the continuous broadcasting of pro-regime demonstrations in the country, and broadcasting songs that glorify the president, as well as interviewing 'ordinary' by-passers on the

streets, speaking about 'their rejection of the conspiracy', and support 'for the reforms of Dr Bashar al-Assad'. However, recordings from official Syrian channels show the same people being interviewed over and over in different parts of the country; people who were hosted by the Syrian media as analysts are also passed off as 'ordinary' bystanders (Zarzar 2013).

The effectiveness of official media with its targeted audience

The strategies of the official media have provided the opposition with rich material to ridicule the regime and its ways. On the other hand, the official media's lack of credibility provided credibility for stories contradicting the regime's version of events. The revolution's websites continuously record, preserve and share material that the official media has broadcast in the interest of the revolution:

- however, the official media has succeeded on various levels with some segments of its audience, and these can be grouped as follows: pro-regime segments inside and outside Syria;
- hesitant and fearful segments of Syrian society;
- some non-Syrians who do not have in-depth knowledge of the situation, especially in Arab countries;
- the Western audience in general.

We could say that the Syrian official media has largely succeeded with the first two groups. Official media narratives provided loyalists with moral and political justification needed to warrant their support of the regime, and also provided common ground with the regime. At the same time, it provided hesitant and fearful groups with the moral and political justification to remain silent and not become part of the revolution.

It also resulted in confusion among some of the audience living outside Syria, especially those who do not follow all the events. In other words, people who do not see the whole picture by following the news closely are unable to distinguish between the truth and lies, and are no longer able to utterly accept the version that contradicts the regime's.

The constant repetition of some stories and conspiracy theories represents the Syrian media's attempts to deliver a message to the people. The message that the official media tries to convey is that the Syrian regime is still strong enough that it can force people to believe in and spread such unconvincing stories and versions of events. This has been one of the key indicators adopted by Hafez al-Assad's regime, which was inspired by North Korea and applied widely since the early 1970s (Wedeen 1999).

Revolutionary media

The revolutionary media has played a key role in the Syrian uprising and has provided a different view of events that contradicts the regime's. It has been able to deliver its messages in an influential way, despite the fact that media activists do not have official institutions and, similarly to their opponents, lack professional experience.

The term '*revolutionary media*' is used to describe the different outlets of the new media, some TV channels and newspapers, especially those that began their work just before or after the start of the revolution.

The beginning of revolutionary media

The few years preceding the revolution saw an increase in the number of media outlets that oppose the regime and whose work was focused on broadcasting political opposition movement, and on exposing the violations of human rights in Syria. Prior to the revolution the most prominent opposition media outlets were the Levant News website, managed by the Levant Institute in London; Barada TV, run by the Movement for Justice and Development; or Zanoubia TV, founded by Abdul Halim Khaddam and which operated for a limited period of time during 2006.

However, their efforts were mainly focused on opposition groups and figures based outside of Syria, as all opposition websites are banned in Syria, and people feared watching anti-regime television programmes. Despite its history, the opposition media has been weak and has had limited influence due to a number of factors. Most importantly, there was a lack of global interest in Syrian affairs; therefore, it was difficult to find space and market for news from Syria. Reliable sources of news inside Syria were also lacking; therefore, the opposition's media was limited to following up on news relating to the opposition's political activities outside of Syria. Moreover, the opposition media was restricted to analysing news stories published inside Syria, with a few exceptions from time to time. This has changed after the revolution, with an estimated 2 million videos for the Syrian revolution uploaded to YouTube during 2011 and 2012.

As the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings began, a group of Syrian youth living in exile started thinking about the importance of creating a new form of media outlet by utilizing new media, allowing for the idea of an uprising to travel to Syria (Syrian Revolution Facebook page administrator, interview, 1 May 2013).

Working mechanisms of revolutionary media

Revolutionary media can be described as an amateur form of media, which is run by individuals, most of whom have not practised journalism before. The work of media activists has been distinguished by the unusual circumstances under which it takes place, and with which ordinary journalists cannot cope. Their circumstances have also not been similar to other revolutionary media in other countries. For example, in Egypt and Yemen, activists enjoy relative freedom to work from within the country using their real names, with the availability of physical and logistical resources, unavailable to Syria's revolutionary media even after two years into the revolution.

Most revolutionary media outlets were initially founded through the efforts of Syrians in exile, who worked on establishing networks with Syrians from inside the country. In most cases, team members have never met face to face.

Revolutionary 'Fridays'

Friday is the first day of the weekend in Syria. With the beginning of the Syrian revolution, the Syrian Revolution Facebook page announced the name of the first Friday of the revolution: The Friday of Dignity (*Jummat Al-Karamah*); the page continued to give each Friday a different name. Protesters across Syria began carrying banners with the name of the Friday set by the page. Media outlets also started referring to the Friday by the name given by the Syrian Revolution Facebook page, and their questions to their guests focused on the meaning behind this name.

The administration of the Syrian Revolution page carried on giving each Friday a name of its own for the first three months. This was later changed to incorporate public vote, where Facebook page users can vote on the most appropriate name for the following Friday, and the names were suggested by Syrian political and activist bodies. After the voting, the selected name was announced on the page (Syrian Revolution Facebook page administrator, interview, 1 May 2013).

The name of each Friday in the Syrian revolution formed a pivotal point for the revolution's weekly message to the media. After about a year of the revolution, the naming became a reason for different components of the revolution to compete and dispute, and it has also become a way to reflect on the general mood of the revolution's audience. For example, since the beginning of September 2011, the scene became dominated by the desire to receive international protection in its various forms. This was evident in the names of the five Fridays during the period between September and December 2012. However, these calls began to fade away slowly at the beginning of 2012, as Syrians realized that international intervention is very unlikely to materialize, unlike events in Libya.

It should be noted that other uprisings in the Arab Spring had used the idea of naming Fridays. The Egyptian revolution was the first to use it, followed by the Yemeni revolution, and it is now being used by opposition movements against the Iraqi prime minister.

Citizen journalists

Revolutionary media relies mainly on journalists and citizens who have contributed to filming and transferring videos and pictures, and to the preparation of news.

All citizen journalists, who were later known as '*revolutionary journalists*', began to work spontaneously as they started filming the events they witnessed using their phone and digital cameras, later sending images to revolution pages on Facebook.

Since the start of the revolution, TV channels have broadcast videos posted on revolutionary pages. This has amplified the role of these pages from the public's point of view, as well as increased competition among activists since it urges them to create their own media groups and formations, and to deliver videos and news to news channels and agencies directly, without passing through the pages of the Syrian Revolution Facebook page. A few months into the revolution, a significant increase in the number of pages became evident; until 2013, the number reached at least 3000 pages.

The work of citizen journalists can be characterized as being amateur, as most of those involved have no previous experience in media work. It is important to note that having experience in the field of media is not sufficient enough to work under such circumstances. Such difficulties have led to many mistakes. With time and with the prolonged revolution, citizen journalists have managed to gain experience and to improve their skills to become more professional and institutional within less than a year.

Furthermore, the fact that the revolutionary media has relied mainly on the efforts of citizen journalists has meant that media organizations have no control over revolutionary media. Unlike the regime's media organizations, including regime-affiliated social media, which follows a set media policy, there is no centralized control over which videos or news are published and broadcast by revolutionary media. Therefore, the revolutionary media was able to broadcast news about field and even military work and

activities. This has led to many deaths and injuries as a result of broadcasting sensitive information, including the whereabouts of rebels, soldiers and civilians. The regime used this lack of control to its advantage. For example, it was able to hack into several revolutionary pages and broadcast false news and rumours, in addition to utilizing some of the information publicized on social media (Ugarit News Network representative, interview, 2 June 2013).

Despite media activists' mistakes, this did not affect the overall course of the revolutionary media due to their strong belief in and commitment to their cause. These activists managed to work under harsh circumstances, both in terms of financing and security; however, their voluntary commitment was ongoing and enabled the international media to rely on them (Al-Ajlouni, Shadia, interview, 1 June 2013).

Social media pages

New media provided the main platform for revolutionary media because of its user-friendliness, and because it provided a cheap means for activists to publicize their work, as they generally suffered from a scarcity in finances. Social media networks and mediums such as Facebook, YouTube, Skype and Twitter to some extent were the main tools used to publicize voices and pictures of the revolutions. These tools were also employed as the main mediums for political and military factions.

Revolutionary media relied heavily on Facebook pages, which became the primary medium even for TV stations. These pages were responsible for writing and presenting news from inside Syria and were the source of publicity for the videos and pictures, which were used by different TV stations in their news bulletins.

The main advantage of revolutionary media was its ability to present and publicize different pictures and videos from the field almost instantly. This, in turn, has made social media the main source for different international media agencies in spite of the quality of some of the videos and pictures that were mostly taken using mobile phones.

It is thought that the Syrian revolution has broken records in terms of the number of videos uploaded to the World Wide Web covering a single political event. Approximately 2 million videos have been uploaded over the two years of the revolution (Syrian Revolution Facebook page administrator, interview, 1 May 2013).

The Syrian Revolution Facebook page was the first to be named as opposing the regime, as it was created on 18 January 2011. The page called for protests on 15 March 2011 in the Hamidiya Market in Damascus. A number of activists took part in this protest, which resulted in their arrest. This protest was the first trigger of the Syrian revolution.

Since that protest, the Syrian Revolution Facebook page became the revolution's main page. The page is now known between revolutionaries as the Main or Official Page, as it has become responsible for outlining the editorial line of the revolution's media. Starting from naming the Fridays to having a say in forming political institutions and to monitoring their performance, the role of the page has been integral to revolutionary media work (Syrian Revolution Facebook page administrator, interview, 1 May 2013).

After the creation of the Main page for the revolution, other pages were created, such as the Syrian Free Press on 20 February 2011, the Shaam News Network on 18 March 2011, and the Ugarit Network on 2 April 2011. By mid 2013 there were an estimated 3000 pages supporting the Syrian Revolution (Ugarit News Network representative, interview, 18 May 2013).

TV channels

Television stations have not become part of revolutionary media due to their high operation costs. However, some TV channels were able to secure an audience due to their ability to cover revolutionary events.

Some of the most important television channels that started broadcasting during the two years of the revolution are Syrian People (Souria Al-Shaab), Syria's Tomorrow (Souria Al-Ghad), 18th of March Channel and Aleppo Today, in addition to Orient Channel, which was an entertainment channel but joined the revolution's channels after its owner, Ghassan Abboud, decided to back the revolution.

Souria Al-Shaab was one of the first channels to be set up and to broadcast. The channel, which is owned by Jordanian businessman Mohamed Al-Ajlouni, remained in the leading position compared to other television channels. During its operation, the channel relies on Syrian youth volunteers who are based in Jordan and Turkey, and on the services provided by the media group owned by the owner of the channel (Al-Ajlouni, Shadia, administrator, interview, 1 June 2013).

Revolutionary media and target audience

The revolutionary media managed to combat the regime's media force and was able to present to the world an alternative window into what is actually taking place on the ground. While the revolutionary media lacks resources and relies heavily on volunteers who are not experts in this field, it has been able to play a significant role in the revolution in spite of the fact that the regime's media is backed by the state. The 2011 and 2012 budget of the Syrian Revolution Facebook page totalled US$4000 for each year. This sum was donated by a businessman to the page management team, which is formed by volunteers (Syrian Revolution Facebook page administrator, interview, 1 May 2013).

One of the main achievements of the revolutionary media has been the material and footage presented to different international media outlets in order to cover the Syrian revolution. This helped some of the media outlets that were unable to send their own correspondents to Syria to write and produce thousands of written and visual reports in their coverage of the revolution in Syria:

- The revolutionary media has succeeded in reaching their target groups to varying degrees. Target groups can be identified as follows: Syrian and non-Syrian supporters of the revolution.
- Groups inside Syria with no clear position towards the revolution and who remained undecided.
- Arab and international media outlets.
- Arab and international public opinion.

One can argue that the revolutionary media was able to present the revolution's point of view to Syrian and non-Syrian supporters. It was also able to address and communicate with Arab and international media outlets, becoming their main source for news instead of the regime's media. In terms of the effectiveness of revolutionary media on the undecided inside Syria and Arab public opinion, it became equated with the effectiveness of the regime's media force. However, it had not been able to outdo the regime's media. In relation to the non-Arabic-speaking audience, and in terms of influencing

public opinion, the role of the revolutionary media has been limited, weak and unable to compete with the Syrian regime's media force. This is mainly due to the fact that the regime used and contracted public relations agencies, which are able to translate material to other languages. Such means were not available to revolutionary media, as activists were mainly supported by the individual initiatives of Syrians living abroad. However, the fact remains that the revolutionary media was unable to outdo the regime's media force (Al-Ajlouni, Shadia, interview, 1 June 2013).

Despite the feeling of those in charge of the revolutionary media that their cause is a just cause, and easier to publicize in comparison to the regime's, it became evident that the problem lay in the fact that the regime controls centralized media organizations, which are able to convey the regime's messages in a systematic and organized manner. On the other hand, revolutionary media activists do not have access to the same resources, and it is at the discretion of individual activists to decide on what material is to be made accessible to their audience.

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Part III

Egypt in the Arab Spring

Islam, the State and the Military

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16

The Egyptian Revolution

Causes and Dynamics

Shafeeq Ghabra

Introduction

Between May and September 2011, I made four visits to Cairo, spending several Fridays on Tahrir Square meeting with Egyptians kind enough to candidly speak with me about their dreams, fears and experiences during the 25 January Revolution. This study was somewhat difficult to conduct because the situation on the ground remained so fluid. Thus, this chapter is necessarily a work in progress; yet it captures the most important dynamics leading up to the revolution and its aftermath. I believe Egyptians will repeatedly revisit 2011, a foundational year for them and their country, to generate momentum and sustain the power that ignited their revolution.[1]

The 25 January Revolution has deep roots in Egypt's past as well as in the Hosni Mubarak era. The Mubarak regime bet its ability to stay in power on a popular fallacy accepted across the Middle East – that Egyptians feared change because of the potential of Islamic militancy. In other words, Egyptians would willingly forgo freedoms in exchange for government protection against Islamic extremism. Under this assumption, the government held on to the emergency regulations it imposed in 1981 after the assassination of Anwar Sadat – the event that brought Mubarak to power. Furthermore, the regime had no interest in nurturing a system that would allow any real political opposition to emerge or partnerships to form that could further the country's development (Muasher 2008).

During Mubarak's 30 years in office most Egyptians were more or less apolitical, preferring instead (and often by necessity) to focus on managing daily hardships as unemployment and poverty rose. In the early 2000s, Mubarak still had legitimacy in the eyes of many Egyptians. They stuck with him when he promised reforms and better living conditions in 2002 even though they doubted things would really improve.

But the roots of the 25 January Revolution grew outside of Egypt's established political opposition, rising from its newly formed youth groups. The regime's shortcomings turned an apolitical population into an angry population focused on regime change. This study will focus on the causes and dynamics of the Egyptian revolution.

Unchecked power

One of the first mistakes of dictatorial regimes is unchecked power centralized in the hands of a small group of officials. With time, such situations encourage corruption, which in turn generates opposition to the system. For the past 30 years, the Egyptian government was accountable only to President Mubarak. In keeping him happy, it guaranteed him – and, by extension, his political circles – extraordinary privileges and power. The regime's lack of responsiveness to the rest of Egyptian society, along with repression of any opposition, exacerbated the regime's arrogance.

According to Abdullah Kamal, a leading member of the National Democratic Party (NDP) with strong ties to the Mubarak family, 'The appointment of Habib al-Adly as minister of interior in 1997 was [the president's first] strategic mistake. The second strategic mistake is the empowerment of his son Gamal Mubarak in 2000 as a member of the NDP's secretariat general, then in December 2000 as a member of an ad hoc committee entrusted with reforming the NDP, and in September 2002 as the head of NDP's Policies Secretariat during the party's eighth General Congress. In his turn, Gamal allied himself with al-Adly and his policies of repression' (interviews with Abdullah Kamal, June 2011[2]). In fact, one of the first people to point out the dangers of inheritance in Egypt was Saad el Din Ibrahim, a leading Egyptian intellectual. His article on the matter led to his imprisonment from 2000 to 2003.[3]

The alliance between al-Adly and Gamal Mubarak would prove toxic for the regime. Al-Adly backed Gamal, aiding in the younger Mubarak's political ascent, which coincided with the slow but clear marginalization of the military establishment. The relationship between Gamal and al-Adly gave the police and internal security forces power rivalling the army's (interview with Wael Jamal, June 2011).[4] It is telling that in the early 1980s, the army was 1.5 million strong, while internal security and the police numbered 250,000; but as the 2011 revolution approached, the army consisted of 250,000 troops and the security forces 1.5 million men.

Gamal Mubarak's rise coincided with his father's disengagement from internal policy. The elder Mubarak preferred instead to focus more on foreign policy. Beginning around 2000, President Mubarak became increasingly less interested in Egypt's domestic affairs. In addition, it is speculated that the death of one of his grandchildren in 2009 sent him into a possible depression and further isolation (interviews with Abdullah Kamal, June 2011).

In some ways, simply being the son of an unaccountable leader created a trap for Gamal. Once his father ensured him a seat on the NDP policy committee, many assumed, along with Gamal, that he would be Egypt's next president. Those around Gamal inflated his capabilities while simultaneously contributing to his isolation and tunnel vision (interview with Nabil Farouk, June 2011).[5]

Despite Gamal's limited political experience, he became involved in liberalizing the economy. The process created new alliances between the business community and the government under Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif beginning in mid-2004.[6] Some of the businessmen who benefited from the new policies were affiliated with Gamal's Future Generation Foundation (FGF), established in 1997.

In contrast to his son, President Mubarak surrounded himself with a group linked to the establishment. His circle included Ibrahim Kamel, a multimillionaire businessman and prominent member of the NDP; Zakaria Azmi, a former chief of the presidential staff and a founding member and former secretary-general of the NDP; Fathi Sorour,

speaker of the People's Assembly since 1990; Hussein Salem, co-owner of the East Mediterranean Gas Company; and Safwat Shareef, former speaker of the Egyptian Shura Council and the secretary-general of the NDP. Mubarak did not like change, preferring instead to rely on men with whom he had long histories.

These individuals, however, were part of his problem. As Mubarak aged, they became his gatekeepers. They isolated him and prevented him from being told anything that might upset him. Members of the president's inner circle, of course, recognized Gamal's usefulness and the necessity for continuity.

President Mubarak had introduced programmes of economic reform over the years, but in contrast, those under Gamal showed no awareness of the safety net on which so many Egyptians relied. The business-oriented ministers around him were insensitive to the need for minimum wages or strong labour rights. The model of privatization implemented by the government had neither limits nor regulation, which led, unsurprisingly, to massive corruption (interview with Wael Jamal).

When Mohamed Mansour, a businessman associated with Gamal Mubarak, was appointed minister of transportation in 2006, he stated publicly that he had been unaware that so many Egyptians took buses, trains and other forms of public transportation. He resigned after a deadly train accident in 2009. The crash was one of a string of disasters involving public transportation or government facilities and helped to destroy what little goodwill remained in the Egyptian people towards their government. In 2008, more than 100 people died in a landslide in Cairo when boulders rained down on a shantytown. That same year, the 19th-century palace housing the Shura Council (the upper house of parliament) caught fire. In 2006, a boat sank with some 1300 workers *en route* from Saudi Arabia; only about 300 men survived. Egyptians blamed these and other disasters on corruption.

Powerful members of the regime dominated the business community, through their ownership of large companies, benefiting from government privatization. Some companies, listed on the stock exchange, inflated their profiles based on millions of acres of formerly state-owned lands obtained at bargain basement prices. To the detriment of the middle class, promotion of small business was ignored.

Many Egyptian progressives thought that reform from above was the only hope for Egypt. 'Only the army can make a difference', some of them would say in 2008. Many had pinned their hopes on Omar Suleiman, the director of military intelligence. If he became vice president, they thought, perhaps he could emerge as a reformer. During the last five years of Mubarak's rule, however, Suleiman was weakened by Gamal's connection to al-Adly (interviews with Abdul Rahman Yusuf, June 2011).[7]

Kifaya and beyond: Seeds of a rebellion

The Kifaya (Enough) movement started in 2004 as a broad national coalition with the goal of bringing about a democratic transformation in Egypt. The group, composed of communists, leftists, Islamists, Nasserites and liberals, committed itself to peaceful means. Its most immediate goal was to prevent the passing of the presidency to Gamal Mubarak. Its followers pressed for open and fair elections and for a president other than a Mubarak. According to Ahmad Shabaan, a Kifaya co-founder and leader:

> In Kifaya we discovered that political parties were penetrated by the regime and by the security [apparatus] and that civil society was totally marginalized. To deal

> with this situation we went to the street and found it to be the main variable of change.
>
> *(Interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011)*

As Kifaya evolved, so did its ability to take advantage of available media. Between 2004 and 2010, Kifaya was involved in 3000 strikes and sit-ins. For a time, Kifaya embodied prospects for change in Egypt and represented the voice of the middle class and its sense of marginalization (interview with George Ishaq, June 2011).[8]

Between 2005 and 2008, some 1.5 million Egyptians participated in protests against social conditions and government policies. Labour also became a factor in such protest. For example, after a state-owned factory was privatized, the new owner wanted to dismiss a large number of employees and did not want to give remaining workers certain rights and benefits. This led to labour protests (interview with Wael Jamal, June 2011).

Constitutional amendments in 2007 paved the way for Gamal Mubarak's ascendancy by blocking any presidential candidate from running who had not been sanctioned by the incumbent regime. Article 179 was changed to allow the state to prosecute civilians in military courts and to give the state even more powers to arrest and search citizens. The amendment to Article 88 weakened the judiciary's oversight of elections, while changes to Article 5 effectively blocked the Muslim Brothers from forming a political party (Brown et al 2007).

In response, Egyptians mounted major strikes on 6 April 2008. The state restrained itself from full-scale confrontation and even made conciliatory gestures. For example, Prime Minister Nazif spoke to 20,000 workers in one factory and sacked the plant's chair. These 2008 labour strikes transpired in the creation of the 6 April Youth Movement that would be a decisive influence in the 2011 revolution. In March 2008, activists had launched a Facebook page in support of the planned strike by textile workers in Mahalla to protest low wages and high food prices. The activists behind 6 April were non-ideological. Only later would the movement coalesce into an attempt to overthrow the Mubarak regime through non-violent protest.

The story of Muhammad Adel, a 23-year-old activist and one of three principal leaders of the 6 April Youth Movement, illustrates the dynamics that led so many Egyptians to Tahrir Square in January 2011. Adel was politicized at age 16, in 2005, when he became a member of the Muslim Brothers. He left the Brothers in 2007 when he came to disagree with their conservative message.

Many of the bloggers who played a major role in the 2011 revolution started out as Muslim Brothers but with time became more liberal in their views. Adel joined the 6 April Youth Movement one month after its formation in 2008 and promptly found himself jailed for four months. 6 April included many individuals who were critical of the Muslim Brothers but nonetheless defended them publicly to maintain unity against the government. The members of the 6 April Youth Movement did not know each other by face as all their activities took place on Facebook and later on Twitter before turning into a street protest movement (interview with Muhammad Adel, June 2011).

The question of Palestine highlighted another side of Adel's political awareness. Events in Gaza, and Israel's war in South Lebanon in 2006 against Hezbollah, shaped his thinking and the thinking of an entire generation of Egyptian revolutionaries. Gaza and Lebanon enhanced Adel's understanding of the link between Mubarak's policies and the larger Arab national questions of independence and rights. Adel himself broke

the blockade imposed by the Mubarak regime on Gaza when he entered the strip in order to show solidarity with the Palestinians.

Confidence-building and regime blindness

Most Egyptians doubted the efficacy of collective peaceful action, so confidence among youth and activists in their abilities to organize rose only slowly. Small strikes and demonstrations helped them to realize the potential of their power to make a difference. Such is the contribution of Kifaya, the 6 April Youth Movement, and similar mobilizations to the Egyptian psyche.

Before 2000, Egyptians would look around and compare their situation to those of the Syrians and Libyans and feel assured that despite their problems, they were better off. After 2000, however, through the open social media, Turkey and Brazil caught their attention, igniting thoughts that maybe they could do better (interview with Bilal Fadl, June 2011). The awarding of Nobel Prizes to two Egyptians – Ahmed Zewail in 1999 for chemistry and Mohammed El-Baradei in 2005 for peace – inspired youths but also gnawed at them. These two laureates were products of Egyptian institutions, yet they had no outlets for using their gifts or expressing themselves in Egypt. This demonstrated to many that the problem lay within the system, not the individual.

ElBaradei returned to Egypt in November 2009 with a vision for change. He arrived with a global perspective and attempted to prod Egyptians' imagination and encourage them to think outside the box. His presence disturbed the waters and helped to take Egypt's fledgling protest movement to another level. A group of activists, including those from Kifaya, formed Jamiyat Wataniya lil Taghyeer (National Association for Change), an umbrella outfit to support ElBaradei. The group launched a campaign for political change in Egypt and tried to engage Egyptians in poor, marginalized areas and neighbourhoods. Slowly but surely they were breaching the wall of fear.

The campaign for parliamentary elections in 2010 exacerbated tensions, which reached a critical mass when the NDP took 97 per cent of the seats. The last and slightest hope to change the system from within disappeared. Egyptians knew that the Mubarak forces had rigged the elections, which they considered the run-up to a transfer of power to Gamal Mubarak. Renewed feelings of humiliation spread through a population that had already had enough.

The regime, sensing Egyptians' restive mood, turned to Habib al-Adly, who unleashed the police and security forces against average citizens. During 2010, they switched from intimidating opposition leaders and well-known critics to targeting student activists and average citizens. Police had orders to beat and mistreat; the state and the people had entered into an undeclared battle (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011).[9]

The government also hired 500 technically savvy young men and women from the NDP to disrupt internet communications among activists and movement supporters. Based on an investigation by the Ministry of Communication on the impact of social media in the turmoil that followed the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2009, the Mubarak government decided to focus its efforts on Facebook but not on Twitter. Despite the regime's foresight, the Facebook revolutionaries easily identified the government teams by their content – nothing but praise for Mubarak (interview with Muhammad Ibrahim, June 2011).[10]

The igniter

According to Muhammad Adel, a leader in the 6 April movement:

> Since 2009 about 300 of us started going to Maydan Tahrir [Tahrir Square]. Our movement was small and effective. We were about 4000 individuals by 2010. We did small demonstrations and walked to the People's Assembly. But four days after the murder of Khaled Said we had a demonstration in front of the notorious Ministry of Interior in protest of his murder. We were about 500 metres from the ministry of Habib al-Adly and were beaten severely. Thirty of us were jailed. But this proved to be a prelude to what would be coming later.
>
> *(Interview with Muhammad Adel, June 2011)*

Khaled Said used his phone to record police informers in Alexandria distributing drugs and talking about giving them to individuals and pushers so they could arrest them and get promotions. They would keep a portion of the drugs for themselves and profit by selling it. Khaled planned to upload the video to the internet, but before he could he was arrested. At 26 years of age, Khaled was tortured to death at a police station in June 2010. He had been socially conscious but was not an activist. After Khaled's death, friends uploaded the footage he had recorded so all could see why he had been killed.

Sara al-Sheriff, a 23-year-old activist and freelance journalist, described how Khaled's murder changed the atmosphere in Egypt:

> I joined [the] We Are All Khaled Said blog on Facebook formed by Wael Ghonim after Said's murder. One million joined Said's page. Said was like us. He wanted his country to be better. We also decided to go to the street every Friday wearing black and carrying his photos while holding a Quran. We did this every Friday on every seaside or riverside in Egypt. Thousands participated. We were determined to take Khaled's right back.
>
> *(Interview with Sara al-Sheriff, September 2011)*

In short, with YouTube as a mirror, Egypt's youth realized that they too could easily become or could have been a victim of official repression. Further charging the atmosphere, an explosion at an Alexandria church on New Year's Eve 2010 appeared to have been carried out with the cooperation of members of the Ministry of Interior. Collusion between the regime and certain elements of the Salafi movement was well known. Coupled with events stemming from Bouazizi's death in Tunisia, Egypt was ripening for a revolution of its own. The state, however, going about business as usual, failed to see the currents energizing Egypt's youth (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011).

The revolution

When the call was issued for Egyptians to take to the streets of Cairo in January 2011, no one expected a revolution. The cadre of young Egyptians on Twitter and Facebook involved in the 6 April Youth Movement, Kifaya, the National Association for Change, We Are All Khaled Said, and other social and civic groups thought to themselves, 'It is

impossible to have a revolution by appointment and by announcement on Facebook, but why not try. We have nothing to lose' (interview with Bilal Fadl, June 2011).

Therefore, after deliberations in closed groups on Twitter, the activists decided to call for a revolution on 25 January, a holiday honouring the police. They evaded detection by the Ministry of Interior by using accounts and groups unknown to authorities. Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Bin Ali had fled to Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011.

The leading members of the ruling NDP viewed the younger generations with contempt. Many in government felt, 'This generation has no values. This is a spoiled generation that only cares about Facebook and hip-hop' (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011). According to Mahmoud Ibrahim, a tech-savvy young NDP supporter:

> We met with the leaders of the media strategy in the party on the 23rd and 24th of January 2011. We estimated there would be 5000 young activists from the 6th of April group and the Muslim Brothers on the 25th. We agreed during this high-level meeting to continue our work after the 25th. No one among us understood that Egypt was ready for a revolution. For us, business as usual reflected our state of mind.
>
> *(Interview with Mahmoud Ibrahim, June 2011)*

Three days before the revolution, Ahmad Izz, Gamal's main confidant as well as owner of Ezz Steel and leader of the ruling National Democratic Party of Egypt (NDP), ordered that all the computers at NDP headquarters be backed up. He had received information that the Muslim Brothers or other demonstrators planned to attack the headquarters. He could not imagine anything bigger. The state security apparatus expected some 50,000 in Cairo. Both estimates were well off the mark.

The last time Bilal Fadl, a screenwriter, had demonstrated was in 2005, with Kifaya. After growing accustomed to seeing the same people at gatherings, he asked himself why the event on 25 January should be any different. Now in his mid-30s, he decided to venture out to express solidarity with Egypt's youth. Once out in the street, he felt that something different was going on. He found the protesters' slogans to be polite and minimalist. He recalled that one of the first ones he encountered read, 'police, army and people are one'. Another read, 'live, freedom, dignity' (*eesh, hurriya, karamah*).

Bilal recalled:

> There were about 200 people and very few next to Dar al-Hikma [close to downtown]. It was 2:00 pm. Then the group agreed to move to Tahrir Square when its numbers rose. I gave a speech; others gave strong speeches. All slogans kept emphasizing that this is a peaceful, non-violent protest.
>
> *(Interview with Bilal Fadl, June 2011)*

A friend then told Bilal that 10,000 people had gathered next to the Arab League building. Another friend told him that 20,000 people were coming from Imbaba, on the outskirts. He thought for sure they were both exaggerating and went to the office of the newspaper where he writes a column. While there, a photo came in showing an estimated 60,000 people in Tahrir Square. Only then did he recognize the revolution.

Muhammad Adel relates the following about that day:

> We knew the 25th would be a big day. Everyone was calling and asking me what are we doing on the 25th. We prepared ourselves very well for the day, and we

> believed that we would pull [off] a revolution. My mobile was not working all day on the 25th. I arrived with my group at the Maydan al-Tahrir when it was empty, but we were there early, before most of the crowd. This exposed us. We were arrested and beaten in the police car on the premises of the American University of Cairo. I found myself in front of the director of Cairo security. I learned later from my friends that we took over Tahrir Square at 4:00 pm on the 25th. I realized there is something different in the spirit of our people, [especially after] the city of Suez also started demonstrating …
>
> During the first night of the revolution, we were about 700 hundred in jail in one place. During the second night, they divided us in groups. Anyone who asked about us – our friends and family – was told we are not here. Then they let us leave on the 27th.
>
> *(Interview with Muhammad Adel, June 2011).*

The Mubarak team underestimated the event from the first day which helped to further inflame the movement. Mubarak's aides told him, 'The demonstrations are made up of some Brothers, Facebook groups and pro-Americans. Do not worry; it is a manageable situation' (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011). This lack of understanding among regime members resulted in their resorting to the only response for which they were well prepared: repression. Several demonstrators were shot and killed in Suez on 25 January. The regime's clamp-down on the internet and attacks on demonstrations ignited protesters' passion. Only after the regime exhibited its brutality did the demonstrators begin to chant their signature slogan: 'Down with Mubarak. The people want to end the regime.' On 26 and 27 January, demonstrations took on a life of their own. The protesters declared Friday, 28 January, a Day of Anger. The Muslim Brothers joined the protests. After hours of confrontations, the police withdrew from city streets.

After the regime's years of exertion towards discrediting any viable opposition (loyal or otherwise), it found there was no one to help stem the tide washing across Tahrir Square. Traditional parties had fragmented and weakened.[11] And the revolution had a spirit, not a leader (interview with Nabil Farouk, June 2011). The nearly-a-million people who gathered in Tahrir Square were organized; they arranged for food, shelter and bathrooms and faced down state security. Even when internet access was disrupted, they managed to find alternative ways to communicate. The youth groups exhibited an amazing degree of cooperation. The revolution's programme evolved on the ground and by the day.

During the first two days of the revolution, regime supporters felt disbelief and fell into disarray. Mahmoud Ibrahim woke up on 26 January and when he checked the news was astonished to find that Tahrir Square was still filled with people. He thought the day before had been a nightmare that would go away, but it did not. He met up with some party leaders near Tahrir to try to reorganize and help find a way to clear the square. The scope of events soon became clear to him. In the square, he saw the collapse of his party and the state. He was truly surprised when the army deployed into the streets as a neutral party, essentially granting the demonstrators immunity. The army announced that it would do nothing until Mubarak and the demonstrators agreed on something. Ibrahim recalled: 'I realized then we [had] lost the battle.' Indeed, two days later the NDP collapsed, and its headquarters were burned. Ahmad Izz resigned as NDP leader under suspicion that other members of the leadership circle had pushed him, not recognizing the beginning of the end and that such actions would

be of no significance. Gamal Mubarak resigned as well. It was all too little too late (interviews with Abdullah Kamal and Mahmoud Ibrahim, June 2011).

Wael Jamal, a leftist writer and journalist, noted that Tahrir Square was not the only place where the people confronted the government: 'You cannot have a revolution in the *maydan* of downtown Cairo alone.' Rebellions took place all over Egypt. Transportation workers held a nationwide strike (interview with Wael Jamal, June 2011). Civil society activists and associations ignited the revolution, but labour made it possible. The demonstrators in the heart of Cairo began to sense victory only after they learned that labour had joined the movement. This changed the landscape a few short days into the revolution. A circle connecting the various segments of Egyptian society had been drawn.

Mubarak speaks

On day three of the revolution, Egyptians learned that their refusal to surrender in their confrontations with the police had prompted the Ministry of Interior to release prisoners in its custody in an attempt to present Egyptians with a choice: the Mubarak regime or anarchy. The regime's strategy was to keep people at home, worrying about looting, thugs and crime in general (interview with Nabil Farouk, June 2011). On 1 February, President Mubarak delivered his third and most powerful speech to the nation. In his statement he attempted to appeal to Egyptians' emotions, announcing that he would not seek re-election and that he wanted to die in Egypt. He appointed Omar Suleiman as vice president to try to appease Egyptians who opposed Gamal Mubarak succeeding him. Some of the demonstrators began to leave Tahrir, but others were not sure that they should. A debate ensued at the heart of the revolution. Some, including novelist Nabil Farouk, felt that they should give Mubarak the benefit of the doubt. Others wondered whether they should or could trust him. What guarantees did they have that he wouldn't order them arrested by the thousands if they called off demonstrations and he remained in office? They could not be sure that people would re-join the movement if they quit at that moment (interview with Nabil Farouk, June 2011).

Tahani al-Jabali, deputy chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court at the time, remembers that on Wednesday 2 February she got a call from some youths in Tahrir Square. She related:

> I was invited to Maydan al-Tahrir to be consulted on whether the youth should continue or stop the revolution. They asked questions of a legal nature. They wanted me to tell them as a judge if any of the decisions and promises by Omar Suleiman or Mubarak were legally binding. I was so impressed and could not believe that I was in Egypt talking to Egyptian youth involved in a major revolution and making history.
>
> *(Interview with Tahani al-Jabali, June 2011)*

Tahani also recalled her impression of the square that day: 'I was shocked to see the maydan [square] in front of me. I saw young and old, men and women; even coffee-makers came to the maydan to offer free coffee to the revolutionaries. Stars, singers, actors, writers, medical doctors, stand-up [comedians] were all in the maydan.' As some of the protesters seemed ready to concede and give Mubarak a chance, men on camels charged in, using swords, knives and rocks to injure people. The attack was vicious,

provoking battles that lasted for two days. Eleven people are believed to have been killed and 2000 injured on 2 and 3 February in and around Tahrir Square. The Muslim Brothers, who had fought hard in the square, secured most of its roads.

Why the attack on Tahrir after Mubarak's speech? From information gathered during interviews, it seems that Mubarak had known about the planned raid and had hoped it would end the demonstrations in the square (interview with Mustafa al-Fiqqi, June 2011).[12] A group of Mubarak loyalists had wanted to exploit any divisions among Egyptians, particularly targeting people of limited means who lived on tourism and whose livelihoods might be suffering because of the protests. Ultimately, the attack contributed to the radicalization of the revolution and to the fall of Mubarak one week later. The camel raid provided the demonstrators in the square with the clarity needed to stick to their original position and stay put. They united once more.

One theory from the revolution holds that the military did not like the idea of Gamal coming to power. It understood the regime's weaknesses and welcomed a limited rebellion. As events unfolded, however, the rebellion turned into a revolution, and the generals could not control it. This in part explains the snipers on the day of the camel raid and the sniping against demonstrators in Alexandria, Cairo, Suez and other cities. It also explains the actions of Majid Bolis, a Coptic army officer, who prevented an attack on the demonstrators on one side of the square despite orders to do otherwise (interview with Abdul-Jalil al-Sharouby, June 2011).[13]

Eyewitnesses believe the army had had orders to facilitate the camel attack in the aftermath of Mubarak's offer to 'compromise' by appointing Suleiman as vice president. The army wanted to stop things there, but the rebellion had a life of its own.

The Mubarak regime mismanaged events at every step. If the president had come out on 26 January and apologized for the deaths, announced he would not run again, appointed a vice president, and pledged to stop state violence against the people, the revolution might have taken a different turn. From the perspective of Mustafa al-Fiqqi, who had close ties to the regime, Mubarak could have immediately forced al-Adly out and dissolved the government. By the time he acted, however, the stakes had increased, and Mubarak repeatedly came up short (interview with Mustafa al-Fiqqi, June 2011). According to Abdullah Kamal (interview, June 2011), 'The team on the regime side that dealt with the crises was divided. One team represented the interior, which controlled state security [and] wanted to keep the system at any cost; another, led by the moderate director of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, wanted reconciliation and changes in the structure of power at the top.' From the first day, the army was with the demonstrators, though not necessarily all the way. It definitely supported stage one – blocking Gamal Mubarak from the presidency. For the army leadership, the fight worth winning was over the presidency *after* Mubarak.

On 10 February, the leadership of the army met without a portrait of Mubarak in sight. It was clear that a decision had been made. The day before Mubarak's resignation, Chief of Staff Sami Anan was said to have explained to him, 'If we leave the demonstrators endlessly, it is as if we are surrendering to them, and if we attack them, this is [the] start of a civil war.' The army wanted Mubarak out (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011). Mubarak resigned via Omar Suleiman on 11 February 2011.

In the Egyptian 2011 revolution, some 12,000 people were injured, 1000 went missing and 1000 died. According to Muhammad Adel of the 6 April movement, 'We made a revolution with 6785 Egyptian pounds. All our support came from contributions by

Egyptian supporters. People contributed blankets, food, time, their own cars, and transportation' (interview with Muhammad Adel, June 2011).

The Muslim Brothers engage

During the first two days of the revolution, according to businessman and politician Naguib Sawiris, the army made an agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood. The army realized that a collapse of the security forces would lead to anarchy and that under such a scenario, the Brothers could end up in control. Therefore, in return for the Brothers agreeing not to take actions that might split the army, the military would allow the Brothers to openly take part in political activity after the protests ended. No one, including the Brothers and the military leadership, fully understood the direction that events would take. At the time of the agreement, according to Sawiris, the army felt it could at the least limit the rebellion and empower itself at the expense of Gamal Mubarak. The situation, however, changed dramatically on the third day (interview with Naguib Sawiris, June 2011).[14]

The leadership of the Brothers made a wise decision on the evening of 25 January when they told their cadre that they were free to participate as individuals in the protests but not as representatives of the movement. If they formally participated as an organization, it would have allowed the regime to paint the revolution as an attempt by extremist Islamists to seize power.

From the first Friday gathering, young Brothers protected the maydan, taking charge of the frontline. They had more discipline than others in the area. Their most important contributions occurred on 28 January (the first major Friday gathering) and during the 2 February camel raid. The Brothers did not initiate the revolution, and it was not theirs, but their structure and organization were visible throughout it. They set up clinics, provided medics, first aid and ambulances (interview with Abdul-Jalil al-Sharnouby, June 2011).

Negotiating the revolution

Although the revolution had no leader, the Mubarak regime wanted to negotiate with someone to try to keep the situation under control. Therefore, it sought out someone in the maydan (square) to represent the revolutionaries. Abdul Rahman Yusuf, a member of the group of youths who went to Tahrir on day one, is a well-known poet and was leading member of the National Association for Change. Four days into the revolution on 29 January, President Mubarak appointed Ahmad Shafiq, a close associate, well-known air marshal and member of the Mubarak government since 2002 as prime minister. Yusuf and two others met with the new prime minister on 3 February. He was, according to Yusuf, a non-political military man who did not understand what was going on in the street.

Yusuf recalled, 'We met with the prime minister. Our message was clear: Mubarak has to leave immediately and delegate all his rights to his deputy Omar Suleiman. Shafiq did not get it. He answers: "The man is old and only has a few more years to live." This meeting ended with nothing substantial.'

On another day during the revolution, Yusuf met with Suleiman:

> He sat with us. We were three: Yaser al-Hawwari, Mustapha al-Najjar, and myself. He was very collected and calm. When you talk to Omar Suleiman, you see nothing

> beyond a face of steel with no expression. He is a man of security. Suleiman was blunt: He said, 'What is going on in the maydan is prompted by external forces and Brothers.' He told us Egypt will suffer from a military coup if, we, the demonstrators, do not stop. … This did not shake us: We have been under army rule for sixty years anyway.
>
> *(Interview with Abdul Rahman Yusuf, June 2011)*

The complexities of revolutionary Egypt

The 2011 revolution will radically change Egypt. The rebellion's effect will take several years to mature and settle. Street confrontations in late November 2011 and again during 2012 looked like Round Two in the standoff to install a political system that reflects the changes for which so many Egyptians had struggled.

After Mubarak stepped down on 11 February, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the highest military authority in Egypt, assumed the powers of the presidency for a transitional period. This meant that most of the old regime remained in place.

On the ground, a new dynamic developed between the forces of the revolution and the SCAF as well as between the Islamist and liberal social democratic components of the revolution. This explains the Fridays of protest and anger in Tahrir Square against the council and its practices and the rise in differences over the content of the future constitution, formation of a constitutional assembly, and elections.

Egypt's revolution is one of several stages and rounds; each stage lasting from one to two years will only open the way to the next stage. The spirit of change will settle in Egypt before dismantling the old authoritarian system, replacing it with a working democracy based on social justice and a strong civil society that can deal with the issues and problems of corruption, unregulated areas around Cairo, poor education, health, housing and unemployment (interview with Ahmad Shabaan, June 2011).

The revolutionaries fear that the military is trying to stay in power and shift public opinion toward accepting another authoritarian regime. This is at the centre of the struggle in Egypt today. As Bilal Fadl asserted, 'Youth were the vanguard, the core that made the revolution. If it was not for youth, history could write one day [that] "The army of Egypt rebelled and the people of Egypt supported it"' (interview with Bilal Fadl). Ahdaf Soueif, a novelist and intellectual, said, 'The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is not aware that this is a revolution and that the people of Egypt want to remake Egypt' (interview with Ahdaf Soueif, June 2011).

Abdul Rahman Yusuf concurs that Egyptians' main problem in the future will be the army. Military leaders know that they must relinquish power to an elected government, but they are resisting (interview with Abdul Rahman Yusuf. June 2011).

The army has vested interests in Egypt; it owns factories, schools, delivery services, farms and industries that manufacture cars, vans, weapons, heaters and televisions. The army controls a significant portion of the economy, perhaps as much as one third, and the top generals have unchecked powers in handling its business operations. This tie stands between the revolutionaries and the military. The revolutionaries maintained pressure on the SCAF regarding freedom of expression, abolishing redlines against expression, challenging attempts at controlling the media, and managing the transition without losing the gains of the revolution.

The challenges will continue for a long time: police culture, prosecution of police accused of killing demonstrators and improvement of the court system and Egypt's bureaucracy. Meanwhile, against a backdrop of an explosion of demands by Egyptians, the army warns that constant strikes will cause Egypt's collapse.

Social initiatives

Egyptians feel that Egypt is now theirs, and they can shape it as they want. For example, in Helwan, an industrial area, residents who never participated in political activities have decided to divide the area into quarters for future elections in order to have a say in the parliament (interview with Tahani al-Jabali). In another example, in 2011 a group of people established a forum, Enlightened Egypt (Masr al-Mutanawirrah), through Twitter and Facebook as a pressure group. Their first meeting, in a hotel, attracted 3000 participants. Men and women without political experience met with the vision of changing Egypt. Most of them were participating in a public activity for the first time (interview with Tahani al-Jabali, June 2011).

The trend in Egypt after the revolution is to want elections for everything. Elections were held to select a new dean of Cairo University, whereas under Mubarak the dean had to be approved (if not handpicked) by the Ministry of Interior. At Manshiyat al-Bakr, a poor hospital in Cairo, workers, including janitors, formed a union in 2011 with the help of some lawyers. The idea for a union originated with three women: a Muslim doctor, a Christian nurse and another employee (interview with Ahdaf Soueif, June 2011).

Change inside the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood consists of three generations (interview with Essam al-Aryan, June 2011).[15] The most critical generation among the Brothers is its youngest; its members are the organization's hope for change. They took part in the revolution. On more than one occasion, they rebelled against decisions by the leadership not to participate in it. And they have also been known to criticize statements made by the leadership.

The Freedom and Justice Party is the new political representative of the Brotherhood. After the revolution it spent millions establishing headquarters in a number of cities. Many of the Brothers respect and admire the Turkish experience with political Islam.

I had an extensive discussion with Abdul-Jalil al-Sharnouby, one of the youth leaders of the Muslim Brothers. The day before we met in June 2011, he had publicly resigned his position in the Brothers on television; he said he did so to spark a debate and initiate discussion (interview with Abdul Jalil al-Sharnouby, June 2011).

Abdul-Jalil grew up in Saudi Arabia with his father, who was a Muslim preacher. He was exposed as a teenager to the ideas of the Brotherhood. There were no books at home on other topics, so that was what he read. He became the director of IslamOnline, the wing responsible for the Muslim Brothers' electronic outreach.

According to Abdul-Jalil, the revolution puzzled the Brothers: 'This change will have an impact on their methods and way of thinking. It will impact organizational structures. We will have to in the near future, work publicly to elect leaders in the group and its guidance office. What was normal ten years ago is not acceptable today.' He continued, 'A group of youth has rebelled and speaks its mind. For example: the second

Friday of Anger on the 27th of May 2011, the Brothers asked that no one participate. On Friday the 27th, many youth Brothers went to Maydan al-Tahrir. They [had] friendships and good relations with all the other youth in Maydan al-Tahrir.'

It is important to realize that the Muslim Brothers were largely underground and that a group of men at the top made all the decisions. Such a structure is not always possible to maintain in a democratic environment. The Brothers will face the challenge of electing their leaders and evolving from a Leninist-style opposition party into an open and democratic political party. In 2011 they were suspended between the 'worlds' of before and after the revolution. There is limited representation of women in the organization. No women sit on the podium at public discussions held by the Brothers.

According to Abdul-Jalil:

> Now the brothers can be in power and are asked to deliver on economics, employment, corruption, world and regional politics. You can lose public [favour] in one week. This means the Brothers will not survive this era without major changes and opening the way to its new generation. It will need new thinking. New style.
>
> *(Interview with Abdul-Jalil, June 2011)*

The Salafis

Many Salafis are lumpen proletarians recruited in the past by the state security forces to counter the Muslim Brothers. Many were against the revolution and sided with the forces of the Ministry of Interior. But not all Salafis identified with the regime. They represent a genuinely traditional, ultra-conservative phenomena. Their financing comes from Salafis outside of Egypt, often conservative forces in the Saudi regime or affiliated with groups close to it. They increased their visibility after the 2011 revolution but still play into the hands of the SCAF and the military.

Al-Azhar's reach both in the region and internationally decreased during the Mubarak era. The weakening of al-Azhar's moderate Islam during the last few decades strengthened the Salafis' extreme and literal interpretations. Under Mubarak, the Sheikh al-Azhar was appointed after an investigation and report by the security sector. The Salafis' call to 'obey the ruler' helped to bring them in line with the Mubarak regime. They penetrated al-Azhar as well. The Salafi groups could at some point reach a compromise with the Egyptian environment. They too could evolve if Egypt finds its way to a future of development and genuine reform.

Conclusion

The 25 January Egyptian revolution is a democratic social explosion that aspired to do more than topple the regime of Hosni Mubarak. It is easy to start a revolution but impossible to control its dynamics and twists and turns. Attempts by the old regime and forces representing its interests to return Egypt to dictatorship will continue, but they are unlikely to succeed given Egyptians' aspirations and politicization and the changes that have taken place within society. The price for change will prove to be high, but the single-party security state of the July 1952 coup or the Sadat and Mubarak eras are slowly coming to an end. It appears that 25 January 2011 marks the beginning of a long process to slowly replace the old regime, banishing its monopoly on politics and the supremacy of army control.

Since my fieldwork in Egypt and research for this study in 2011, it has become clear that one key to real change in Egypt will be convincing the military to relinquish power to an elected civilian president and a parliament able to exercise their constitutional authorities. Another key is the independence of the courts and the judiciary. These positions were tested by the 2012 election of Mohammad Mursi of the Muslim Brothers as president. While Mursi's rule exposed the Brotherhood's short-sightedness, rigidity, lack of political experience and exercise of power, the military utilized public discontent towards it to engineer the coup of 3 July 2013. More than 3000 Egyptians have died since the coup, and 20,000 have been jailed. The court's hasty issuance of mass death sentences to hundreds of Egyptians has seriously undermined the judiciary and implicated it as an accomplice of the military.

Since July 2013, Egypt has experienced a crisis marked by street protests and loss of life. As I was finalizing the conclusion of this study in May 2014, Egypt's interim government had been accused of committing widespread torture and other major violations of human rights against the Islamic and secular opposition. The Muslim Brothers had earlier been declared illegal along with the secular 6 April movement. Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will inherit, as president, formidable challenges and problems requiring reconciliation and transitional justice for lasting peace. The struggle for Egypt continues, and it will take several years before the nation settles into a new order. The old military establishment and much of the traditional power structure must exit the scene and allow new forces of change to take the stage.

The next three to five years will be difficult as Egypt tries to find the right balance between revolutionary ideals and realities on the ground, democratic principles, people's needs and aspirations, and relations between Islamic and secular forces. Dealing with the challenges of the economy, debt, poverty and corruption, however, demands a less-divided country and responsive civilian rule independent of the military. In the words of a young Egyptian blogger and revolutionary, Sand Monkey, 'The revolution brought to life a dead body [Egypt]. Lots of things are needed to make the country sustainable. If we succeed, we will have a different Egypt; if we fail, then we who [made] the revolution will be on trial for creating the revolution in the first place' (interview with Sand Monkey, September 2011).

Notes

1 I would like to thank Sara al-Sheriff, a young freelance journalist who embodies the spirit of the Egyptian revolution and who arranged interviews with the people whose perspectives are presented here.
2 In addition to his affiliations with the NDP, including sitting on its policy committee (2003–2011) and in its media office (2006–2011), Kamal served as an appointed member of the Shura Council (2007–2011) and editor-in-chief of the daily *Ruz al-Yusuf* (2005–2011). Al-Adly was dismissed during the 2011 demonstrations as part of an attempt to tamp down protests.
3 Egypt was not an exception to undemocratic political systems in that intellectuals are the first to issue warnings and among the first to pay the price of telling the truth.
4 Wael Jamal is a leftist-oriented writer and journalist and managing director of the daily *al-Shorouk*.
5 Farouk is a writer best known for his books in the Egyptian Pocket Novels series. Farouk gained access to state intelligence information in order to write realistic accounts in his novels.
6 Nazif resigned during the first days of the revolution as prime minister in 2011 and is now under investigation. Ahmad Izz (who monopolized the metals trade), Anas al-Fiqqi, Ibrahim Kamel, Mohamed Mansour, Ahmad Mugrabi and Rachid Muhammad Rachid were a few of the prominent businessmen associated with Gamal Mubarak's projects.

7 Yusuf, a poet, is the son of the Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi. He was the first coordinator of Jamiyat Wataniya alil Taghyeer (National Association for Change), which supported the political aspirations of Mohamed ElBaradei after his return to Egypt in 2009.
8 Ishaq, as general secretary of the Kifaya, became the first Copt to hold a high-profile position of leadership in an Egyptian political organization during the Mubarak era.
9 Shabaan is a co-founder of Kifaya.
10 Ibrahim took part in the NDP's electronic operation before the revolution.
11 The traditional opposition, including the Muslim Brothers, took positions based on what they thought the street wanted.
12 Al-Fiqqi is former head of the foreign relations committee of the Shura Council and leading member of the NDP, June 2011. He resigned from the NDP after the revolution.
13 Al-Sharnouby is chief editor of Ikhwanonline, the official website of the Muslim Brotherhood.
14 Sawiris was executive chairman of Wind Telecom and Orascom Telecom Holding (the largest employer in Egypt) before entering politics in May 2011. He is committed to liberalism and launched the Free Egyptians (al-Masryyin al-Ahrar) party.
15 Abdul Minim Abu al-Foutouh, a member of this middle generation of the Muslim Brotherhood, ran as a presidential candidate independently of the Brotherhood. Also, Essam al-Aryan is a leading member of the middle generation.

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Making the Crisis Visible

A Reassessment of the Parliament in the Mubarak Regime

Irene Weipert-Fenner

The 25 January Revolution showed to the world that the Mubarak regime had been in a deep crisis. Before the revolution, however, this assessment was only expressed by critical voices in Egypt – for example, by the novelist Alaa al-Aswani, who expected the Egyptian people to no longer accept the dictatorial oppression. A few social scientists pointed to the increasing public protests and argued that the regime's legitimacy had almost vanished (Hopkins 2008). However, the question remains of what had *changed* that led to the fall of the dictatorship because repression as well as public protests had not been new to the regime. Furthermore, one has to ask why autocratic regime research was not able to recognize the dynamics and to find a way to revise the prevailing concepts about authoritarian states in order to explain the revolutionary outcome and to better understand future developments.

This chapter claims that an analysis of the Egyptian parliament will improve the understanding of the fall of the Mubarak regime, as it will give insights into the legitimacy crisis of the regime and into power struggles within the ruling elite before the 25 January Revolution. This might seem awkward at first sight as the Egyptian People's Assembly (Majlis al-Shaab) – like any other legislature in an autocratic state – used to be regarded as a mere instrument of the ruling elite for stabilizing the regime. Accordingly, no importance was attributed to what was actually going on within the parliament. This chapter argues that this functionalist perspective, in general, misinterprets regime survival as stagnancy and equates the intention of the ruling elite to stay in power with the actual effects of political decision-making.

Therefore, a reassessment of the parliament in an autocratic regime seems necessary in the first part. Historical institutionalism is offered as an alternative approach that pays tribute to the complex and interdependent relation between the institution, the actors and the context that can all undergo changes over time. It also attributes agency to every actor within the institution, not only to the ruling elite, and shifts the focus to dynamics as a result of diverging interests and unintended consequences of actions. From this perspective, an institutional analysis can give insights into the development of conflicts and cooperation between different actor groups. Furthermore, the discursive

nature of parliament as a place of public speech and of justification and criticism allows for an empirical assessment of what is considered legitimate and of the extent to which the current regime is perceived as fulfilling these ideals.

In the second part, the approach will be applied in an interpretive analysis of parliamentary debates about the competition protection law in Egypt. It allows us to observe how all actors – not only the ruling elite – understand the context they are situated in which is marked by the transformation to a free market economy, the political rise of business elites and the deteriorating socio-economic situation. Here, an increasing intra-elite conflict between private business elites and the rest of the ruling party becomes apparent. Furthermore, a growing gap between legitimacy claims and beliefs over the years gives additional insight into the crisis of the regime which was not only about its autocratic nature as such. It also dealt with the question about the appropriate role of the state in a new system of a market economy. Drawing the line until the parliamentary elections in 2010 on the eve of the revolution, this analysis will generate a more profound understanding of Egypt's Spring of 2011.

The parliament in an autocratic regime

Autocratic regime research has been neglected for a long time, and the focus on the normatively preferable regimes, democracies, prevails until today. When, however, the third wave of democratization (Huntington 1993) ended without the expected fall of all dictatorships, the interest in the functioning of authoritarian systems re-emerged. Due to the general trend in political science, the focus was now on quantitative studies and rational choice approaches. In large-*n* (country) comparisons, regime stability was taken as the dependent variable, and one result of these studies was that institutions accounted for varying degrees of stability. Beginning with Barbara Geddes (1999), who differentiated between institutional forms of rulers (military, single party, personalist), several attempts have been made to refine the understanding of institutions such as the ruling party (Brownlee 2007; Magaloni 2008), elections (Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2006; Blaydes 2011) and the legislature (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006; Gandhi 2008). The overall explanation, however, always remains functional: how do institutions create or preserve regime stability?

For the autocratic parliament, several potential stabilizing factors are identified. First, institutions are seen as creating incentives for powerful groups to cooperate with the regime. In the case of the parliament, this is rent-distribution in the form of potentially lucrative privileges such as high salaries, a preferential access to state tenders, the contact to decision-making incumbents and immunity (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004: 383).

Second, institutions are regarded as dividing the opposition by integrating the moderates and thereby separating them from the radicals (Lust-Okar 2005). A third stabilizing effect is the co-option of people from different backgrounds by granting them some influence on the decision-making process, which helps the core elite to find moderate and easily implementable policies (Wintrobe 2007: 379). Fourth, the parliament is considered a perfect place for the ruler to give in partially to the demands of the opposition without showing any weakness because the negotiating process is institutionalized and expresses normality – rather than giving in after street protests (Gandhi 2008: xviii). Fifth, accommodating the demands of members of parliament (MPs) gives more credibility to the dictator's promise to respect property rights and improves the investment climate as the arbitrary power of the ruler is tamed. The overall economic

development increases, which mainly leads to growing profits for the dictator himself (Wright 2008: 325).

Finally, as some authors claim, the positive impact of the parliament concerning the overall regime legitimacy results from the imitation of democratic structures and procedures by creating a pluralistic assembly with some freedom of speech (Schlumberger 2008: 160; Arafat 2009: 2). A similar argument says that a parliamentary assembly offers the chance for criticizing the government. This would help in calming down the public without changing much (Brumberg 2005: 4).

This overview shows that all these different arguments of why a parliament matters think in terms of functionalist rational choice institutionalism. According to this approach, institutions constitute a voluntary agreement of the relevant actors on a set of rules that will constrain the actors' behaviour in a way that will solve a collective-action dilemma (North 1990). It constitutes a stable equilibrium as long as the institution serves its purpose. Applied to autocratic regimes, it is interesting to observe that the relevant actors who are considered in the literature are solely the ruler or the group of rulers. They constitute the core of the ruling elite around which other elite groups of a broader ruling coalition unite in the shared interest of regime survival.

Instead of limiting the parliament to a certain role for the system, in this chapter it will be understood as an integral part of the whole system, as interwoven with the context, other institutions and actors that all develop over time. Therefore, I suggest that institutional analysis is the chance to observe ongoing developments in an autocratic state.

This approach rests on historical institutionalism which integrates the processes taking place in society, economy and politics, as well as the role that the agency of all integrated actors plays into the analysis of the institution (Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen 1999; Pierson and Skocpol 2002; Steinmo 2008). The heterogeneity of actors with diverging interests and normative concepts is acknowledged, which emphasizes the likelihood of conflicts within the institution. In addition, conflicts and frictions might also lead to unintended consequences (Thelen 1999: 382–383). Furthermore, in order to comprehend the dynamics of an institution, it is not sufficient to analyse one point in time, but it is important to extend the period under study (Steinmo 2008:127–129).

However, this does not imply that functional approaches are entirely wrong. On the contrary, they offer a rich pool of ideas about possible tactics of the ruling elite. The real challenge, then, is to understand how the other actors react to them. Rent recipients or the opposition are not necessarily passive, but they might pursue various interests that could lead to conflicts. As the decision-making of the ruling elite is linked to the distribution of power, money and prestige, which can be a zero-sum game, the ruling elite might need to side with one group and by that alienate other parts of the broader elite coalition or the public. The same applies to the institution itself that used to be regarded as being at the complete disposal of the ruler.[1] The elite might manipulate or even abolish the institution at any time, but again this does not tell anything about how these manipulations are interpreted by other actors and what consequences these institutional modifications will have.

This also leads to a revised concept of legitimacy. As mentioned before, the parliament's link to legitimacy used to be found in its role of enhancing regime legitimacy by simply being a nominally democratic institution. But again, the intention of the ruling elite to profit from a democratic façade is just one side of the coin. This points to a

conceptual problem of assessing legitimacy without taking into account what people actually believe to be legitimate.

Legitimacy, indeed, constitutes a source of power as it means that an actor or institution is perceived as having the right to rule. This basically means that legitimacy is about the social recognition of an actor or institution's identity, interests, practices, norms or procedures (Reus-Smit 2007). In order to assess legitimacy, it is necessary to look at both sides, the claims *and* the actual beliefs. It can thus be observed as a discursive phenomenon, one side seeking to justify his or her identity, interests, practices and institutional designs and the other side either accepting those claims as rightful or contesting them (Nullmeier 2010: 9–15). Comparing how claims and beliefs relate to each other and how they develop over time can give evidence of what parts of the regime are seen as legitimate, be it certain actors, policies or the entire regime.

This is why the parliament is suited for the study of legitimacy as debates mostly consist of claims and beliefs – concerning various elements of legitimacy – expressed in public speeches. Of course, the parliamentary debates are just one part of a wider public discourse and can also suffer from biases created by power asymmetries that are mostly felt in the composition of the legislature. However, as Malesky and Schuler (2010) showed for the single-party system in Vietnam, the public speech entails strong incentives to express criticism in a homogeneous parliament, and this at least ensures valuable insights into the regime. This proves true for Egypt, too, as will become clear in the following analysis which was conducted by using interpretative methods (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). These methods enable the researcher to reconstruct the social meaning attributed to the topic and by that to grasp the particular elements of legitimacy claims and beliefs.

The context: Egypt's major developments in the 2000s

The decade before the revolution was marked by increasing political and social protests from 2004 onwards. The same year was also the point of departure for the so-called 'new guard' of the ruling party (National Democratic Party – NDP) around Gamal Mubarak, one of the president's sons, to take over the power in the government. Under Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif, a cabinet was formed that included big businessmen and technocrats who speeded up the process of privatization, liberalization and deregulation which had begun in the 1970s by the then president Anwar al-Sadat and further pushed forward by the structural adjustment programme of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the early 1990s. The economic transition, however, did not lead to free and fair competition but to cartels and monopolistic structures dominated by businessmen with close ties to the regime (Amin 2011).

At the same time, Egypt suffered from dramatic inflation and price increases, particularly of food and basic goods, which caused labour protests for higher wages and better working conditions as well as food riots (Weber and Harris 2008; El-Mahdi 2010).[2] This means that at the same time that a minority of businessmen with close contacts to the political elite became wealthy and politically influential, the socio-economic situation for the majority of the Egyptian people deteriorated.

In order to understand how these changes were perceived and how it transformed the ideas of legitimacy and power, the case selected here is the Law on Protection of Competition and Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices (*qanun himayat al-munafasa wa-man' al-mumarasat al-ihtikariyya* – Law No 2005/3). It deals with the major

developments and covers the pre-revolutionary period from 2005 on, when the new reform government had just been installed and public protests started to kick off.[3] It contains two legislative periods (2000–2005 and 2005–2010) which differed most significantly in the representation of the strongest opposition force, the moderate Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood. Officially forbidden but informally tolerated, they increased their number of delegates from 17 to 88 in 2005. Strikingly, this did not cause a rupture in the debate as will become clear in the following analysis.

Hopes are high: The enactment of the anti-trust law 2005

In the general debate about the introduction of the anti-trust law (Session No 2005/21), the government was criticized for being too late with the enactment as Egypt had already embarked on the economic restructuring for more than a decade. Still, except for one MP of a socialist party, the vast majority trusted the seriousness of the government to install a strong competition protection. Most of the MPs considered an anti-trust law to be a crucial element of the free market economy whose introduction was thus interpreted as a part of Egypt's transformation from a socialist system to a free economy.

The law was mainly justified by the need to regulate free markets. The MPs discussed the degree of state interference to protect this freedom and by that referred to the new role of the state that developed from an entrepreneur with social responsibility to a mere regulator (2005/21: 26). For the majority, the need to effectively control the free market stemmed from the fear of the private sector and 'the capitalist greed' (2005/21: 31). The lack of social responsibility, particularly of big companies, gave the state a huge importance in protecting especially small and medium-sized enterprises. A minority within the NDP, however, worried about scaring off business and tried to enhance the trust in Egypt as having left socialism behind (2005/21: 15–17). 'The whales' (*al-hitan*, 2005/21: 61), as the huge companies were called, were needed to create jobs and were the sole ones to survive in international competition. Instead of fighting the big players, those MPs argued in favour of a new balance (*tawazun*) between different parts of the economy.

Many MPs focused on the advantages, from improved competitiveness like modernization, high growth rates and an improved investment situation, as well as a number of positive effects for the consumer, such as lower prices, a higher quality of production and a better distribution of goods. All of this was expected to be achieved automatically by introducing the law. Only the issue of sinking prices caused a dispute as, for some, lower selling prices were a mere by-product of the law as illegal agreements among producers were forestalled. For others, sinking prices could only be a result of a price regulation that presupposed an intervening state, which was needed in the current chaotic market situation. And, indeed, in the end, the law included an article that allowed the government to determine selling prices for essential products for a limited amount of time.

To sum up, the debate in early 2005 was marked by a relatively high level of cooperation and trust in the government in actually pursuing competition protection. There was also a consensus between legitimacy claims of the government and legitimacy beliefs of the opposition that the state should have an active role in the regulation of the market economy.

2008: Power struggle within the ruling party

Three years after the enactment of the competition protection law, several proposals for amending it were discussed (2008/118, 8 June). The aim of all drafts was to raise the fines for monopolistic practices in order to enhance the scare-off effect. In addition, the introduction of a leniency policy was suggested to set incentives for the people involved to shed light on the crimes committed. Furthermore, a new obligation for companies to inform state authorities about their business activities aimed to enhance transparency. Agreeing on the same goals, the proposals did not share the same assessment of the status quo. The minister of trade and industry claimed that it was simply time to revise the law after three years of experience and adjust it where shortcomings were found. One delegate of the ruling NDP (Khalil Quwayta) instead saw the reason for the amendments on the actor level, namely the greedy businessmen and their exploitation of the Egyptian people that had to be stopped by the law. This, however, had not been achieved by the anti-trust law so far due to a lack of respect for the state and its power to protect the laws. The second MP (Saad al-Husayni) of the Muslim Brothers not only blamed the businessmen who became monopolists because the government allowed it. The MP also accused the public sector of working hand in hand with the private sector. 'The marriage of power and money' (2008/118: 27) was the reason for the ongoing ineffectiveness of the anti-trust law.

In the debate, two blocs became visible. Despite the different descriptions of the status quo, the minister was in an alliance with a group of MPs demanding higher fines. A compromise between the different proposals turned out to be a twofold solution for the maximum fine which was defined by either a sum in absolute terms or a percentage between 10 and 15 per cent of the turnover of the product which was the subject of monopolist practices committed, depending on which fine would be higher. The argument here was clear: the bigger the company and the more massive the gains from monopolistic practices, the higher the fine should be to ensure a scare-off effect. This proposal, however, still entailed the expectation that the state was going to fulfil its regulation function but needed to be more active than in previous years because of the devastating situation of many citizens due to massive price increases.

During the discussion, however, another group appeared to justify low fines with the protection of small-sized companies. Unveiling the two camps, one could see a heterogeneous bloc pushing for a harsher punishment which consisted of members of the NDP (minister of trade and industry), Mustafa al-Sa'id (head of the committee for economic affairs), MP Muhammad Khalil Quwayta and MPs belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood (Saad al-Husayni, Ahmad Diyab, Abd al-Halim Helal). On the other side, a group of businessmen included the ceramics magnate Mustafa Mustafa Kamal al-Sallab, the banking tycoon Dr Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Rahman Baraka and Ibrahim Saad Muhammad al-Jawjari, who belonged to one of the most wealthy families from al-Mansura, the capital of Daqahliya Governorate, an important centre for textiles and food production.

In contrast to the other amendments that were approved after a short discussion, a long dispute evolved which was solved – instead of putting it to vote – by the speaker of the assembly, who sent the article back to the joint committee for revision. After all, the final decision was taken there behind closed doors and only presented in the People's Assembly a few days later (2008/131, 12 June). In contrast to the vivid debate described above, the committee's rapporteur put forward the formula favoured by the businessmen

in the earlier session – without giving any justification for the decision. Notwithstanding, it was approved straight away. In addition, a group of MPs proposed the deletion of the new leniency article by simply declaring one argument as wrong that was used in favour of the article before. Both justifications, however, appeared far-fetched to the Muslim Brotherhood MPs and the minister's adviser and caused an outcry. The shock was so great that even the government had the intention to tighten the law; in the end it was parliament who actually diluted it.

Obviously, easy solutions to policy-related problems are not always at hand. Decisions need to be taken at a certain point, which then can give evidence of the power structures, which were here in favour of the business elites around Gamal Mubarak. Making use of their power for their own interests without justifying the decisions in a persuasive way or engaging in a compromise, however, led to discontent and criticism. Possibly as an attempt to appease critics, six days later (2008/139, 18 June) another draft for amending the law was introduced by the NDP delegate and well-known steel tycoon Ahmad Ezz, the personified monopolist for the Egyptian public. He pushed through a reintroduction of the leniency article, with only a mitigation of the penalty of not more than 50 per cent. To him, this would be enough of an incentive for giving information on monopolistic practices, but at the same time it would prevent false accusations. In contrast, a group of Muslim Brothers, NDP and independent MPs blamed his solution as not being sufficient to motivate someone involved in monopolistic practices to give evidence if he still had to pay up to 150 million Egyptian pounds. Furthermore, the question of higher fines was brought up over and over again, accusing the current formulations of emptying the anti-trust law of its entire content and effectiveness, which meant to them that monopolists could continue the exploitation of the country.

These observations showed a conflict of interests, and various actors engaging in a zero-sum game about either strengthening the effectiveness of the competition law or weakening it. The final decision in favour of lax regulations reflected the power relations of the time but also fortified existing divisions within the ruling party. Increasingly, many MPs referred to the aggravating social crisis to which an active state would be the solution and pointed to a widening gap between their legitimacy beliefs and their assessment of the government's performance.

2009: No elite responsiveness to public protests

Less than a year later, in a number of interpellations, the government was held to account for not being capable of implementing the anti-trust law and controlling the price increases that had hit Egypt in 2008. Here, the expectations concerning price regulations, raised in 2005 as a central element of the law, became the core criticism. Compared with the ministers' answers to the interpellations, huge gaps appear. First, the assessment of the status quo of the MPs and the government differed significantly. The delegates described a deep social crisis resulting from price increases, stagnant wages and high rates of unemployment (2009/66: 17) that led to poverty and social fragmentation, visible in the growing number of strikes, protests, divorces and even suicides (2009/67: 7). In contrast, the ministers considered the price increases as natural fluctuations on a market and even argued that the inflation rate had improved, which they declared to be a historic event for Egypt (2009/67: 30).

Second, the appraisal of the role of the state showed deep divisions. Whereas the ideal of a strong and active state was still shared, the MPs contrasted it with the reality which, from their point of view, was an absent, incapable or even corrupt government (2009/66: 49–50, 65–66). Market regulation, the main reason for introducing the anti-trust law in 2005, was regarded as a complete failure. Instead, the privatization process suffered from corruption, selling state enterprises at low prices to regime proxies who made huge profits from reselling the companies to mainly foreign investors who raised the prices without caring about the Egyptian people (2009/66: 66). Instead, as the people suffered the consequences, the government was protecting the monopolists rather than its citizens (2009/66: 14).

Here, the trust in the government's seriousness of implementing the law had fully vanished. The interpellants demanded the withdrawal of confidence from the government and some even insinuated that the system as a whole was no longer stable. One MP declared: 'I give a warning of a coming explosion' (2009/66: 59). Another one claimed that other people would have already 'moved the thrones' (2009/66: 61) if they had had to suffer from such living conditions.

Comparing these assessments with the high expectations associated with the law at its enactment, it becomes clear how the belief in the government and regime's right to rule had dramatically decreased. It also shows how the agency of various actors in form of harsh criticism in parliament pushed the group of businessmen towards a crossroad, to either concede to the demands or to suppress further criticism. It seems that the business camp opted for the latter solution. Already in 2009, the critical voices from within the NDP seemed to have been silenced as the attacks on the government were only expressed by Muslim Brothers and other independent oppositional delegates – a development that continued the year after.

Silencing the criticism and its unintended consequences: The 2010 elections, the 2011 revolution and the new rise of the army

The lack of responsiveness increased to such an extent that in 2010 another attempt to amend the law was approved by the committees but not even debated in the assembly. Critical voices were not desired anymore, which became most evident in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Not only was the number of oppositional candidates reduced from 30 to 5 per cent,[4] but the critical camp within the ruling party was also kicked out. All parliamentarians who had fought for the tightening of the anti-trust law in 2008 lost their seats, among them well-known and respected NDP members such as Mustafa al-Sa'id. The Ezz-camp had taken over – this was the overall lesson from these elections (Al-Ali 2011).

The intention of the business wing within the NDP to exclude critical voices had probably been to stabilize their powerful position. The unintended consequence, however, was the alienation of support from broader segments of the ruling party and further public resentment. The newly elected People's Assembly was not accepted as legitimate, and oppositional forces founded a 'shadow parliament' in December 2010. This is remarkable as all elections before had also been manipulated by corruption and even violence. The elections of 2010, however, seemed to have crossed a threshold of what was still tolerable and considered as fair and appropriate within the existing regime.[5] By this, one can observe how the parliamentary criticism of certain policies and their withdrawal of legitimacy beliefs from the government led at first to the

exclusion of these critical voices. Yet, as an unintended consequence, this caused a legitimacy crisis within the parliament itself as an institution that contributed to the legitimacy crisis of the whole regime, which a month later led to the 25 January Revolution.

When the public uprisings in February 2011 reached a point of no return, the army generals as another major party within the power circles in Egypt profited from the exposed position of the business elites. They imprisoned the well-known 'whales', among them Ahmad Ezz, together with the Mubarak clan (Kirkpatrick and Afify 2011). Ironically, the army had not even been directly affected in a negative way by the economic restructuring as it had been compensated for their partial loss of power and money resulting from the privatization of public-sector companies. The upper ranks received high positions in the privatized companies and also kept a substantial part of the economy (estimates between 15 and 40 per cent gross domestic product). Yet, this relationship was precarious as the army's privileges depended on the army General Husni Mubarak, who had been the broker between conflicting interests for decades. However, as his health deteriorated, his son Gamal, a civilian, was suspected of being installed as a successor. His leaning towards private businessmen and technocrats posed a threat to the old balance, even more so as the unwillingness of the businessmen to come to terms with other elite groups had become obvious, most prominently in the parliamentary elections in 2010. With the 25 January Revolution, the army took the chance and reduced this factor of insecurity concerning their privileges by imprisoning some of the most prominent businessmen.[6] Furthermore, as the political actors of the ruling elite had been divided into two camps, it appeared that the military as a third force rejoiced and expanded its influence into the political arena. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took control over the political daily business in 2011. The major aim, however, always seemed to install constitutional safeguards for the generals' interests, especially the veto on military actions and budgetary autonomy in order to keep their financial and economic independence. Although it seemed in 2012 that a deal between General Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi and then-president Muhammad Mursi had brought the army back to the barracks, the events following Tamarrud Day in 2013 showed that this assumption had been wrong. Since al-Sisi became Egypt's new president it seems unlikely that the generals will let go of their regained influence in politics any time soon. What resistance this might create in the long run remains to be seen. What is yet clear is that the army's return to the political centre stage was made possible by power conflicts and the lack of legitimacy ascribed to the politics of the business elites around Gamal Mubarak – a process that the analysis of parliamentary debates made visible.

Conclusion

Dominated by a focus on enduring stability, autocratic regime research had a blind spot for the dynamics within the authoritarian state that are triggered by someone else than the ruling elite and somewhere else than in the presidential palace. The perspective suggested here assumes that institutions such as the legislature are embedded in major developments and are used by various actors for their interests. In order to understand changes within a regime, the parliament can be a perfect place to study shifts in power relations and legitimacy beliefs. For the case of Egypt, this chapter has shown how the interdependent developments of changes within the political elite, the

economic restructuring and public discontent were dealt with in parliamentary debates. The analysis pointed to a growing intra-elite conflict within the ruling party and a decreasing trust in the government to fulfil the functions agreed upon, most notably the market regulation and protection of the citizens from exploitation by big companies. This means that the legitimacy crisis in that particular field was not about the norms and values as such but about the assessment of the extent to which the regime complied with them.

Understanding democratization in Egypt means comprehending the old system in its complexity. By doing so, this chapter has shown that a huge part of the overall regime crisis was rooted in 'the marriage of money and power'. The revolution led to the dissolution of this alliance, at least temporarily. The army profited from the intra-elite frictions and put itself on top by eliminating the publicly and internally detested big business elites from the political scene. Yet, the underlying conflict over the role of the state in a free market economy hasn't been solved as one can see in the still increasing labour protests. Socio-economic discontent also contributed to the mobilization that led to the ousting of former president Mursi. In spite of that, the focus of the political discourse has remained on the re-establishment of the political system and identity conflicts between secular (or 'civil') forces and Islamists that reached a climax with the crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood from July 2013 on. At some point, however, the conflict about the economic restructuring, social justice and the role of the state will most probably become central for the political discourse again, of course in a changed context, with a new actor constellation, but definitely also in parliament. Whether this institution will be embedded in a democratic or an autocratic regime is too soon yet totell.

Notes

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1 This argument can be found explicitly in the concept of 'intensive chameleonism' (Albrecht and Frankenberger 2010: 53).
2 For an assessment of the role of labour in the Egyptian revolution, see Weipert-Fenner (2013).
3 Parliamentary minutes were published in the *Official Gazette* (al-Jarida al-rasmiyya), accessible before the revolution on the official homepage of the People's Assembly. The debates analysed are 2005/21: 9–66; 2008/118: 8–60; 2008/118 annex: 1–35; 2008/131: 4–13; 2008/131 annex: 34–35; 2008/139: 49–60; 2008/139 annex: 81–88; 2009/66: 22–68; 2009/67: 3–23; 2009/68: 3–23.
4 The Muslim Brotherhood attained only one seat as they boycotted the run-offs due to the extent of electoral fraud.
5 This assessment was expressed in interviews with an NDP ex-parliamentarian, an oppositional politician and a political consultant in Cairo, June 2011.
6 For more details on the revolution and the elite change, see Demmelhuber (2013).

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18

The 'Anguish' of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

Khalil al-Anani

This chapter explores the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) after the January 2011 uprising and attempts to unpack the reasons behind this. It explains the failure of the MB in power and the consequences of this failure on the movement's future.

Rethinking Islamism

To provide a plausible understanding of the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood, one needs to situate it within the broader context of understanding and studying Islamism as a socio-political phenomenon. Over the past three decades, two influential scholarly trends have dominated the study of Islamist movements. First is the essentialist trend that treats Islamism as a rigid and immutable phenomenon. According to the proponents of this trend, Islamism is a mere reaction to the tension between Islam and modernity. Moreover, they claim that Islam, as a set of traditions and cultural values, has a deep problem with democracy (see, for instance, Pipes 1983). Not surprisingly, they tend to identify Islam as a rigid cluster of idioms and symbols that shapes Muslims' vision towards the self and the other (Ismail 2003).

The second trend is contextualists who view the emergence of Islamist movements as a mere response to the crises that destroyed the Middle Eastern countries over the past six decades. According to them, the problems of urbanization, unemployment, poverty and corruption had eroded the legitimacy of political regimes and paved the way for Islamist movements to exist and thrive. According to the advocates of contextualism, authoritarian durability and socio-economic failure fuelled the Islamist resurgence in many parts of the Muslim world (Hudson 1977; Ayubi 1991; Guazzone 1995; Ibrahim 1996; Esposito 1997).

Clearly, these two currents were mainly preoccupied with the impact of culture and politics on the emergence and development of Islamist movements. They focused on the 'externality' of Islamism – that is, examining its discourse and behaviour without paying much attention to the internal dynamics and interactions that could explain Islamists' ideology, behaviour and tactics. Therefore, a new generation of scholars has

emerged over the past decade and sought to fill this gap. The new trend has its roots within social movements' theory. The proponents of this trend tend to view Islamism as an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon that can't be understood without unpacking its complexity. Hence, they focus on the institutional and ideational aspects in examining Islamist movements. Issues such as identity, mobilization, framing and collective action are the locus of this trend (Munson 2001; Wickham 2002; Yavuz 2003; Wiktorowicz 2004; Bayat 2005).

Some of social movement's scholars tend to apply the so-called 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis in order to understand the behaviour, ideology and strategy of Islamist movements. It assumes that the integration of the anti-establishment parties and movements can lead to their moderation (Wickham 2004; El-Ghobashi 2005; Clark 2006; Schwedler 2006). However, this hypothesis has recently been a subject of critique and revision (Wickham 2004; Schwedler 2006; Tezcűr 2010; Brown 2012). Generally, the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis suffers two limitations: its mechanical or linear thrust and the ambiguous and highly controversial nature of the concept of 'moderation'.

Following the same line of scholarship, this chapter runs against the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis. The argument put forward is that the integration of Islamist movements is not inevitably conducive to moderation, nor does it necessarily lead to democratization. It suggests that instead of focusing on the 'outcome' of the inclusion process and whether it involves moderation or not, it would be more useful to concentrate on the 'process' itself and how the internal and external variables interplay within Islamist movements. The case of the MB after the Egyptian uprising provides an important case for examining the impact of the internal dynamics upon the movement's discourse, ideology and tactics and we shall discuss it in this chapter.

The pre-uprising Brotherhood

In the years before the January 2011 uprising, the Muslim Brotherhood was preoccupied with two key goals: maintaining its social and political activism and preserving its organizational structure. Apparently, the MB could achieve both goals despite the brutal repression under the longstanding reign of Hosni Mubarak. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the MB has been involved in formal politics. They participated in parliamentary elections, dominated several syndicate offices, and became the main opposition movement in the country over the past three decades. During 1980s and 1990s, the MB expanded its social network all over Egypt and solidified its organizational structure to become disciplined and obedient to the leadership. Furthermore, the MB has benefited from the limited political openness under Mubarak to achieve political gains. It participated in 1984 and 1987 parliamentary elections in a coalition with different liberal and leftist parties which secured it significant political weight and clout.

Exhausted by fighting radical and violent Islamists, the Mubarak regime had to turn a blind eye on the expansion of the MB during the 1980s. However, by the turn of 1990s, Mubarak decided to eliminate the MB (Wickham 2002; Al-Awadi 2004; El-Ghobashi 2005). Therefore his security apparatus carried out the heaviest crackdown on the MB since the 1950s and 1960s (El-Ghobashi 2005). Mubarak employed the surge of violence initiated by radical Islamists as a pretext to suppress the MB. The MB, in turn, sought to de-legitimize the Mubarak regime and discredit its party, the former National Democratic Party (NDP). It thus boycotted the parliamentary election of

1990 and sought to strengthen its alliance with other political forces. The Mubarak regime, on its part, used military trials to jettison the MB and prosecute its leaders.

However, over the past decade the MB sought to enhance its political clout. In 2004, the MB issued a 'political reform' initiative that was a hallmark in the movement's ideological and political evolution. The initiative adopted democracy, pluralism and political reform as key objectives. The MB has also reached out to other ideological and political forces in order to thwart Mubarak's attempt to hand over power to his son, Gamal. It thus coordinated with the Kefay movement ('Enough'), supported the demands of judges for more independence and campaigned for more political and constitutional reform. In 2005, the MB, surprisingly, won 20 per cent of the parliament seats before Mubarak unleashed a harsh and heavy crack down campaign against the movement. The security apparatus hounded and arrested many of the MB's senior leaders including Khairat al-Shater, Hasan Malek and Mohamed Ali Beshr, who were tried before a military trial and were sentenced to between three and ten years (Al-Anani 2007). It was not until the January 2011 uprising when many of the MB's leaders were released and regained their political freedom.

The Brotherhood after the uprising

After the fall of Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as one of the key political forces in Egypt. It sought ardently to fill the political vacuum left by the former National Democratic Party (NDP) that dominated the country for more than three decades. The MB benefited from the fragmentation and the lack of experience of the young revolutionary movements that sparked and spearheaded the uprising. As Nathan Brown points out, the young revolutionaries were mainly interested in the politics of protest more than party-building and organization (Brown 2012: 4). Not surprisingly, they were quickly surpassed by the more organized and well-prepared forces such as the MB, Salafis and the military.

In June 2011, the MB established its Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), which would later become the new ruling party in Egypt before being banned by the military-backed government in 2013. While Islam remains the party's chief frame of reference, the FJP platform has introduced several amendments to the draft platform the Brotherhood unveiled in 2007. Perhaps the most prominent difference between the two platforms is the omission of the controversial provision giving clerics a formal role in politics and law-making. The Brotherhood's 2007 programme called for the formation of a committee of senior religious scholars, chosen in national elections, to advise parliament and the president, thereby creating a system which many found to be akin to the Iranian one (Aly 2007). The FJP also removed the article on the importance of the state's religious functions, which had implicitly ruled out a Copt or non-Muslim woman from becoming head of state. The new platform does not rule out the election of women to government, although Brotherhood members have repeatedly said that they consider women 'unsuitable' for the presidency.

Overall, the Brotherhood has chosen to remain silent on controversial issues, hoping to dodge criticism from other political parties and segments of society. Even though the FJP labels itself as a civil party, religion has a heavy presence throughout its platform. The party declares as its primary objective not power, as one would expect of any civil party, but rather to 'enhance Islamic morals, values, and concepts in individuals' lives and society', which are goals closer to that of a religious group than a political party.

Moreover, the FJP platform is ambiguous and inconsistent in the use of key terms. For instance, when discussing the nature of the state, the word '*shura*' (consultation) is used, as this is thought by Islamists to be a broader and more inclusive term than democracy. In other parts of the platform, '*shura*' and 'democracy' are used interchangeably, an apparent reflection of the conflict between the party's religious ideals and its political ambitions. This usage also reflects the party's attempt to balance the discourse of the conservatives with that of the reformers within the MB, with '*shura*' being favoured by the conservatives and 'democracy' appealing to the reformers.

In terms of its economic vision, the FJP now clearly embraces social liberalism, which shows that the Brotherhood's economic ideology has come a long way since 2007. The platform backs the principles of economic freedom that achieve social justice and a redistribution of income, while also encouraging foreign and domestic investment. The 2007 draft platform, in sharp contrast, had been based on an Islamic economic system.

In addition, the way in which the party was founded and its leaders were selected has also been controversial. Party leaders, including former chairman Mohamed Morsi, deputy chairman Essam El-Erian, and former secretary-general Mohamed Saad El-Katatny who became party chairman afterwards were not chosen through elections. Instead, the Brotherhood's Shura Council chose the party's leadership behind closed doors. This move left many disgruntled, especially young Brotherhood members, who believe that the Brotherhood's old guard has been trying to impose control over the FJP since its inception. The FJP has attempted to show that it is open to all Egyptians, taking on a Christian vice president (Rafiq Habib, a Copt who was a consultant for former Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mahdi Akef) and including nearly 1000 female co-founders. But this diversity is belied by the fact that up to 70 per cent of FJP founders are active members of the MB as well as the dearth of youth and women in leadership positions. In general, the FJP leadership is dominated by Brotherhood conservatives, with no representation for the reformists. The reformist leadership has been on the decline within the Brotherhood after the resignation of Ibrahim Zafarani and the announcement by Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh that he was going to run for president of Egypt as an independent, which was rebuked the MB's leadership. Obviously, the FJP is politically and ideologically subordinate to the MB and represents its political arm.

The long march to power

The path of the Muslim Brotherhood to power was neither easy nor smooth. To start with, after the fall of Mubarak the MB and FJP were keen not to provoke or alienate other political forces. Hence, it adopted a self-restraint strategy in order to defuse the fears of the power hungry. Therefore, immediately after the downfall of Mubarak, the MB declared that it does not seek full control of Egypt. It raised the slogan of 'participation, not domination' to signal its limited political ambitions (Brown 2012). For instance, in March 2011, the MB announced that it would only contest 30 per cent of the parliament before it retreats and increases it into 40 to 50 per cent of parliamentary seats. Moreover, a few days before the ousting of Mubarak, the MB announced it would not field a candidate in the presidential elections. However, the movement changed its position and decided to run and eventually won the presidency in June 2012.

The decision of the MB to contest presidential elections came amid a standoff with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) after a short period of collaboration

between both parties. Ironically, the standoff was not about the guarantees of democratic transition but rather over the share of each party from the revolution's benefits and privileges. SCAF, after staying in power for more than a year and breaking its pledge of relinquishing it within six months, sought to secure as much economic, financial and legal profits from the revolution as it could. For the military junta, these privileges comprised a 'red-line' beyond the negotiation table with the new regime regardless of its ideological background. On the other hand, the MB was determined not to allow the old regime to return. For it, the only way to prevent this was to step in and take power from the generals. Moreover, the failure of both groups to find a 'consensual' candidate who could secure their interests intensified the relationship which became more confrontational when the MB decided to contest the presidential elections.

The MB's decision to take power was as much intricate as strategic. After what appeared to be an impasse with SCAF, the Shura Council of the MB nominated Khairat al-Shater, the deputy of general guide, as the MB's candidate for presidency. While the decision of nominating al-Shater for presidency was viewed by many as a surprise and 'gambit' with the military (Lynch 2012), from the MB's perspective it was a 'necessity'. After dominating the parliament alongside the Salafis, the MB discovered that the real power was still in the hands of SCAF. It took the Brotherhood a little over a year to discover that they had been deceived by the military, which boxed them into a theatrical parliament that has restricted authority; it could neither sack the government nor hold its ministers genuinely accountable. Nevertheless, the nomination of al-Shater for presidency was a reflection on the balance of power within the MB. Indeed, al-Shater was the key player in the Brotherhood's decision to field a presidential candidate. Unlike the claim that he was taken by surprise by this decision, he was actually pushing for it. Over the past decade, al-Shater tightened his control over the MB, particularly after electing Mohamed Badie to be the general guide in 2010. Not surprisingly, most of the reformists abandoned the MB after the January uprising and when it became certain that al-Shater was taking over the group and extending his control over the FJP. Al-Shater also managed to secure a line of loyal followers, such as Morsi, Saad al-Katatny, Saad al-Husseini and other members in the Guidance Bureau. However, al-Shater was disqualified by the elections committee because of his legal status. Therefore, the MB-nominated Mohamed Morsi became Egypt's first elected president after the January uprising in June 2012.

Morsi in the palace

After Morsi was sworn in as Egypt's president, the Muslim Brotherhood grappled with many forces and opponents in order to consolidate its power. The main, and the most important, obstacle was SCAF. In 14 June 2012, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) dissolved the parliament and ruled that the elections were unconstitutional (BBC 2012). The decision of the SCC was interpreted by the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, who were dominating the parliament, as a plot by the military against them. Moreover, a few days later, SCAF issued a statement that significantly restricted the powers of the presidency, which stirred Islamists who called for mass protests against the military. Therefore, after a short period of taking power, Morsi boldly dismissed SCAF's most senior leaders, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and the chief of staff, Sami Anan (Hussein 2012). Moreover, Morsi cancelled the constitutional addendum, which was issued by SCAF mid June to dissolve the Constituent Assembly which

was responsible for drafting the new constitution (Ahram Online 2012). Although Morsi's bold moves have been praised by young revolutionaries, other political forces and state institutions viewed them as alarming. Moreover, liberal and secular forces have interpreted Morsi's decisions as an attempt by the MB to grab more power (*Economist* 2012).

In 22 November 2012, Morsi issued a constitutional decree granting himself sweeping powers and putting himself above other institutions, including the judiciary. (*Egypt Independent* 2012). The decree created a fury, and angered non-Islamists who called for massive protests against Morsi and the MB. It also cast doubts on Morsi and the MB's democratic commitment. While Morsi's supporters viewed the decree as a step to stop what they called the counter-revolution, his opponents perceived it as an utter power grab from Morsi and the MB. Morsi's decree has polarized society and deepened the division with the opposition. Moreover, it led to a vicious cycle of discontent and street violence which paralysed the political process and led to a stalemate between the MB and other political forces.

While Morsi justified his decree as 'an attempt to fulfil popular demands for justice and protect the transition to a constitutional democracy' (Kirkpatrick and El-Sheikh 2012), the opposition, which was hastily formed under a loose umbrella called the National Salvation Front (NSF), treated it as an attempt from Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood to consolidate their grip on power. Not surprisingly, a few days after Morsi issued his decree, violence and deadly clashes broken out in front of his presidential palace among his supporters and opponents.

Yet, the crucial question is why Morsi issued such a controversial decree? Obviously, the decree aimed to protect and immunize the Constituent Assembly and the Shura Council from dissolution by the judiciary. It was highly driven by the deep mistrust and suspicions between Morsi the judiciary particularly the SCC. For many of the MB, the decree was crucial to stop what they viewed as the 'counter-revolution'. Nevertheless, the decree can be viewed from a different angle: Morsi's personality; and it should be put in the larger picture of Morsi's ruling style. The story of Morsi in power resembles his journey within the Brotherhood. He came from the backseat of the MB to be Egypt's first elected president. As he was not the movement's first choice, he sought to prove himself as a competent and strong president. However, each time he ends up more powerless and isolated. Morsi believed that his decree could reshape transition dynamics to fit with the Muslim Brotherhood's interests.

During his membership in the MB, Morsi has strived to portray himself as a 'self-disciplined' leader with a serious character. He always acted like a 'man-on-a-mission' and was one of the average members in the Brotherhood, but became a self-made success. A hard worker and devotee to the conservative wing that has controlled the Brotherhood since the end of 1990s, Morsi in a few years (2000–2004) proved himself as a trustful and loyal cadre to the Brotherhood leadership. Moreover, Morsi was always ready to deliver and do the jobs that others might resist. Surprisingly, yet understandably, he became the head of the political division of the Brotherhood in 2004 at the expense of the shrewd and politicized figure Essam al-Erian, who was alienated and marginalized before the January uprising. Morsi was also responsible for accommodating and containing discontent among the Brotherhood youth that surfaced in 2007 and 2008. From 2005 to 2010, Morsi exemplified the most resilient and resistant character of the Brotherhood in the face of the Mubarak regime, which gave him more power and confidence.

After the uprising, Morsi's career within the MB became more visible. He was selected to be the head of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Ironically, the promotion and emergence of Morsi reflected his organizational commitment and acquiescence to the Brotherhood leadership rather than his political skills. After becoming president, Morsi maintained his style as a 'man-on-a-mission'. For many, he is acting as the Brotherhood's man in the presidency, rather than the president for all Egyptians. His decree has revealed how desperate he is to consolidate his power and to prove himself a qualified president.

Ruling but not governing

The Muslim Brotherhood is ostensibly in power in Egypt; however, it is not in control. Despite its attempt to take over the state, the MB faces strong resistance from state bureaucracy, the judiciary and public institutions. Despite the fact that the MB has the largest number of professionals, including doctors, lawyers, engineers and teachers, and more than any other social or political movement in Egypt, they lack the technocratic and bureaucratic experience and skills that can enable them to govern effectively. Ironically, while the Brotherhood has always been credited for its robust and competent organizational structure, which enabled it to sustain itself for decades, its ability to morph this organizational experience and capabilities into a competent governing body is significantly weak and limited. As a proselytization movement, the Brotherhood indoctrinates its members to become 'preachers' not 'statesmen'. For decades, the socialization and identification process that occurred within the Brotherhood aimed mainly to reshape individuals' identity to become devout and loyal members, not merely politicians. For the Brotherhood, it was the only way to maintain members' commitment and solidarity, and to preserve its survival in the face of the many attempts of the Mubarak regime to undermine its leadership and activities.

Not surprisingly, after the 25 January 2011 uprising, it was significantly difficult for the Brotherhood to make the needed shift from becoming the regime's subject to its owner. In other words, the Brotherhood's leaders are grappling to become the new policy-makers following decades of being targeted. This has become more palpable after the useless attempts of the Brotherhood to infiltrate the state's bureaucracy, which unveiled their governance ineptness.

Since its foundation in 1928, Brotherhood members were trained on how to protest, oppose and challenge political regimes, but not how to govern or rule. In addition, the brutal repression and exclusion under Mubarak undermined the Brotherhood's once-held hopes of not only sharing power with the former regime, but more importantly to be included within state institutions. 'We were treated as second-class citizens', a senior Brotherhood leader once told me. Furthermore, the Brotherhood's cadres never ran a public institution, whether on a local or national level. They were barred from public office and excluded from having influential posts within state bureaucracy. Unlike their counterparts in Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP), who gained significant governing experience during the 1990s, the Brotherhood's leaders had no access to provincial and municipal administration in Egypt, which were under the complete control of the former ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) and its rotten lackeys in the public sector. In other words, the Brotherhood's members were never trained to be professional civil servants. The highest experience they received was how to run mosques, syndicates and welfare societies, where their performance and record were

remarkable and indisputable. Ironically, those who possess some strategic and administrative skills, such as al-Shater, are politically conservative. They embrace a narrow-minded vision that tends to alienate their opponents and produce contempt. So far, the experience of the last two years revealed that the MB lacks the ability and aptitude to rule Egypt competently.

The Muslim Brotherhood's paradox: Inclusion without moderation

Since it took power, the Muslim Brotherhood's discourse, ideology and behaviour have perplexed many observers and policy-makers (Brown 2013; Lynch 2013). Whereas the movement was supposed to adopt more progressive and moderate agendas, as the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis argues, it embraced a rigid and uncompromising attitude towards its opponents. For example, the MB has pushed for a highly contentious constitution that is far from being democratic or reflects national consensus among different political forces (Human Rights Watch 2012). Furthermore, Morsi's constitutional declaration drove many to question the credibility of its political discourse and to suspect the sincerity of his commitment to democratic values and respect for political plurality. The crisis revealed the extent to which the MB has moved not only toward alliances with hard-line Salafis but also toward 'Salafisation' of its own doctrine. In so doing, it sacrificed its relations with liberal and secular forces, which had frequently allied with the MB before the uprising, and in the process it discarded its 'civil' face for one that is staunchly conservative.

However, the crucial question is: how can we explain the bewildering behaviour of the MB after taking power? Is it a problem of ideology or reality? And to what extent can the MB shift its discourse and strategy to be more democratic and transparent?

To answer these questions, one needs to have a closer look at the internal politics of the MB. Indeed, any attempt to fathom the MB's behaviour should take into account two key points: the impact of ideology on behaviour and the role of internal dynamics in shaping the MB strategy and calculations. Ideology can inform behaviour, but political reality forges and guides it. The MB has a significantly loose and broad ideology that fits with different contexts and circumstances. Ironically, the vagueness and elastic character of the MB ideology enabled it to last for more than eight decades without significant schism or fissures. Historically, the pragmatism of the MB, in many instances, superseded its ideology. Moreover, the MB took power in Egypt not primarily because of its ideology but mainly because of its unrivalled organizational and mobilizational capabilities. The chief role of ideology in the MB is mainly to recruit new members and foster their commitment and loyalty to the movement.

The Muslim Brotherhood has always calculated its moves and decisions based on interests rather than ideological or ontological views. Therefore, it is highly misleading to contend that the MB ideology was behind its odd behaviour. Likewise, it would be inaccurate to argue that the MB has changed its ideology after taking power. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The inability of the MB to modify its ideology to adapt to Egypt's new environment after the January uprising has created many problems and distorted its image. This is, in part, because ideologies don't change overnight. They take years, if not decades, to be internalized within a movement's structure and embraced by its members and leadership.

Since the uprising, the MB has struggled to reconcile its internalized ideology with Egypt's rapidly changing political reality. The MB was created and operated for

decades as an 'opposition' movement. Over decades, it developed a tradition of how to 'protest' not how to 'rule'. After the uprising, the movement couldn't make the required shift from an opposition movement to a ruling party. In other words, the MB is still unable to restructure itself as a normal political party instead of a semi-clandestine movement with a vexing and multifaceted agenda.

The bewildering behaviour of the MB reflects the complexity of its internal structure and dynamics. By internal dynamics I mean two things: the internal coherence and balance of power within the MB. For decades, preserving the MB's survival and unity was a key objective to the movement's leadership. The indoctrination and socialization process within the MB is deliberately designed to serve this goal above all else. However, maintaining the integration of the MB came at the expense of modernizing the movement's organizational structure to become more democratic and transparent. The decision-making process within the MB is strict and exclusionary, and the line of leadership doesn't allow real participation from the lower levels, particularly in the strategic decisions. The organizational norms of allegiance (*bay'a*), obedience (*ta'ah*), commitment (*iltizam*), etc. enable leaders to act on behalf of all members without real accountability or checks on their power. Despite the new environment, these norms still operate and are manifest in the MB's behaviour and decisions. Thus, when the leadership calls for protest or marches, members do nothing but obey their leaders – or else, as with a number of youth leaders, leave the organization. Former President Hosni Mubarak's repression interacted with the internal dynamics of the MB to shape this organizational ideology. It entrenched the sense of victimhood among members and created a subculture of ordeal and tribulation (*mihna*) that bound members and dominated them over the past three decades. However, after the downfall of Mubarak and the extraordinary political openness, the MB's leadership couldn't (and maybe doesn't want to) develop a different subculture or mechanisms that could maintain members' unity and loyalty in a more participatory and inclusive manner. It was the 'external' threat or enemy that preserved the integration of the MB and continues to ensure member commitment. Therefore, when President Morsi and Mohamed Badie, the supreme guide of the MB, or any other senior leaders talk of 'conspiracy,' plot or 'hidden hands' that 'seek to subvert the revolution', their eyes are on their followers not opponents. It is the language that resonates with the hearts and minds of Ikhwan. In other words, the MB's embedded anxiety about unity and coherence makes it hard for members to act as normal political actors.

The other internal element is the balance of power within the MB. The MB organization is currently under the control of conservatives. Since the 1990s onwards, the conservative leaders managed to solidify their grip on power within the MB. After two decades of a relatively balanced relationship between the so-called reformists and the conservatives, the latter became more powerful and were able to dominate the MB organization and decision-making process. This was the case until the 2011 uprising, when the entire organization came under the control of the conservatives. The conservatives, led by al-Shater, deputy of the supreme guide, Mahmoud Ezzat, the former secretary general of the MB from 2001–1010 who was promoted to deputy of the supreme guide two years ago, and Mahmoud Ghozlan, the spokesperson of the MB and member of the Guidance Bureau, as well as Shater's brother-in-law, were able to alienate the reformists and expel them from the movement. They restructured the influential bodies of the MB, the Guidance Bureau and the Shura Council to become more obedient and loyal to them. Not surprisingly, after the uprising, the reformist

current within the MB faded away. Prominent figures such as Abdel Moniem Aboul Fotouh, Mohamed Habib, the former deputy of the supreme guide, Ibrahim El-Za'farani, Khaled Dau'd, and Hitham Abu Khalil were excluded and had to leave the MB. Even the young reformists who took part in the uprising from the outset, such as Islam Lotfi and Mohamed El-Qassas, were unashamedly expelled and left the movement.

Furthermore, the domination of the conservatives in the MB became more visible when al-Shater and then Morsi were selected to run for the presidency. While the former is a heavyweight leader within the MB due to his financial and organizational capabilities, the latter was a clear example of how conservatives 'craft' their loyal cadres and leaders within the MB. As mentioned earlier, Morsi was selected for the presidency not due to his political skills (indeed, he lacks a lot of them) but mainly because of his commitment and loyalty to the conservative leadership. His record of trust, obedience and commitment over the past two decades made him an ideal candidate for the job. Therefore, when Morsi speaks, acts or behaves, he reflects the conservative face of the MB. Indeed, Morsi was the mouthpiece of the conservatives who have captured the MB over the past two decades and, for them, he is their man in the presidential palace and his throne should be protected at any cost.

Transforming the Muslim Brotherhood or modifying the theory

The case of the Muslim Brotherhood in power poses many challenges to the 'inclusion-moderation' theory in its current form. It reveals the weakness of its interpretive model and the fragility of its main assumptions, and undermines its causal relationship. Put differently, at a time when it was expected that the full inclusion of the MB in the political process would lead to its adopting a discourse of consensus and democratic policies towards other forces, there is a tendency by the Brotherhood to adopt a conservative and reserved agenda that is not compatible with democracy or with the revolutionary spirit that Egypt has experienced over the past two years. While the political conduct of the MB has discouraged many and made them lose hope in the possibility of viable democratic transition, others viewed it as the group's organizational, doctrinal and ideological authoritarian structure that existed before the uprising. Today, doubt is no longer confined to whether the Brotherhood has the political competence and skill to manage the affairs of state, but also to the group's thought and ideological credibility and commitment to democracy as a value, conduct and discourse.

Overall, we can highlight three key issues that might explain the shortcomings of the 'inclusion-moderation' theory in the case of the MB. The first is pertinent to the casual relationship between inclusion and moderation which is far from being linear or mechanical. A quick comparison between MB rhetoric and conduct before and after the uprising reveals that oppression, not inclusion, was the motivation for developing the group's intellectual discourse and maturity and the rationality of its political conduct. This is perplexing and perhaps requires behavioural and psychological study of the group. Second is the nature of inclusion and whether it is gradual or sudden. The sudden change in the MB's status from an opposition movement that was suppressed for decades to becoming the sole party in power was not accompanied by any transformation or transition in vision, thought process or policies. Unlike the cases of Turkey, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen and Kuwait, the Brotherhood was not integrated gradually but was suddenly and quickly catapulted into the driver's seat and put in charge of

running the country and affairs of state without any technocratic experience, or psychological, ideological or organizational readiness.

Third is the impact of the wider context of inclusion. Clearly, the inclusion of the MB did not happen under normal circumstances. Instead, it occurred within a highly contentious context that is shaped by deep religious and social polarization, a competitive and conflicting atmosphere not only among political and ideologically divergent forces, but also within the Islamist camp itself, and a high degree of uncertainty that affected the calculations and views of the MB. In other words, the inclusion of the MB occurred in a significantly abnormal context which has put the MB under numerous pressures from other religious and political forces which might have pushed it in the direction of reticence rather than openness.

Conclusion

The failure of the Muslim Brotherhood in power has highlighted the inability of orthodox Islamism to adapt to the political environment that developed from the Arab Spring. By orthodox Islamism I mean the traditional Islamist movements that emerged over the past century and are burdened by its stagnant structure, its sprawling organization, and the domination of a conservative, old-fashioned style of leadership.

Therefore, it is highly important to unpack the underlying factors that affect Islamists' ideology and shape their political calculus and strategy during transitions. The Brotherhood, for instance, has failed to maintain power in Egypt not only because of its incompetence and political inexperience, which was evident, but also because of its rigid organizational structure and obsolete ideology that shaped the movement's strategy, calculations and political choices. The decision to run for presidency, for instance, was driven mainly by political miscalculation and misconception of the new realities without deliberate discussion or genuine debate within the movement. Hence, the Shura Council, the Brotherhood's legislative body, was deeply divided over fielding a presidential candidate and whether the movement should abandon its self-restrained strategy that it had adopted for decades.

Moreover, the dominance of the conservative faction within the Brotherhood has contributed to its removal from power. Over the past two decades the Brotherhood has been controlled by a 'narrow' power centre that dominated the movement and precluded calls for internal reform. This faction adopted a rigid worldview and wasn't able to adjust to the new environment after Hosni Mubarak's downfall. When the Brotherhood took power in 2012, the so-called 'reformist' current was almost absent or marginalized. The inauguration of Mohamed Morsi as Egypt's first democratically and freely elected president in June 2012 was a triumphant moment for the conservative leadership within the Brotherhood, and the election dissipated the hopes of reforming the Brotherhood via fundamental changes in its ideology, discourse and strategy.

In addition, the nature of the Brotherhood's organizational structure – which was created and infused by Hassan al-Banna eight decades ago and maintained by his successors – has contributed to the Brotherhood's failure. As a social movement, the Brotherhood has a highly disciplined structure that is rooted and maintained by a profoundly conservative and rigid code of norms and values such as obedience, loyalty, allegiance, nepotism and commitment. While this well-knit structure safeguarded the Brotherhood from Mubarak's brutal repression and preserved its cohesion, it has become a hurdle after the uprising. The Brotherhood continued to operate as a secretive

and underground movement without any attempt to modernize its code of values. Indeed, the lack of a pluralistic worldview and the absence of a flexible strategy within the Brotherhood can be ascribed to the influence of this set of norms and values. This lack deepened the mistrust between the Brotherhood and other political forces and reinforced external scepticism over its commitment toward democratic values.

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19

Contemporary Islamist Discourses on the State in Egypt

Before and After the Arab Spring

Mohammed Moussa

Introduction

How has the Arab Spring transformed perceptions of the state in Islamist discourses? It is apposite to ask this question as Islamists from Cairo to Tunis have enjoyed varying degrees of political power in the Arab Spring geography. At one level, there is continuity in Islam supplying the language and norms to adapt the relatively recent invention of the modern state. Reverence of the past in an 'alien' present still influences the stances adopted by Muslim scholars and Islamists alike in the search for a putatively authentic polity in line with Islamic norms. At another level, there are emerging trends of a new discourse that introduces changes into the Islamist rhetoric of the past. The Arab Spring seems to have forced Islamists to renew the way they 'discourse' the state. Thus, this chapter seeks to examine the unfolding story of the Islamic state in Egypt since the eve of the 20th century amid polemics about its meaning. I shall also do this by surveying and analysing the positions of the Muslim Brotherhood and its subsequent political arm, the now-dissolved Freedom and Justice Party, to present evidence in support of the key claim advanced in this chapter.

I begin my examination with examples of how contemporary Islam has been represented in Western scholarship and the media. Bernard Lewis, Cornel West, Abdullahi An-Naim and James Piscatori are a few notable academics who have contributed to narrating stories about its democratic potential and limitations. Subsequently, the discussion in this chapter moves to the emergence of the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* (objectives of the Shari'ah) as an attempt to discover the norms and rules safeguarding the interests of human beings. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi were the pioneers in hammering out a methodology to tease out an Islamic law from the sacred texts of Islam. These efforts were followed by contemporary jurists and thinkers such as Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur and Muhammad al-Ghazali who expanded the scope of the *maqasid* to go beyond the immediate texts of interpretation, although, significantly, not abandoning either the Qur'an or *ahadith* (Prophet's reported sayings and actions).

The illustration of the genesis of the Egyptian discourse on the Islamic state begins in the following section with two immensely influential scholars, Ali Abdel al-Raziq and Rashid Rida, and their attempts at reform through the concept of the Islamic state. A few decades later, a debate, based on almost identical battle-lines drawn by al-Raziq and Rida, between Khalid Muhammad Khalid and Muhammad al-Ghazali, gripped Egypt's public discourse. Towards the end of the 20th century, the appearance of a collection of kindred spirits of Egyptian reformist figures helped to articulate a vision of politics emphasizing the reinterpretation of sacred texts and the Muslim past. The Islamic state, argued to be not synonymous with theocracy, was motivated by the principal objective of safeguarding the interests of its citizens on an equal footing, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the debate on the civil state, among Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice Party, Muslim scholars and other intellectuals, which characterized the short-lived experiment of a post-authoritarian Egypt.

Narrating Islam: A collision with democracy?

Tellingly, discussions in certain media and scholarly circles on Islamist acceptance of democracy at the eve of the 21st century were also absent (Takeyh 2001: 99–100). Although the narrative of democracy situates its emergence and continuing evolution within modernity, it has been incorporated through a variety of ways into Islamist discourses in the Arab world. Bernard Lewis's scholarship has stressed the former at the expense of the latter. Alternation of governments, at a minimum twice, emphasize the ballot box to be the criterion for a democracy – or rather a liberal democracy – from the three manifestations of Islam noted by Lewis; the last, 'neo-Islam', is demonstrably incompatible (Lewis 2003: 208–210). After the Arab Spring, the theme of the 'modernization of Islam' remarkably still persists underplaying the indigenous mainstream currents of Muslim reform promoting pluralism (Zakaria 2012: 24–25). A system such as democracy, claiming universal applicability, has been accompanied by the notion of civil society with its synonym of civilization (Keane 1998: 117–122). However, local styles and trends of social activism and political mobilization by Islamist actors belie the 'one size fits all' model of both democracy and civil society. Neither democracy nor Islam can be reduced to a single unchanging essence as John Esposito and John Voll observe in their contested natures (1996: 27–30). Even within the repertoire of Islam, notions hitherto perceived to have a stable existence are reinterpreted to cultivate or stifle a democratic ethos that purports to be Islamic. Words do not possess a fixed meaning for Islamist political actors.

Cornel West's survey of the democratic possibilities among Muslims points to the emergence of a 'Socratizing Islam' in response to their particular context (West 2004: 136). Despite the little or no room granted for these possibilities by 'clerical Islam', in my view mistaken, his arguments are a genuine attempt to discern the moral anchor urgently needed for democratic visions (West 2004: 128–141). Importantly, eschewing the narrative of 'securitising' Islam, West travels *to* the discourses expounded by Muslims and Arabs for the purpose of listening *to* these voices. Dialogue within and without, including West's participation, fosters a genuine moment for the creation of a democratic spirit within Islam. Similar efforts to contest the perceived negative relationship between Islam and democracy have centred on constructing a synergy between religion and politics. Contemporary political developments involving Islamists in Turkey are

cited by Ali Mazrui for such an enterprise with the notions of democracy and theocracy shorn of an essentialist nature – both are open to a dynamic exchange of ideas (Mazrui 2006: 257). The study of the past is appealed to in refuting the essentialist account on Islam.

Contemporary works on the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*

Eventually, common agreement on the sources and methods of interpreting Islamic law established the dominance of the Asharite theology for jurists that still evoked latent Mutazilite positions concerning the nature of an interpreted rule. Contemporary works on the *maqasid* have been dominated by the theme of reconciling permanence and change in the rules of the Shari'ah. The continuing influence of al-Shatibi in the 20th century among Muslim scholars and intellectuals demonstrates the juristic nature of reformist thinking. Revision of the body of existing rules, mainly concerned with politics and social affairs, was proposed as the replacement of older, if not obsolete, rulings with newer and more authentic ones. Change was thus expressed in the language of a simultaneous continuity with an ideal distant past and a break with a distorted recent past. New interpretations of Islam tended to revolve around a disparate group of like-minded Muslim thinkers. Wider changes in Muslim thought were in part based on a new methodology emphasizing the thematic nature of the Qur'an for the purpose of proposing radical change in Islamic law (Auda, 2008: 171–174). Prominent traditional Muslim scholars and political activists have contributed in diverse ways to the expansion of the scope of the *maqasid* in the last 100 years. In the former part of the 20th century, Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur elaborated upon the insights of al-Shatibi to argue for novel foundational propositions known as *masalih mursalah* (unrestricted public interests) without direct explicit reference to the Qur'an (ibn Ashur 2006: 121–126).

More recent efforts in this spirit of reform are evident. For Muhammad al-Ghazali, the general nature of the *al-kulliyat al-khams*, also known as the *daruriyat*, lends itself to discourses and practices that ensure its realization without specific injunctions supporting them (al-Ghazali 2002: 82). Reform illustrating the current relevance of the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* has tended to demonstrate the ability of Muslims to reinterpret the moral imperatives within jurisprudence in a changing context. An attempt to expand the latent foundational norms in the *maqasid* is evident in al-Raysuni's reflections on other fundamental interests alongside the *al-kulliyat al-khams* (al-Raysuni 2005: 24, 36–37, 364–365). Perhaps one of the boldest developments in this area has been carried out by Khaled Abou El Fadl. Similar to previous reformist thinking emphasizing the thematic character of interpretation, Abou El Fadl (2001: 147–153) goes much further in arguing that universal moral norms have primacy over specific injunctions in the Qur'an.

Muslim discourses on the state in Egypt

Beginning in the early 20th century, the relationship between politics and religion became a focal point for discussion. Egypt was part of this broader intellectual commotion seizing the Muslim world where the roots of reform, both secular and religious, could be traced to the influence of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in the late 19th century. Around these two individuals, a diverse collection of followers emerged who subsequently adopted different and often conflicting positions on the role

of Islam in politics. Although both al-Afghani and Abduh were driven in their activism and scholarship by Islamic reform with religion defining politics, several of their disciples pursued an ostensibly secular worldview. In this respect, Rashid Rida differed from this loosely defined group, itself containing varied perspectives, with his explicitly religious thought. The project of reform in Egypt seemed to be torn between the arguments of Ali Abd al-Raziq and Rida against the background of an anti-colonial nationalism sweeping the country. Further, the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by Mustafa Kemal created much consternation in the Muslim world about the nature of the state according to Islam. Meanwhile, the state in Egypt according to P. J. Vatikiotis (1991: 300) was being constructed, at least theoretically, 'on legal-rationalist foundations'. This effort was driven by the nationalist and anti-colonial movement of the Wafd led by Sa'd Zagloul who was a graduate of al-Azhar seminary and closely associated with al-Afghani and Abduh.

Nonetheless, a nationalist politics singling out an Egyptian identity dominated the discussion of independence and resistance to the British. Thus, al-Raziq and Rida shared a common frame of reference in their writings on what was the authentic Islamic position on the nature of the state. Both proposed contending, not necessarily conflicting, accounts of this state derived from the Islamic sacred texts. Authority from the Qur'an and *ahadith* is similarly invoked by al-Raziq and Rida. The Islamic state is a major theme in Rida's account of politics. Curiously, Enayat notes that Rida's distinction between *ibadat*, on the one hand, and *mu'alamat* accompanied by *ijtihad*, on the other, points to similar conclusions shared by secularists (Enayat 2005: 79–80). Matters relating to *mu'amalat* provide a wide horizon for the ability of changing laws. Al-Raziq departs from Rida in distinguishing between prophecy and royalty with a quotation of the biblical passage of 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God those that are God's' (Abd al-Raziq 2007: 24–25). Moreover, the dichotomy between religious authority and temporal power is supported by the verses from the Qur'an and a *hadith* reporting the Prophet's acknowledgement of the independence of worldly matters from religion (Abd al-Raziq 2007: 27–28). The question of the relationship between Islam and politics is confronted by al-Raziq and Rida on separate yet parallel lines. Each delves into the sacred texts of the Qur'an and *ahadith* to support their positions, simultaneously demonstrating the importance of Islam in defining the arena of politics and the authority afforded to Muslims to pursue new forms of government. During the interwar years, Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri also entered the intellectual debates of his time. In a doctoral thesis on the caliphate, Sanhuri argued for its revival in the revised form of a 'representative regime' based on the separation of powers (Hill 1988: 46–47). The prospect of reforming Islamic law was thought to be an urgently needed task on the part of al-Raziq, Rida and al-Sanhuri. Out of the three scholars, only al-Sanhuri would pursue the desire of this reform in a concrete fashion through his redrafting of the Egyptian Civil Code of 1948.

Contending conceptions of the state in Egypt revolving around secular and religious poles persisted in scholarly and journalistic debates. Prior to the Free Officers coup in 1952, a published work, *Min huna nabda*, by Khalid Muhammad Khalid revived al-Raziq's basic thesis and its accompanying reaction. The principal proposition, the separation of religion from politics, vehemently argued by Khalid, was met with equal vigour by Muhammad al-Ghazali. Khalid and al-Ghazali were both Azharite graduates and close friends who were members of the populist left-leaning group Religion at the Service of the Masses. However, these two Azharite scholars and political activists

came to disagree profoundly on the issue of the Islamic state. For Khalid, what was considered to be the Islamic state in theory and practice had no legitimate basis in Islam. Democracy, freedom and rationality, the genuine values of Islam, could not be found in the history of this state which has been responsible for the tyranny against and the stagnation of Muslims (Abu-Rabi 2004: 236–237). The view of Islam expressed in such uncompromising terms by Khalid removed the realm of politics and state from its interpretation aiming to introduce change.

A sharp retort by al-Ghazali (1975: 4) emphasized the Prophet Muhammad's journey from preacher to ruler in his lifetime. Islam not only explicitly supports democracy and socialism but rejects any form of theocracy that elevates the ruler above other Muslims (al-Ghazali 1975: 13, 23). Similar to the previous contributions of al-Raziq and Rida to contemporary Egyptian Muslim discourses on the state, Khalid and al-Ghazali wished for the realization of the objectives of Islam. While Khalid spoke of the universal imperatives of Islam exclusively as a *religion* to remove it from the political sphere, al-Ghazali similarly expounded a universalism of Islam to determine *politics*. Writing his retort to Khalid in 1950, al-Ghazali (1975: 32) commends the 1923 Egyptian constitution for being in harmony with Islamic rule in the same book. The legal-rational foundations of the Egyptian state described by Vatikiotis are included in al-Ghazali's reflections on the legitimacy of the Egyptian state from an Islamic perspective.

Current deliberations about the character of the Islamic state have their roots in the increased public presence of Islam in Egypt during the 1980s. An important book entitled *A Contemporary Islamic Vision*, which initially appeared in 1991, although written in 1980, affirmed this new shift. Published under the name of the writer Ahmed Kamal Abul Majd, the book distilled the contributions and insights of al-Ghazali, Fahmi Huweidi and other high-profile Muslim thinkers under the umbrella of the current of the *Wassatteyya* (Middle Path) (Baker 2003: 9–11). The circumscribed involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliamentary elections during this period also contributed to an environment for the broaching of issues relating to democracy and Islam. Through the prism of the Shari'ah, Yusuf al-Qaradawi situates the notion of democracy in a broader moral framework: principally the *fiqh al-muwazanat* (jurisprudence of the balances) and *fiqh al-awlawiyyat* (jurisprudence of the priorities) (al-Qaradawi 2002: 17–19, 132–134). Principles and methods of interpretation are applied to incorporate practices and institutions from different cultures to achieve Islam's universal objectives. Democracy is thus included in a juristic framework. Muhammad al-Awa places *maslahah* as the legitimate basis for an Islamic state in comparison to the secular state (al-Awa 1980: 78–82). Absence of this norm in the formation or subsequent administration of policies render a state illegitimate with the consequence that citizens no longer owe allegiance to it. Speaking about the 'rights of man', Abul Majd (1985: 282–284) views the notion of *shura* to be the primary driving force behind the process of democracy. Not too far intellectually, al-Ghazali (2001: 57) interprets this notion to require the participation of citizens in politics and the resulting decisions to be binding on the ruler.

For this brand of Egyptian Muslim reformists, the relationship of Islam to politics is defined in religious terms as distinct from theocracy. The Dar al-Hikma debate in 1986 attended by a number of well-known religious and secular figures was a practical manifestation of this current. At the event, al-Ghazali spoke about the 'true Islamic state' as religious in contradistinction to being theocratic (Gallagher 1989: 210). Succinctly expressing the mood of reform, al-Qaradawi argues that the Islamic state is a

civil state. Religion is understood to have a comprehensive meaning, including other facets of human life, and the Islamic state is directly accountable to the people (al-Qaradawi, 1998: 79–82). Thus, the civil state is defined by the removal of divine sanctity from the state with the Shari'ah supplying the criterion of legitimacy. This strand of thought further developed by Saad Eddine al-Othmani (2005), currently foreign minister of Morocco, distinguishes between two senses of religion: its general meaning eschewes any sacrosanct elements laying the foundations for a civil state where the people are the source of its legitimacy. Absolute authority enjoyed by the state is singled out for critique as having a tendency towards theocracy in Hasan Hanafi's (2002: 69–70) discussion of Islamic civil society. Intellectual developments were accompanied by more organized political changes among Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood movement. During the 1990s, the formation of al-Wasat, refused political party status into the first decade of the 21st century, signalled a watershed moment in Egypt. Founders of this organization included Rafiq Habib, a prominent Christian writer, and Abul Ela Madi, an Islamist politician, who came together to give a concrete political form to the idea of the civil in Islam. At the time, for Madi, al-Wasat was envisaged to be a civil party with an Islamic culture (Abu Ila et al 1996: 30). Moreover, Rafiq Habib stressed the party's proposals to be an essentially 'human understanding' of Islam that could be disputed (Abu Ila et al 1996: 32). Problems beset the members of al-Wasat as their efforts to be licensed as a political party were continually frustrated until after the 25 January uprising.

Egypt's recent past is also a source for the formulation of specifically Islamic positions. Huweidi and Tariq al-Bechri have intervened in the debate about the Islamic state recognizing the integral role of nationalism. Recent events have made a marked impact upon the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. A change in the status of non-Muslims in Islamic law is tied to these events. Anti-colonialism and national unity form elements of the criteria for citizenship according to al-Bechri (2001: 82–83) in a context entirely different from the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the early Muslim community. Non-Muslims, Christians in the Egyptian national milieu, are considered to be fully enfranchised citizens participating in the public affairs of their societies. The comparison between early and classical Muslim community is made by Huweidi (2001: 90–91) with the conclusion that the institution of *dhimmah* is not laid down in the Islamic sacred texts and is no longer relevant in the contemporary context.

The Muslim Brotherhood was not silent in the debates of the last decade of the 20th century on democracy, the role of the Shari'ah in the constitution and the civil state. Greater participation of the movement, under restricted conditions, necessarily involved their contribution to the Egyptian national public conversation on these issues. Success at the ballot box, either in alliance with formally recognized political parties or as independents in light of the Brotherhood's illegal status, led to a change of its terms of reference. No longer left completely in the political wilderness, although in a repressive context, the movement was able to demonstrate a democratic commitment to electoralism. The parliamentary system was perceived to be the locus of legitimate involvement for Essam al-Erian, senior Brotherhood leader, writing in the early 1990s in support of an 'Islamic form of democracy' where 'the nation is the source of legitimacy' (al-Erian 1993: 163–65). A short tract written by Mamoun al-Hudaibi (2000: 34–37) states 'the people are the source of all power' alongside rights ensuring freedom for political parties and the separation of powers in a 15 point manifesto. Major figures had also voiced their commitment to democratic notions of statehood, expressing the fundamental

values of Islam. In the first ten years of the 21st century, a consensus solidified from within the ranks of the Brotherhood on the nature of the civil state. Democracy was a principle in accordance with the interpretation of the Islamic state. The interpretation of this state put forward was a result of continuous dialogues with the broader current of Muslim scholars and thinkers on the Brotherhood's ideological policy.

Important developments on the nature of the Islamic state were accepted into its repertoire and practice. Movements toward the conception of the civil state indicate the acceptance of several important elements in collective national decision-making. Politics was to be a changing domain open to the ethical norms and rules of the Shari'ah as the main source of legislation. However, the latter position was already enshrined in the amended 1971 constitution. A divergence with the constitutional status quo under the Mubarak regime was located in the further discussion of several interrelated issues: the rule of law, the separation of powers and the civil state as distinct from a secular or authoritarian state. These three areas of elaboration on the part of senior Brotherhood leaders were driven by the recognition of the democratic facets of the Shari'ah, which ensures rights for all citizens irrespective of religion and gender. The mere presence of the rule of law in a constitution did not imply that the legal framework of the state is premised on democracy.

In 2007, a draft political platform under the auspices of the Brotherhood appeared. Muhammad Habib, its then deputy leader, averred the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims, as outlined in the platform, inspired by the harmony between citizenship and the Shari'ah. Further, however, this is qualified by the position that the presidency is only eligible for a Muslim. For Muhammad Habib, Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution, stating that Islam is the religion of the state and the principles of the Shari'ah are the principal source of laws, necessitates one who is Muslim to occupy this office. All positions of authority from vice president and prime minister down are open to citizens without discrimination (Ismail 2007). A variant interpretation of Article 2 was produced by Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh on the eligibility of non-Muslims and women for the role of president. Unanimity was lacking on this position among the senior leadership of Brotherhood. Responding to his movement's draft platform, Abul Fotouh questioned the need to stipulate the criteria of religion or gender for the presidency when the constitution did not mention them (Howeidy 2007).

Separation of powers within a civil state is a central premise stated by Muhammad Habib, thus ensuring pluralism and alternation of power with citizens being the source of sovereignty. General yet qualified acceptance of democracy is inflected through the norms of the Shari'ah, particularly its legal dimension, to endow the civil state with legitimacy. Considerable attention has been devoted to developing the notion of the civil state by those close to the Brotherhood. Essential distinctions between the civil state and the secular state exist for Rafiq Habib alongside further differences between the former and the authoritarian state. Although both the civil state and the secular state share the notion of the people as a reference, the civil state, in an Islamic context, applies the Shari'ah (Habib 2009). Authoritative norms and rules derived from a sacred framework do not oppose the role of the citizenry to be a cornerstone of the constitution.

(Con)testing Islam and democracy in a post-authoritarian Egypt

Transformation of the Middle East since the Arab Spring in late 2010 has changed the role of Islamists. Changes have happened against the background of a profound

rethinking among Muslim thinkers and scholars on the notion of the civil state. Popular unrest and mobilization brought down two longstanding dictatorial regimes in Tunisia and Egypt through peaceful means. Violence was largely eschewed by protesters who were subject to security crackdowns and even killed. The general atmosphere of discontent, in part due to the Brotherhood's open espousal of democracy and its participation in demonstrations, led to more assertive demands for political rights (el-Affendi 2012: 76–77).

Toppling the Mubarak regime in Egypt proved to be a pertinent opportunity for Islamists of different colours and hues, not just the Brotherhood, to put the ideas formulated in opposition to the test in a drastically liberated public space. The notion of a civil state with an Islamic reference has indeed been tested by its detractors. Criticism of this notion has come from Jamal al-Banna, younger brother of the founder of the Brotherhood, who does not agree with its fundamental premise. The civil and the religious are distinct for al-Banna whereby justice motivates the existence of the civil state, thus excluding the need to apply the classical corpus of Islamic law (Halawa 2011). Opposition to the presence of religion in politics has been raised by Saad Eddin Ibrahim, political reform activist, surrounding the role of the Shari'ah and monotheistic religions as sources of legislation (Zakaria 2011).

The Brotherhood continued to advocate the fusion of religion with politics after February 2011, producing similar arguments during Mubarak's reign. It soon established a political party under the name of the Freedom and Justice Party. No marked change in its discourse is apparent. Emphasis on the civil state continues to characterize the writings and speeches of its members and those who have since parted ways from the movement. Predictably, the Freedom and Justice Party has reiterated the Brotherhood's political platform. Palpable changes, nonetheless, have occurred. Revolutionary symbolism has become part of the repertoire of reform. Past opposition to authoritarianism, such as *tawreeth* (inheritance), corruption, injustice and rigged elections, is considered to have culminated in Mubarak's ousting (Freedom and Justice Newspaper 2012). Significant moves towards political change in Egypt were couched in a language of reform not seeking a break with the foundations of the state. Sobhi Saleh, a member of the 2012 Constituent Assembly which was charged with drafting the new Egyptian constitution, has argued that the Islamic character of Egypt was preserved in the 1923 Constitution through Article 2 (Ikhwanweb 2012a). Continuity with the past can be discerned in the recognition of the legacy of national statehood beginning with this constitution. Article 2 is produced virtually unchanged in the founding document of the Freedom and Justice Party, which emphasizes its commitment to the official relationship between Islam and the state (Freedom and Justice Party 2011a).

Some quarters from the Brotherhood suggested an addition, rather than a transformation, to this provision in the constitutional document. However, Jamal Heshmat (2012), a central figure in the Brotherhood and its party, argued against any alterations to Article 2, pointing to its implicit recognition of the rights of non-Muslims in personal laws. The status quo, the religious character of the Egyptian state, did not need to be revised. During the final stages of the drafting process, Muhammad al-Beltajy, a Brotherhood leader also in the Assembly, stressed the newly composed Article 3's novel acknowledgement of Christians and Jews to refer to their own personal penal code (Ikhwanweb 2012b). From the informal practice of religion to its formal incorporation into constitutional law, the overarching document regulating the power of the state included Christianity and Judaism beside the previously alluded Islam. The new Egyptian constitution passed in 2012 reproduced the amended Article 2 from the 1971 promulgated

constitution, stating 'the principles of the Shari'ah are the principal source of legislation' followed by the new Article 3 enshrining the legal right of Christians and Jews to adhere to their own religious tenets in personal matters. Constitutional eligibility to run for the presidency was defined in Article 134 with no qualifications based on religion or gender except for nationality and age.

Muslim jurisprudence and constitutional law, al-Erian argued, both confirm the validity of the statement in Article 5 that the people are the source of authority (Freedom and Justice Party 2012). Popular conceptions of the state do not clash with the notion of the Shari'ah that allows for the formulation of policies in the interests of the *watan* (homeland). Parallels between *shura* (consultation) and democracy are a core aspect of the Freedom and Justice Party's (2011b) political platform, focusing on citizen participation. Islamic reference to a state, for Muhammad Morsi before being elected president after the removal of Mubarak, did not contradict it being a democratic state: *shura* and democracy are identical in their method and source of authority (Ikhwanweb 2011). Morsi had spoken about a civil state, rather than a secular one, based on democracy and a constitution that is not a theocracy (al-Masry al-Youm 2012). Popular consent of the Egyptian people and their representation in parliament, elected through the ballot, ensure the state's civil character. After the end of the Mubarak regime, the civil state has continued to be a central plank in the Brotherhood's own discourse on politics. The position of the Shari'ah in this discourse did not lead to a substantial alteration to its wording in the constitution.

Additions in the form of Article 219 read in conjunction with Article 2 flesh out the meaning of 'principles of the Shari'ah' commensurate with a catholicity present in juristic thought. Classical schools of jurisprudence are cited to be authoritative although the interpretation of the Shari'ah has not been limited to them. Reformist currents, including the Brotherhood, have contributed to expanding the scope and content of Islamic law. The new constitution, supported by the movement, does not rule out other sources alongside the principles of Shari'ah being the main source in a parliamentary democracy. Article 4's first clause made clear indications for the formal recognition of al-Azhar's Council Senior Scholars to be consulted on matters involving Islamic law. Another institution was to be included in the process of law-making not restricted to the bicameral parliament. Other voices have advocated the infusion of religion in politics in a nuanced fashion without departing from the acknowledgement of a specifically Egyptian state. Abul Fotouh, formerly a member of the Brotherhood, has stressed the civil nature of the state, where merit is the main criterion for occupying political office, without religious faith disqualifying citizens (el-Gaafari 2011). Crucially, competence, not religion, defines the equality of Egyptian Christians and Muslims.

Establishment figures from al-Azhar also waded into the stormy debates about the nature of the state between religious and civilian conceptions. However, far from contributing to the polarization of a putative secular and religious divide, they have stressed the Egyptian state's civil and democratic nature. Ali Gomaa, former Grand Mufti of Egypt, has pointed out that a civil state, completely integrating the nationalist element with Islam, has already been in existence in Egypt for 150 years (al-Beheri 2012). In the period leading up to the final drafting of the constitution, democracy was perceived by Ahmed al-Tayyib, the Shaykh al-Azhar, to supply a critical mechanism to achieve the norms of direct accountability and *shura* under the civil state's aegis (MENA 2011). Preceding interpretations of Islam articulating the rights of citizens have aimed to establish and protect the interests of human beings.

The ousting of Morsi on 3 July 2013 led to the suspension of the 2012 Constitution and the creation of a new constituent assembly to rewrite it. Definition of the state was a major bone of contention in the demand for a radically new or revised constitution. Articles 219 and 4 (specifically clause 1) were deleted in the new constitutional document, completely excluding the participation of Brotherhood members, which was subsequently put to a successful referendum in January 2014. Shawki Allam, Gomaa's successor as Grand Mufti, decried the removal of al-Azhar's consultative function as a move against its authoritative position to the advantage of those less qualified (Mohsen 2013). The Shari'ah's primacy was left undefined in its particulars or means. Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court regained its previous authority in this area, bringing together exegetical, judicial and legislative responsibilities. Generally, the influence of the discourse on a civil state coupled with the Islamic reference on the constitution is no longer conspicuous. Islam is nonetheless recognized to play a central role in the identity of the state rather than contributing in its legislative process.

Conclusion

Relatively recent events have, to a noticeable extent, changed the Arab political ground. The Arab Spring has reinvigorated longstanding public discourses revolving around the role of Islam in the modern state. Despite the repressive character of the regimes in the region, Muslim scholars and Islamists contributed to a growing debate about the democratic potential of Islam. Largely indebted to the juristic legacy, shaped by classical jurists such as Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, a great many contemporary Muslim thinkers and scholars have reinterpreted the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* to support the notion of democracy. Twentieth-century Muslim political discourses, influenced by Rashid Rida and Muhammad al-Ghazali, have tended to emphasize the maintenance of the symbols of Islam within the responsibilities of the state based on religious legitimacy. Nonetheless, a large scope for human creativity was carved out in the area of the *mu'amalat* by the likes of Rida and succeeding Muslim reformers and scholars. Further, the subtle classical juristic distinction between *ibadat* and *mu'amalat* bore an uncanny resemblance to the contemporary secular division between the sacred and the mundane. However, the former brought the universalism of Islam into the scope of politics while the latter limited the universal spiritual teachings to the personal sphere. Depending on the perspective adopted, Islamic law was either to be reinterpreted, thus cultivating latent democratic elements, or to be discarded, replaced with Western democracy and laws in their entirety.

The second half of the 20th century witnessed a gradual movement of thought among Muslim scholars and Islamists in Egypt and throughout the Muslim world. Culminating in the 1980s into a reformist trend, which Raymond William Baker has aptly termed the *Wassatteya*, it argued against a theocratic conception of the Islamic state. Additionally, democracy was acknowledged to be a necessary condition for the implementation of the divinely sanctioned ethos of *shura* in the public affairs of Muslims. The inescapable fact of human participation withheld the sanctity of theocracy from a state claiming to rule by the Shari'ah or applying Islamic law. Reinterpretation of the principles of the Shari'ah for politics is essentially a provisional matter subject to continual revision. The civil state is thus conceived to be an interpretation of the *maqasid al-Shari'ah* seeking to elaborate upon the interests of human beings in rights. After the ousting of Hosni Mubarak in the early months of 2011, there was an opportunity to

articulate a conception of the civil state, in part influenced by Islamic norms, which reconciled tradition and contemporary conceptions of the state.

Many voices from within the Brotherhood, as well as former members, have openly accepted the validity of the contemporary Egyptian state. Rejection of authoritarianism has not led to a rebuff of the foundations of the national state established in its boundaries. The events of 25 January 2011 enabled Islamists to participate openly in public discussions debating the compatibility of the Shari'ah with a civil state. Drafting of articles stipulating and detailing the sources and procedures to involve the Shari'ah elevated the Senior Scholars of al-Azhar to a consultative status in Islamic law linked to parliament. However, the overthrowing of Morsi in 3 July 2013 has precipitated a reversal of this process accompanied by the restoration of the political hegemony of the military. Subsequently, a new constituent assembly was created deleting the articles which specified the sources of the Shari'ah and included a religious body into the legislative functions of the state.

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20

Failure of a Revolution

The Military, Secular Intelligentsia and Religion in Egypt's Pseudo-Secular State

Khaled Abou El Fadl

Introduction

Since the age of colonialism, *legitimacy* has become an elastic word that is exploited to invent and repress history; to construct and deconstruct identity; and to uphold and deny rights. Legitimacy is possessed by no one but claimed by everyone, and it is enforced only through sheer power. In the absence of a transparent and accountable civil process, those who believe that they are the *de facto* possessors of legitimacy massacre in cold blood, torture, maim and commit every possible offense in the name of defending the existing legitimacy.

The revolution of 25 January 2011 promised a complete paradigm shift in the way that Egyptians think about political legitimacy. The revolution created a hope, which now feels like a passing dream, that Egyptians could learn the lesson taught by so many tragedies in human history. Quite simply, this lesson is that sovereignty belongs to the citizenry, and that the only source of legitimacy is the integrity and sanctity of the democratic process. No group and no person, whatever the imagined urgency or ultimate wisdom, has the right to short change or overrule the process.

There are two very memorable images of the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath, the first occurring at the beginning of the revolution in 2011 and the second occurring shortly after the military coup of July 2013. These two images are similar in content, but the discourses surrounding them are very different and rather abruptly show the lost hope of creating a civil society and the failure of the Egyptian revolution. No one forgets the images of the Egyptian revolution of hundreds of people lined up for prayer in Tahrir Square. Hundreds in prayer endured assaults of hot gushing water and tear gas by riot police. The public outcry of this assault on peaceful protesters was widespread. Those who are considered Islamists, secularists and liberals joined together in condemning the horrific violence of the Ministry of Interior that was unleashed onto the peaceful protesters in prayer. After the Egyptian military coup on 3 July 2013, which ousted elected President Mohammad Morsi from his position, there is another image that will be forever embedded in my mind. On 14 August 2013, riot police backed by

military armoured vehicles raided the peaceful pro-Morsi protesters at Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque, leaving well over 500 people dead and over 4000 wounded (*Huffington Post* 2013). The discourse surrounding this dark event in Egypt's history was not one of a united voice against oppression and violence, but rather many Egyptian 'liberals' and secularists supported the violent force used against Morsi supporters. Egypt's intelligentsia have legitimized this violence by making claims that Egypt is in a 'state of war' and that anyone who supports the Muslim Brotherhood and are against the military government are 'terrorists and fascists' (Al-Shamsy 2013; Kingsley 2013; Ramadan 2013). It is in this context that we currently find Egypt – stuck in the colonial cliental paradigm.

In the first few months of the Egyptian revolution, Islam, and more particularly Shari'a, which embodies a set of values and normative commitments, played an important and positive role in fuelling and engineering the revolution. This does not mean that there were calls for an implementation of positivistic legal determinations of Shari'a law, or that there were calls for a theocratic state. The display of religious symbolism and the role of Shari'a principles during the revolution was, at least at first, an indicator that we needed a complete paradigm shift in the way we view religion and society and religion and politics. There was hope that religious-oriented political parties, like the Muslim Brotherhood, and those who consider themselves liberals and secularists, would be able to come together and work towards a common good and common goal of creating a legitimate political process, a civil society, in which all could participate and flourish.

Sadly, the so-called Arab Spring only ended up demonstrating the extent to which what the political scientist Amos Perlmutter called the 'Praetorian State' is so entrenched in Egypt, to the point of dominating all public spaces and subordinating any competing space that could be occupied by the institution of civil society. The Praetorian State means societies where the military has become part of the bureaucratic state and a substantial force in creating the middle class. It also signifies the embeddedness of the military in the administrative structure as well as the oppressive powers of the state. Egypt, and other countries in the Middle East, including those that some have termed subaltern nation states, fit within exactly that description – where the military is like an octopus that has its tentacles in practically all aspects of society (Perlmutter 1974).

In this chapter I will first discuss the role Islam and Shari'a played in the Egyptian revolution in fuelling the hopes of creating a civil society. Then, in contrast, I will show how all these idealistic ideas collapsed and instead we are left with the same paradigm that has existed in Egypt since colonialism, which is a cliental relationship between the military and the secular elite in a state that controls and defines religion.

The role of Islam in the Egyptian revolution

The social and religious ethos of struggling for liberty and justice

The role played by Shari'a in the Egyptian revolution was conspicuous but also subtle and complex. But before addressing the dynamics directly relevant to the Shari'a, it is necessary to analyse the multifaceted ways in which Islam, in general, interacted with the Egyptian revolution. For instance, one cannot fail to notice that the very tempo of the revolution was regulated by the Friday congregational prayers (*jum'a* prayers) so that the very developmental stages of the revolution were orchestrated around the weekly

services. The protesters labelled Friday congregational prayers with powerful mobilizing designations such as 'the Friday of wrath' (*jumu'at al-ghadab*), 'the Friday of departure' (*jumu'at al-raheel*) and 'the Friday of victory' (*jumu'at al-hasm*). Far from being a formalistic process of labelling, these designations grew out of the very powerful normative dynamics of the congregational prayers in being vehicles for moral and social solidarity, collective aspirations and mobilization. These congregational performances affirmed a sense of solidarity that transcended the disparate economic statuses and divergent educational and cultural backgrounds of the revolutionaries. Importantly, Friday sermons (*khutba*) delivered by dynamic figures, such as Shaykh Al-Mahallawi in Alexandria, played a critical role in sustaining and augmenting the momentum of the revolutionary zeal (Fayed and Awad 2011). In the Friday sermons, Al-Mahallawi and other clerics exhorted people to persevere, endure and to maintain the revolution until the 'fall of the despot' (President Hosni Mubarak). Importantly, these calls for perseverance were powerfully reinforced by a profound sense of divine providence and destiny. The Egyptian revolution was fuelled by a widespread social and religious ethos of being on a holy mission and also a divinely sanctified struggle for liberty against injustice.

The revolutionary discourses of Egypt persistently invoked the compelling concept of jihad. Friday sermons repeatedly assured the revolutionaries that they were engaged in a jihad no less worthy or sanctified than struggling against foreign invaders or any other rarefied objective in the course of Egyptian history. Judging from the literature and discourses of the revolutionaries, the idea of being engaged in a jihad against injustice and for liberation from despotism and corruption became a central part of the ethos guiding the Egyptian revolution. Interestingly, the ethos of the revolution as a jihad held sway not only among Muslims but also among Christian activists. This is in part explained by the very nature of the concept of jihad, which is quintessentially centred on the idea of just struggle, but also by the creative interpretive reconstructions taking place in the Egyptian context in particular.

The dogma of jihad gained further momentum and acquired a further transformative power through another Shari'a-rooted dogma – the idea of *shahada*, or bearing witness through martyrdom. Rebels killed in the revolution are universally referred to as martyrs, but the same recognition is not afforded to those who lost their lives defending Mubarak's regime. These, however, are not post-mortem honorific designations bestowed after the fact upon the deceased. Doctrinally, martyrdom is part and parcel of a moral status that grew out of and is corollary to the concept of jihad. For the most part, those who are considered martyrs first engage in a jihad and then are killed in the process. In other words, one first rises to the status of a *mujahid* (someone engaged in a jihad) before qualifying for the honoured status of martyrdom (*shahada*) (Cook 2007: 31–44). Muslim clerics, often in the context of Friday sermons, or as discussed below through the issuance of legal *responsa* (*fatawa*), affirmed that those killed in the course of protesting against despotism, injustice and corruption are martyrs as long as the *mujahid* limited his or her protests to peaceful means. The effective and powerful role that this package of Shari'a concepts played in upholding some of the very basic concepts that sustained the Egyptian revolution is potently reflected in the slogans and rallying cries repeated by the revolutionaries throughout Egypt. For example, the protesters incessantly yelled out '*Allahu Akbar*' ('God is greater'), the oft-used rallying cry of jihad, which was very often accompanied by the pacifist battle-cry of '*silmiyya*, *silmiyya*' ('peacefully, peacefully'), connoting the commitment of the rebels to peaceful means of protest – stubbornly yelled out every time the protesters were violently assaulted by

government thugs or soldiers. And if the violent assaults resulted in deaths, or if the demonstrators mourned a fallen revolutionary, they yelled out '*al-shahidu habibu Allah*' ('martyrs are the closest or the most beloved to God').

Liberal and cultural values as expressions of Islamicity

Alongside religious performance and symbolism, demonstrators in various Egyptian cities engaged in numerous cultural festivities – dancing, singing, pop performances, comic skits and poetry – activities that in a strictly puritanical or Wahhabi setting would not be linked with religiosity and would even be condemned as antithetical to the teachings of Islam (Abou El Fadl 2005: 156–161). Moreover, women participated in the Egyptian revolution in substantial numbers, and men and women protested, worshipped and celebrated together in mixed-gender settings (Mohyeldin 2011). The free mixing of the sexes is deemed offensive and sinful by puritanical persuasions within Islam, but beyond the question of puritanical sensibilities, the gender dynamics and practices observed in Tahrir Square and other urban centres in Egypt would also not have appealed to the more culturally conservative or traditional elements of Egyptian society. However, these gender practices, as is the case with the democratic values espoused by the revolutionaries, reflected the liberal cultural values that had come to inspire the rebels. Most importantly, these liberal values were not held by the pioneers and makers of the Egyptian revolution in opposition to Islam or as a challenge to Islamic values. For the revolutionaries, these liberal values and the cultural practices were considered to be true and genuine expressions of Islamicity.

The marked absence of religious absolutism

At the same time that there was widespread deployment of religious doctrines and symbolisms, the religiosity displayed by the revolutionaries was far from puritanical or absolutist. The revolutionaries assiduously avoided any suggestion of creating a religious state or a hegemonic and totalitarian system of government. At the first Friday congregational services after Mubarak's resignation, one of the first acts of the revolutionaries was to invite prominent religious authorities, such as Shaykh Yusuf Qaradawi, who for decades had lived in exile because of Mubarak's repression, to address tumultuously rejoicing masses of supporters.

But, at the same time, the Egyptian revolution also portrayed a remarkably equanimical picture in which Christian prayers were held alongside Muslim prayers, and as a sign of national unity and solidarity, the Qur'an was raised side by side with the cross, and both Islamic and Christian clergy held unified religious services in the midst of the Tahrir Square. Perhaps most tellingly, the demonstrations that overtook all the major cities were distinctly devoid of any chants or placards proclaiming that sovereignty belongs only to God (*al-hakimiyya li'llah*), or that the Qur'an is the only legitimate constitution (*al-quran dusturuna*), or that Islam is the only solution (*al-Islam huwa al-hall*), all of which were the typical rallying cries of Islamic movements in the 1970s and 1980s.

Shari'a and Shari'a law in the Egyptian revolution

The Egyptian revolution was not about the imposition of Shari'a law. In the literature generated before and after the revolution, the call for an imposition of Shari'a law or

set of positive legal commandments is conspicuously absent. This literature places a great deal of emphasis on civil society, civic duties and rights, rule of law, limited and accountable government, social and political justice, and citizenship. Even the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the course of the revolution and to this day has not called for the imposition of Shari'a law, but like many of the revolutionaries, has argued that the Shari'a of Islam not only supports but mandates this revolution (Mursi 2011). We can better understand the intellectual context and system of thought from which this revolution emerged if we keep in mind that while a large number of moderate Islamists, such as Amr Khaled, Fahmi Huwaydi, Mohammad Umarah and Selim Al-Awa, supported or participated in the protests, puritanical Salafi and Wahhabi organizations boycotted the revolution. Among other things, the objection raised by puritanical groups and activists was that the revolution did not call for the imposition of Shari'a law. Furthermore, Saudi jurists and Wahhabi activists issued legal proclamations appealing, albeit unsuccessfully, to God-fearing and pious Muslims to boycott the revolution. In these proclamations, Wahhabis contended that Shari'a law prohibited demonstrations and also prohibited rebelling against a ruler who is unjust or despotic. The Saudi government also condemned the Egyptian revolution, stating in no uncertain terms that it was contrary to Shari'a law (*Reuters* 2011).

Partly in response to the Wahhabi position, the prominent Egyptian jurist Yusuf Al-Qaradawi spoke out in clear support of the revolution and called upon Egyptians to join it (Kirkpatrick 2011). Qaradawi appealed to the principles of Shari'a in arguing that there was a religious and moral obligation upon Muslims to support the revolution and to rebel against despotism, degradation and injustice. Qaradawi's position on the Egyptian revolution was consistent with a position he had articulated several years earlier. A number of years before the revolution, in a television programme entitled *Shari'a and Life* (*al-Shari'a wa al-haya*) broadcast on Al Jazeera, Qaradawi argued that a proper understanding of Shari'a would give precedence to a democratic system of governance over any system of government that would give effect to the technical positive commandments of the Islamic legal tradition. Qaradawi also argued that democracy, or a political system that respects human dignity, is more fundamental to the fulfilment of Shari'a than the enforcement of a set of positive legal commandments, such as the prohibition of usury, that ultimately might or might not lead to the realization of justice.

On the occasion of the Egyptian revolution, the Shaykh of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayyib, issued a statement that directly addressed the Shari'a and its import upon the revolution (*Newspusher* 2011). This statement promised to be a seminal event if he did not go on to betray it later. It should be noted that the position of the Shaykh of Al-Azhar is a highly prominent one in the Sunni Muslim world. The Shaykh of Al-Azhar is, in essence, the highest-ranking jurist in the Sunni Muslim world, and thus the holder of this office enjoys a considerable degree of prominence and respect among Muslims. On Wednesday 16 February 2011, the Shaykh of Al-Azhar issued a telling statement setting forth the following: first, the Shaykh stated that Shari'a endorses the principle of majoritarian rule; therefore, whatever legal system is desired by the majority, as long as it upholds the principles of Shari'a, is also the Islamically mandated and required legal system. Second, the Shaykh went on to explain that the objectives and principles of Shari'a are to: promote knowledge and *'ilm* (science); establish justice and equity; and protect liberty and human dignity. Third, he argued that a political system that upholds the basic moral values and natural principles of justice shared by all religions is mandated by Islam. Fourth, he argued that democracy is a fundamental and basic objective

of any Shari'a-based system because it is the political system most likely to lead to upholding the dignity of all, to the prohibition of cruel and degrading treatment and torture, and to bringing an end to political and economic corruption and despotism. The Shaykh argued that the protection of human dignity, the prohibition of cruelty and torture, the elimination of corruption, and the end to despotism are, in turn, basic and fundamental Shari'a values. Finally, the Shaykh stated that as an institution, Al-Azhar calls for a system of governance that respects the rights of all citizens and that despotism is inherently and fundamentally a breach of Shari'a. He explained that, among other things, despotism creates social ills such as cowardice, hypocrisy, social alienation and a lack of a collective or communal ethos, all of which are contrary to Shari'a.

To jurists such as the Shaykh of Al-Azhar and Qaradawi, then, the Egyptian revolution and its democratic goals are Islamic – they are, in fact, a proper expression of the normative values of Shari'a. Importantly, however, I do not believe that this perspective or conceptualization of Shari'a was engineered by the jurists and adopted by the masses. As discussed below, the idea of an innate and inherent relationship between Shari'a and justice and the idea of Shari'a as fundamentally at odds with despotism are firmly anchored in the Islamic tradition. So, for instance, the Shaykh of Al-Azhar's proclamation was enthusiastically received all over the Muslim world, and not just in Egypt. Yet, Al-Azhar was placed on the defensive because of the criticism that its proclamation came late or that it should have been issued in the first days of the revolution. Islamic authorities or institutions that chose to support Mubarak's despotic regime increasingly found themselves marginalized and side-lined.

The failure of the revolution

The Egyptian revolution was sparked by an idealistic group of youth who had lost faith in all the institutions of power. This youth was defiant, innocent, idealistic and uncorrupted. It was initially successful because the destitute masses had suffered enough.

The Egyptian revolution presented the arrogant and domesticated secular intelligentsia with a true challenge. Suddenly, for the first time, they were presented with the task of practicing what they preached, and of speaking for the populace without the mediating role of the repressive state. Even when, at times, they defended the rights of a member of the Muslim Brotherhood or of an Islamist, the repressive state stood as an ultimate guarantor that the Islamists would never become too powerful.

For decades, this intelligentsia theorized about the sovereign will, reactionism, progressivism and the place of Egypt in world history; but for the first time, they were forced to come face to face, deal with and explain themselves to the Egyptian people. For the first time, they could not simply dismiss the Islamists with contempt and arrogance, and they would have to figure out a native language – a language that did not simply transplant Western concepts, ideas and historical movements, but that would actually empower these ideas with meaning to the Egyptian people. Would the secular intelligentsia be capable of working through the will of the people without guardian state institutions such as the army, police or judiciary to package this will and present it in a palatable fashion?

Why did the secular intelligentsia fear the Muslim Brotherhood so much? The Brotherhood had been the perpetual victim. Since 1954, there was no significant time that passed without the Brotherhood being persecuted and repressed in some fashion or another. Unable to depend on the powers of the state, the Brotherhood developed a

network of charitable projects, and lived and preached among Egypt's disappearing middle class and impoverished masses.

The secular intelligentsia tried to put off an electoral showdown with Islamists. They openly complained that they had not had a chance to work with the masses while the Islamists were adept at tricking and cajoling the simple-minded public who could not understand complex ideas such as constitutionalism and limitations on power. They tried in every way to dissuade the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) from holding a referendum that raised the ultimate question of the Islamic identity of the state. Many of them tried to convince the SCAF that true democracy requires the banning of religiously based parties, and the prohibition of religious symbolism in elections. However, the military wanted a real sense of the pulse of the masses, and did not want to be dragged into a violent showdown with Islamists.

The Islamists won the referendum of 19 March 2011 with 77 per cent of the vote. The parliamentary elections of 28 November 2011 were a landslide in favour of the Islamists with the Brotherhood winning 43.3 per cent and other Islamic alliances winning 25 per cent. The Shura Council elections were also a landslide win with the Brotherhood, capturing 58.3 per cent and al-Nour 25 per cent of the popular vote.

Both the secular intelligentsia and the SCAF itself were now worried, and the elite class of petty capitalists who for decades had thrived only through a parasitical relationship with Mubarak's corrupt state apparatus were also concerned. On 14 June 2012, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), staffed by Mubarak appointees, dissolved the entire parliament because purportedly the election laws discriminated against independent candidates. On 18 June 2012 the SCAF passed the infamous 'revisions' to the first Constitutional Declaration insulating the armed forces from civilian oversight or accountability and granting the army veto power over the act of declaring war. A few days later on 25 June, the SCC challenged the legality of the Shura Council, giving a clear indication that it too was likely to be dissolved.

The last remaining hope for the Islamists was the presidential elections, which were begrudgingly held by the SCAF after repeated demonstrations and protests. Just in case the Islamist-dominated parliament would not be dissolved by the SCC, the SCAF and the judiciary allowed General Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's last prime minister, to run against the Islamists despite the numerous corruption charges pending against him. Moreover, the old regime with its full network of petty capitalists put all its weight behind General Shafiq, who was reinvented by the privately owned media into a revolutionary figure who fervently believed in the rule of law.

Considering that General Shafiq was given the full support of the Egyptian state and that the privately owned media launched a full-fledged attack on the Brotherhood, the real surprise was that President Mohammed Morsi was still able to eke out a narrow victory of 51.7 per cent against Shafiq's 48.3 per cent. The presidential elections presented the secular intelligentsia with a stark choice: they could support the old order or they could swallow the bitter pill of supporting an Islamist candidate.

Most chose to do neither. But their sense of grievance and belief that the masses were not mature enough to decide the fate of the country through free elections was only reaffirmed.

Morsi and the Brotherhood gave their secular opponents a golden opportunity with his poor performance as Egypt's first freely elected president. Comforted by the repeated electoral victories, he moved against two bastions of privilege and power in Egypt – both secular, entitled, elitist and deeply offended at having to limit their power.

Egypt is the only purported democracy where it is a criminal offense to criticize the military or judiciary and it is impossible to penetrate through the veil of immunity behind which corruption takes place.

After secularist members of the Constitutional Constituent Assembly (CCA) of 2012 began to boycott the drafting process, and the threat of the dissolution of the CCA by SCC again was looming, President Mohammad Morsi issued a presidential decree on 22 November 2012, which contained several contentious articles. These included the following: all constitutional declarations made by Morsi could not be appealed until a new constitution was put in place; no judicial authority could dissolve the CCA or the Shura Council; and the president was authorized to take any measures in order to 'preserve and safeguard the revolution, national unity or national security' (*Al-Masry Al-Youm* 2012). This political opportunism of Morsi can only be read in the context of the repeated obstructionism of the SCC and the military – the constant threats of dissolving democratically elected bodies.

Soon after this decree was issued a new oppositional coalition was created called the National Salvation Front (NSF), which included many secularists and *fulool* (remnants of the Mubarak regime). This loose group of people accused Morsi of being worse than former President Hosni Mubarak, and for grabbing sweeping powers in order to push the Islamist backed constitution through (Al-Amin 2012). Though the NSF claimed to represent the liberal constituency in Egyptian society and saw themselves as the safe-guarders of the secular state, they could not claim a democratic mandate or legitimacy.

Although the Islamists were able to pass the New Egyptian Constitution by a 63.8 per cent vote on 25 December 2012, this was the last straw. The old regime with its unholy and somewhat psychotic alliances returned. The secular intelligentsia once again manned all of the podiums provided by the privately owned media, the SCC kept rejecting draft after draft of the revised electoral law that was intended to save the Shura Council from being dissolved, and the military started negotiating with Washington, DC, and Saudi Arabia to remove Morsi from power. The obstructionism of the military and judiciary did not start and end at the level of political process. Ahmad Makki, former minister of justice, spoke in detail in an interview about the subversive acts against Morsi's government that were undertaken by the secular forces (*Jarida al-Sha'b al-Jadid* 2013). This included economic sabotage and obstruction by police forces, in which police forces literally left the streets and unleashed *baltagiya* (state-sponsored thugs) and then blamed the Morsi government for the increase in violence.

The massive turnout of protesters on 30 June 2013 came as nothing short of a real gift to the Brotherhood's opponents. Weeks before the secular intelligentsia had been openly calling upon the old guardians – namely, the military and judiciary – to intervene to save Egypt's revolution reminiscent of the role they have consistently played since the colonial era, they called upon old guardians to save the country from the follies of its natives. The guardians of truth needed to reset the revolution on its proper course by undoing the results of all six elections and by turning over the revolution to its rightful owners – the rightful owners being the possessors of the secular truth, that religion has no role in the public sphere, and that the masses need to be shepherded into a democracy rather than treated as true sovereign agents.

The actual coup was a mere formality. The military coup was planned months before and it was not a spontaneous intervention on behalf of the Egyptian people (*Al-Mashhad* 2013).[1] The secular intelligentsia, however, felt more empowered than ever before.

Now, they badly wanted to believe that in one year of Morsi's rule, they had finally achieved what they had failed to achieve since the colonial period – mass appeal. This is why they jumped on the figure of 300,000 people demonstrating in Tahrir as proof positive of the legitimacy of the secular project. It is *this* group in Tahrir Square and no other who is the indisputable source of legitimacy, and of what the intelligentsia knew all along – that Islamists should return to the periphery of power where they belong, and should be prevented by the old guardians from misleading the masses.

What follows is a discussion on the primary factors that contributed to the failure of the Egyptian revolution: the military, secular intelligentsia and, lastly, the illusory yet undisguised counter-revolutionary acts of Saudi Arabia. While I discuss these actors separately, they should be understood as an interconnected and interdependent alliance.

The military

The actions and ideological discourse of the Egyptian military have been the most decisive factor in determining post-revolutionary Egypt. The military's primary role is not to fight wars, and not even to expect to fight wars, but to run the country. And part of the military creed (*al-'aqida al-'askariyya*) that is explicitly and openly taught in military schools is that it is only the military mind that is incorruptible and that can achieve concrete results. Therefore, part of the military's ideological makeup is the expectation that it is essential, not to defending the country, but to running the country. And here the expression that one often hears repeated after revolutions – 'when is the military going to return to the barracks' or 'when is the military going to be limited to the barracks' – becomes rather complicated because the military has never really been limited to the barracks in the first place.

Take, for example, the various images of people attempting to perform their prayers while being attacked by security forces, or run over by cars. These images underscored – and this again reflects many of the discourses that I have heard and engaged in after the revolution in Egypt – the extent to which the military and security forces are steeped in the same notion of religious sanctities (*ḥurumat*). It is a critical sociological concept that the military and the security forces have a different notion of *ḥurumat* or religious sanctities than the populace. The fact that the military would attack people in prayer, or would attack a mosque, or kill some of the prominent, well-respected religious leaders in demonstrations was a reminder that the military, very much like the military during the colonial age and shortly after the post-colonial age is of a different cultural orientation than the populace which it rules. This is because this military reflects the culture of its former colonisers – they are alienated and detached from the society they rule. The Egyptian military never got used to being accountable to the majority of people; rather, the military acts as a native coloniser.

Just to provide some broad outlines, initially in June 2011, the military announced that it was willing to meet with all Egyptian intellectuals for discussions about the future of Egypt. In the first meetings we attended, certain generals would basically lecture us about democracy and government, to which we objected. We then had a few sessions where there actually was some give and take. After the Declaration of Azhar, what increasingly became the party line represented by the military was: you people – meaning the intellectuals and the people who support the Egyptian revolution – do not know how dangerous our region is. You do not understand the dangers posed by the puritanical Islamic groups. You do not understand the dangers posed by an independent

Azhar (greater independence for Al-Azhar was one of the principles that the declaration demanded). You do not understand the dangers of being drawn into a war with Israel.

The list of untouchables seemed to increase, until we reached a point where the military said, 'Yes, we are willing to transition to democracy; however, there are high state interests (*maṣaliḥ 'ulya*) – such as the army, Camp David, many business issues, the position of America, and the relationship with Saudi Arabia – that cannot be left to the vagaries of the democratic process.'[2] Here we are left with a basic fundamental question, which I actually posed to one of the generals: if these are high state interests that cannot be left to an autonomous democratic process, and must be guaranteed by the military, how much space is left for a democracy?

In fact, one of the things that has developed – and this reflects the current reality in Egypt – is that you can write articles criticizing God, and you can speak profanely about Islam and Shari'a, but you cannot criticize the military. There are currently about 6000 people who are undergoing military trials in Egypt because they have written things that are perceived to be critical of the military or that question the position or the privileges of the military. So how much space is left for a democracy to work in? What does it mean to speak of a democratic revolution in a praetorian state; in a state in which the military has become its own monstrous interest?

The military is a possessor of sacred knowledge. It is a possessor of that knowledge which it calls high national interests – knowledge as to a special relationship with Israel, with the US, with China or with Saudi Arabia – and it becomes a form of sacrilege to attempt to open up these issues for discussion or for renegotiation. Of course, this situation is not entirely new or novel. We all too often forget that there was a similar revolutionary constitutional movement at the beginning of the 20th century in Iran. There was another constitutional revolution at the beginning of the 20th century in Egypt. And, ultimately, these revolutions were aborted by the military, whether the national military on its own, or the national military with foreign aid. In raising these issues, I am saying that understanding revolutionary movements and democracy is not as simple as studying whether there is a merchant class or a strong middle class, or whether the religious institution is cooperating or not cooperating. One of the things that you quickly confront in the Middle East is the extent to which the region itself is permeated with claims of various interests of various powers, and this has become a true mythology – a mythology that you cannot unpack. For example, there were so many times in meetings with the military when we were told, 'If you are not careful, Saudi Arabia is ready to bankrupt us. If you do not modify the Azhari language about liberal Islam, Saudi Arabia will withdraw X amount of money from Egypt and the Egyptian economy will collapse.' That is a mythology that people on the ground have to negotiate, often under horrendous conditions.

The secular intelligentsia

Why did the Egyptian secular intelligentsia betray their revolution? Why have they fallen into such profound and blatant contradictions that they killed the infant revolution? To answer this question we must go back in time and understand what can be described as the time-honoured traditions of Egyptian politics.

Long before the military coup, the secular intelligentsia and some of their revolutionary partners destined the revolution to a painful suicide by indulging in what has

now become an often-repeated offence. They imagined themselves as the one and only true possessors of legitimacy, not because they represent the sovereign will but because they and they alone possess the civilizational and intellectual values necessary for a progressive order in which true democracy, unhampered by reactionary forces, can be achieved.

The colonial era witnessed the rise of a largely Western-educated class that was trained and weaned to form the necessary bourgeoisie that would service the state bureaucratic apparatus necessary for servicing colonial interests in the region. However, at that time, many of the Western-educated intelligentsia still enjoyed close ties to influential reform-oriented religious figures such as Mohammad 'Abduh (d. 1905). These religious figures worked to reconcile traditional Islamic values with the modern nation-state, democracy and constitutionalism. They also represented a symbolic link to historical continuity and the legitimacy of tradition.

The ability of the Westernized intelligentsia to negotiate grounds of commonality with religious intellectual forces granted them a relative degree of native legitimacy. Typically, this Westernized intelligentsia was thoroughly grounded in post-renaissance European thought, but knew precious little about the pre-colonial Islamic epistemic tradition. Indeed, this intelligentsia saw their own native tradition largely through the coloniser's eyes. In other words, what they understood or believed about Islamic history and thought came largely from the writings of Western orientalists. Even to this day, the general outlook of the secular intelligentsia – their understanding of the progression, trajectory, contributions and the very worth of the Islamic tradition – is derived practically exclusively from the writings of Western scholars on Islam.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the secular intelligentsia played a critical role in translating orientalist literature into Arabic and taught these sources in urban universities throughout Egypt. As such, they acted as a persistent bridge to transplanting and transforming Western views of Islamic history and thought to an internalized self-view in the consciousness of the urbanized elite. The cooperative and friendly relationship of the Westernized intelligentsia with the reform and liberal-minded Islamic scholars did not last. With the rise of Pan-Arab nationalism, and ideological movements such as Nasserism and Ba'athism in the 1950s, the dynamics between the Westernized intelligentsia and Islamic orientations changed in fundamental and dramatic ways. Arab nationalism adopted the rhetoric of religion as a fundamentally reactionary force pitted against a progressive force of national liberation. The secular intelligentsia, which at the time were largely leftist and socialist, legitimated and defended the repressive praetorian state as necessary for achieving progressive historical objectives.

A very significant number of Egyptian intellectuals, such as Hussein Haykal (d. 1956), saw religion as a private and personal matter that should play no normative role in the public sphere. In reality, however, religion was not excluded from the public sphere, but it was allowed to exist only within the narrow space allowed it by the Arab secular state. The secular state created officially sanctioned podiums for religion and, in effect, created an official state religion that rubber-stamped and legitimated state politics. At the same time, this state-sponsored religion lost its legitimacy on the ground as the clergy of Azhar became salaried employees of the state. With the domestication of the native Azhari clergy, critical Islamic thought drifted into stale apologetics that placated and satisfied only the most uninspired and unchallenging intellects. This helps to explain the powerful symbolism invoked when Abdel Fattah El-Sisi placed the Shaykh Al-Azhar and the Pope of the Coptic Church on either side of him when he announced his coup.

The 1967 defeat and the rise of Saudi-funded Wahhabi-Salafi movements in the 1970s heralded the death of pan-Arab nationalism, and challenged the privileged status of the Westernized Egyptian intelligentsia. While intellectually unsophisticated, Wahhabi-Salafi movements achieved something that the Westernized intelligentsia was no longer capable of doing: appealing to and galvanizing the masses.

After the co-optation of the scholars of Azhar by the state, and the death of the pan-Arab socialist dream, what captured the imagination of the masses was the impassioned rhetoric of the Islamic groups who recalled in the imagination of their audiences a time of glory when Muslims were powerful and respected, and when justice reigned.

The uncomfortable truth is that the Westernized intelligentsia continued to rely on the repressive state to continue in a privileged status. While Islamic groups appealed to the masses on the street by embracing many of their social and economic problems and by capturing their imagination with the promise of a regained glory, the secular intelligentsia had a very different path.

Over four decades the secular intelligentsia relied on the praetorian state to placate and repress the Islamists. But embracing the evolving language of the age, this intelligentsia adopted the Western language of democracy, pluralism, civil society and human rights. While failing to understand or engage the aspirations of the masses, the secular intelligentsia adopted an increasingly elitist and even supremacist attitude towards Islamists. They borrowed the language of modernity, postmodernity, globalization and the international community as a self-assuring and self-congratulatory discourse about their own ability to understand the complexity of the modern world, to rise up to the challenges of globalization, and to move Egyptian society towards development and progress. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and poor grew ever larger, and the economic problems of Egypt became more complicated.

Secularist and Islamist discourses grew ever more polarized. The secularists saw the Islamists as reactionary forces, often describing them as *dhalamiyyun* ('of the dark ages' or 'living in the dark ages'), and the Islamists saw the secularists as essentially alien to the society they claimed to represent. The irony is that both parties spoke the language of democracy and civil rights, and both continued to believe that they represented the true and legitimate public good. In the name of democracy, Islamists won elections and in the name of democracy the secular intelligentsia continued to rely on the repressive state as their guarantor against the reactionary Islamist forces.

The Mubarak regime balanced the Islamist media with a secular media. The same balancing act is played by the Saudi government, which owns secular channels such as the rather racy MBC and plays them off religious channels such as Iqraa. Importantly, the Mubarak regime had a complex network of incentives, rewards and punishments for journalists, writers, media personalities and everyone who could affect public opinion. Most of the secular intelligentsia became clientele of the state in which they played the role of the loyal opposition. Their measured and domesticated opposition legitimated the repressive state apparatus that had become increasingly savage and brutal.

This is why the secular intelligentsia did not have a problem with the unlawful closings of the media owned by Islamists and with the unjust arrests that included the speaker of the dissolved parliament and even the attorneys who represented the Brotherhood before the SCC.

Paradoxically, it is the secular intelligentsia that unwittingly admitted the empty circle in which they keep revolving. According to them, 1952 and 2013 were legitimate

revolutions in modern Egyptian history – in 1952, the army rose against injustice and the people backed it up, and in June 2013 the people rose against injustice and the army backed them up (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 2013). But the secular intelligentsia fails to note that in both 1952 and 2013 the army remained the ultimate arbiter of power and the only force that at will invents and destroys constitutions, rights and institutions.

Saudi Arabia

It speaks volumes that no country did more to undermine Morsi's regime and no government openly celebrated his overthrow more than the Saudi government. This is because the Saudi government understands something that all of the rejoicing people in Egypt fail to understand. Another military coup means the death of the Egyptian democratic experiment. Saudi Arabia realizes what will come next – the exclusion of the Islamists will lead to radicalization, and radicalization will mean violence, and violence will be the foundation upon which the military and old security forces of Mubarak will arrest, torture and kill, all in the name of public safety and high national interests. Saudi Arabia understands that the democratic threat that the Egyptian experiment once posed to Saudi autocracy is over because today it is the Brotherhood who is being thrown in prison and tortured. A year from now, the young dreamy youth who rejoiced and danced when Morsi was overthrown will find themselves in the next cell-block to the Brotherhood.

Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi intelligence chief, played a major, although not yet fully known, role in setting up the coup. He flew to the capitals of several Western countries weeks before the coup, urging them to support a takeover by the military. It is also known that he met, on several occasions, Egyptian military officials and that plans were in the making to dislodge Morsi since November 2012 (*Asrar 'Arabiyya* 2013). Other than the well-known aid package to Egypt of US$5 billion weeks after the coup, King Abdullah made an unusually blunt public statement in which he called upon all Muslims to support the Egyptian army in its heroic fight against the terrorism of the Muslim Brotherhood. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Saudi Arabia pledged money that far exceeds the aid Egypt receives from the US and the European Union (EU) combined, in the event that the US and EU might attempt to punish the Egyptian army by cutting off aid. The Israelis and the UAE repeatedly assured El Sisi that regardless of how tough John Kerry or John McCain might sound, when all was said and done, they would not cut off aid, and even if they did, the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would more than cover it. Meanwhile, Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the UAE foreign minister, intervened on behalf of El Sisi, urging the US not to cut off aid, even after the toll of those killed and arrested kept rising.

What brings all of these parties together? Was it just a knee jerk reaction to the Muslim Brotherhood? Not quite. The Brotherhood did try to tread carefully and accommodate the military in a number of ways. However, it is the trail of money that provides the best evidence. The Brotherhood tried to enter into several business relationships that would have challenged the economic interests of the military, and even attempted numerous under-the-table corrupt deals with investors from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, as well as some other Gulf countries. The Brotherhood succeeded in entering into agreements with Turkey, China and India. This caused the anger among the ranks of the wealthy generals to begin exploding like fireworks, to the

point that the military showed up on numerous television channels denouncing, and even demonizing, these deals as disastrous. The reasons given were not just unconvincing, but bordered on the neurotic. El Sisi himself spoke frankly about the role that these deals played in his coup decision. In November 2012, he tried to get President Mohammad Morsi to understand by giving him the military's strategic outlook, which incidentally focused heavily on maintaining the ongoing commercial ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, while steering away from Turkey and Iran, and approaching China only after getting the US's consent to any substantial investment. When Morsi did not give El Sisi the response he hoped for, by El Sisi's own admission, the military stopped talking to the elected president in March 2013, and according to El Sisi, he realized that the problem needed a solution of a different kind. For example, in March 2013 National Salvation Front leader Mohammed ElBaradei met with Ahmed Shafiq and Bin Zayed in the UAE to discuss plans to overthrow Morsi (Al-Amin 2013). Furthermore, ElBaradei along with other opposition leaders had multiple meetings with the Egyptian military in which the military officers assured him that the military would take over if there were a sufficient number of protesters in the street (Bradley and Levinson 2013).

Most importantly, in my view, panicking from the new breed of democratic Islam, the Saudis waged a campaign of economic sabotage against Morsi's government, causing repeated power outages and gasoline shortages all over Egypt. And they opened their coffers to numerous writers and journalists for waging an incessant and sometimes irrational campaign against the Brotherhood. In addition to this devastating economic sabotage (miraculously, right after the coup, power and fuel were flowing as usual in Egypt), a smear campaign was waged against the Muslim Brotherhood with Saudi Arabia and the UAE supplying millions to opposition satellite channels, journalists, and the *Tamarrud* (Rebellion) campaign (*Asrar 'Arabiyya* 2013).

Dominating religion in Egypt's pseudo-secular state

Recently, Egypt's ruling junta made a decision to withdraw the licences granted to well over 50,000 mosques (*Mada Masr* 2013). In a move that is unprecedented in Islamic history, hundreds of thousands of imams (Muslim prayer leaders) have been banned from leading religious services, and only clerics who not only graduated from Al-Azhar Seminary, but are also employees of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (Ministry of *Awqaf*) will be permitted to lead services in Egypt.

I do not believe that commentators fully understand the profound implications of this decision. It is no exaggeration to say that if the Egyptian government actually implements this decision, it will change the course of history in Egypt, and indeed the trajectory of modern Islamic history.

The immediate reason that the military junta decided to cancel the permits issued to what are typically small-sized mosques known as *zawaya* (plural) or *zawiya* (singular) is that these underfunded, grossly overcrowded mosques have played an increasingly important role since the revolution, and have been overwhelmingly opposed to the military coup. But in reality, since the mid-1970s, the *zawaya* have played an active role as dynamic forums for social and political mobilization in financially disadvantaged communities and among marginalized low-income areas all over Egypt.

What distinguishes this move from the numerous other oppressive and blatantly unlawful manoeuvres El Sisi and his generals have undertaken since their coup?

The generals and the Egyptian media claim that this was a long needed measure to ensure that sermons delivered in the many centuries-old mosques of Egypt meet basic levels of competence and proficiency in the Islamic religious sciences. Moreover, they claim that these *zawaya* mosques have become a breeding ground for fanatic and extremist discourses that incite and excite ill-educated parishioners. According to the El Sisi apologists, this was a measure that should have been taken a long time ago, but finally, El Sisi had the sheer courage to get the mission accomplished.

It is true that Mubarak's regime had long considered this measure, but never dared to go this far. And decades ago, Nasser shut down 1000 mosques that resisted the socialist government's order of nationalization. However, to appreciate El Sisi's audacious, even insolent step, we need to consider some of the necessary background. For centuries, mosques in Egypt were funded through a complex matrix of private endowments known as the *awqaf* (singular *waqf*). The *awqaf* performed a variety of social functions, including funding schools such as Al-Azhar, orphanages, water works and even animal shelters. Islamic law added layers of complexity by developing a set of rules as to the consecration of mosques, the inalienability of places of worship and, most importantly, the assumption that once land is consecrated as a mosque it cannot be dedicated to any other purpose.

During the Nasser era, all the Muslim religious endowments were nationalized and placed under the control of the Ministry of Religious Endowments. This made all mosques and Muslim religious institutions, such as Al-Azhar Seminary, state owned property. The idea of secularism in Egypt was not a separation between church and state, but a complete dominion by the secular state over all religious institutions. In this capacity, the rentier state is able to control, manipulate and leverage religion to maintain a fundamentally unjust and exploitative power structure (Beblawi 1990: 85–99).

Interestingly, the Coptic religious endowments remained under the control of the Coptic Church, but the government did not allow for the construction of churches or synagogues without the prior approval of the state. While the Coptic Church could elect its own pope, the consecutive military governments of Egypt insisted on appointing the Shaykh Al-Azhar, the mufti of the Egyptian state and the minister of endowments.

The secular state in Egypt consistently tried to leverage Al-Azhar and its graduates as a legitimating sword used aggressively to justify certain policies, such as the Camp David Accords and the privatization of the public economic sector. At the same time, the state used Al-Azhar as a defensive shield legitimating reactionary and conservative power dynamics, such as patriarchy and the monopolization of wealth in the hands of Egypt's new class of super-pashas.

To these ends, the secular state strictly controlled the intellectual activity and curriculum at Al-Azhar. Meanwhile, economic and political corruption became rampant in religious institutions, such as Al-Azhar and various Sufi guilds. But nothing compares to the infamous level of corruption that continues to plague the Ministry of Religious Endowments.

The Ministry of *Awqaf* issued ready-made sermons to be delivered by clergy during Friday services. Before long, all the Friday sermons delivered in the mosques directly owned by the Ministry of *Awqaf* sounded tediously the same. It is difficult to describe the mind-numbing repetitiveness, dogmatism, irrelevance and sheer monotony of the ten or so sermons authored by the institutions of the state, and regurgitated by uninspired, lethargic and subdued Azhari clergy in one mosque after another across the country.

This sombre, dreary reality became the fertile grounds for the spread of the *zawiya* mosque. Without exception, all *zawiya* mosques have been built and maintained by private funds and donations. Some are as big as full-sized mosques built on private property, while most are the size of a conference hall, typically found at the street-level floor of residential buildings, or in the basements of businesses or apartment complexes. Usually after such structures are designated as mosques, a licence is obtained from the Ministry of *Awqaf*, but the mosque remains private property.

Imams hired to lead prayers and give sermons in these privately owned mosques are usually paid from donations raised by the congregation itself. In most cases, the imams are either retired Azhari shaykhs, unemployed university graduates from one of the professional schools, such as engineering, or young men who have attended one or two years of instruction in one of the privately owned Qur'an institutes that have sprouted all over Egypt. After passing an examination in Qur'anic recitation and memorization, these imams are issued a license, and although not under the supervision of Al-Azhar, they become community-supported religious leaders.

The *zawiya* mosques posed a problem on two fronts: first, they often became breeding grounds for extremist discourses and meeting points for fundamentalist groups; second, because of their small size, worshippers would often end up overflowing to the outside of the mosques, praying on street pavements and, at times, blocking street traffic.

Since the 25 January revolution, the *zawiya* mosques have played an increasingly politicized role that contrasts sharply with the docile role played by the Azhari mosques. Critically, these mosques and their podiums constituted the only legitimate competition to the monopoly of state-sponsored religion in the crippled civil society of Egypt. By simply cancelling the licenses given to the imams and closing down thousands of *zawaya* mosques, the Egyptian government is forcing all religious discourse that is not under the formal tutelage of the government to go underground, and to grow more radicalized and polarized.

But even more troublesome is that the closure of these mosques once again demonstrates that Egypt will remain locked between the polarity of an authoritarian pseudo-secularism and an authoritarian pseudo-Islamism. Most of Egypt's secular intelligentsia, who have now become didactic apologists for the military, enthusiastically support the closure decision. In doing so, they once again demonstrate that the secularism of Arab countries, such as Egypt, has practically nothing to do with the post-enlightenment European tradition of toleration and religious freedom.

The patronizing secularism of Egypt's intellectuals and their military allies has little to do with the idea that a civil government should not presume to know God's will, and then claim to embody that will in its policies. It also has little to do with the state guarding the principle of freedom of religious belief and practice, including the right of religious groups to organize, assemble and participate fully in civil society.

Egyptian secularism is not about the separation of church and state. It is most decisively about the state dominating, controlling and leveraging religion. In effect, the state acts to form a church for the state, and then ensures that this church has an uncontested monopoly over the voice of religion in society. Ultimately, the state defines the space that God may occupy and also defines the character that this God is allowed to have, and then allows this God a single voice, which invariably ends up supporting the state as the only real church within society.

We all recall the image of El Sisi bringing an end to Egypt's tragically short-lived democratic experience accompanied by the representatives of Al-Azhar, the Coptic

Church and the Wahhabi Nour party. Soon El Sisi realized that there is a redundancy between Al-Azhar and the Nour party because both are firmly in the comfortable control of Saudi Islam. In other words, even if the Nour party is suppressed, Saudi Arabia will not be strongly opposed because Al-Azhar and the dependence of its administrators on lucrative deals with Gulf countries will ensure that Al-Azhar will never become a serious contender in civil society.

Conclusion

In closing, I must say that I wish that the smug pseudo-secularists in Egypt, and their short-sighted allies in the US Pentagon, White House and State Department, would think seriously about the fact that the only secularism a country like Egypt has ever known is an autocracy that goes to great lengths to control and dominate the voice of God. God has one function in Egypt and that is to bless the privileges of the privileged, and to overlook the excesses of the self-indulgent.

I believe that we will witness in the not-too-distant future increasingly violent clashes between religious groups that feel secularism is hypocritically intolerant and unprincipled, and the old-style Arab elite who thinks secularism means that religion must always protect and guard the status quo. I fear that, eventually, a vicious and bloody revolution will bring about an Iranian-style theocracy in Egypt. It is all too often forgotten that the CIA coup of the democratically elected Musaddiq government in Iran in 1953 led to the Iranian revolution some 20 years later.

Notes

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1 Mona Makram Ebeid, a former legislator under Mubarak and an adviser to SCAF during the transition period, spoke before the Middle East Institute on 11 July and stated that she was invited to a meeting with Hasaballah Al-Kafrawi and General Fuad Allam, along with a number of other secularists, on the morning of 30 June. During this meeting Kafrawi stated that he was in touch with El Sisi, the army, the Coptic Pope, and Shaykh Al-Azhar and that General El Sisi requested a 'written popular demand' in order for the army to intervene. A statement was produced with over 50 anti-Morsi signatories requesting the army's intervention.

2 The military informed us that this is the position of the United States, and that the United States informed the military that the military must guarantee certain non-negotiable interests such as certain privileges for the American military in Egypt and Camp David, as well as some other interests that I am restricted from mentioning.

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Part IV
Women's Voices in the Arab Spring

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21

Syria's 'Arab Spring'

Women and the Struggle to Live in Truth

Tamara Al-Om

> Sixty percent of the peaceful activism and relief work was led by women and were it not for the Syrian woman the Syrian revolution would not have proceeded. Thousands of women are in prison; they are the key of the revolution.
>
> (Sheikh Mouaz Al Khatib, 2013)[1]

There has been no prejudice in the violence and atrocities that have befallen Syria since the start of the uprising in early 2011, be it against man, child or woman. Many have been detained, tortured and murdered; too many have witnessed the death of their families, friends and/or partners. They are faced with daily suffering; searching for food to feed their families; cowering from bomb attacks; fearing the arrest or kidnapping of a loved one and dealing with the torment of displacement for the foreseeable future. Sexual violence and prostitution are increasingly common features of the situation in which Syrians find themselves immersed. Just as the suffering, the list of what people have been enduring throughout this conflict is endless. As a consequence it is unsurprising that increasing numbers of both men and women have joined in the struggle for Syria's freedom. It is sometimes difficult to grasp the extent of the complexity and the intricate organization of the Syrian oppositional movements, particularly if we are to solely rely on the information provided by the mainstream media which has the tendency to only illuminate very limited aspects of the conflict. The political opposition bodies and the Free Syrian Army are predominantly made up of men, albeit a few prominent women such as Suhair Atassi, a human rights activist involved in the Damascus Spring[2] and now co-vice president of the opposition government. Another increasing dominance is the fear of Islamic extremists and Al Qaeda-linked groups infiltrating opposition fighters. Rafif Jouejati (interview, 19 April 2013),[3] a Syrian activist and the English spokesperson for the Local Coordination Committees, highlights how 'traditional media often fails to adequately report on the secular movement or the ongoing civil resistance', which is made up of an extensive network of people largely dominated by women both from within and outside of the country. Women are rarely a feature of the media coverage unless it is regarding the use of women as weapons of war, including such issues as sexual violence, prostitution, human trafficking and

arranged marriages, particularly among Syrian refugees. While these are certainly issues to be concerned with and which deserve the media coverage they receive, their dominance in the media has done little to publicize the vital roles of women within the uprising whose contributions have been both accepted and depended upon by their male compatriots. Significant numbers of Syria's women have played an active role in the revolution right from the start of the peaceful protests that began in early March 2011, including the infiltration of a pro-regime protest by Marwa al-Ghamian on 15 March, who 'walked between a sea of men chanting for Bashar while she was carrying the only flag in the crowd. She boldly flipped the chants by replacing "Bashar" with "Syria." This woman with her flag and patriotic chants represented the birth of the revolution' (interview with Amal Hanano, 17 April 2013). There was also the protest organized by Suhair Atassi and Dana Al Jawabra[4] in Damascus on 16 March, in which they demanded 'the release of all political prisoners including that of Tal Al Malouhi, the seventeen year-old blogger who was detained in 2009 for her political posts. At the time, Malouhi was the youngest prisoner of conscience in the world' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). As the conflict developed, so too did their numbers and their roles, with many becoming 'important links in relaying information between the different rebel groups' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 16 April 2013). Their participation in the revolution has been both vast and integral and has taken place within rural and urban areas of Syria and also from abroad:

> Women have led protests, staged sit-ins, and been among the creative masterminds of the civil disobedience movement. As the uprising has gone on, women have served as reporters, documenters of human rights violations, nurses, doctors, smugglers and relief workers. Women have also served in combat, as evidenced by new Free Syrian Army all-women brigades. Abroad, women have also staged and participated in non-violent protests and have formed civil society organizations, lobbied, raised funds and spoken out in support of the revolution.
>
> *(Interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013)*

In this way, it is these varying roles that Syria's women continue to play within the revolution that is of primary interest to this chapter. Throughout it we will explore the multifaceted struggles many of them face in light of the largely conservative nature of Syrian society and their success and unwavering commitment in spite of them. Fundamentally, it is a desire to illuminate their efforts towards achieving both equality and adequate representation within society, the conflict and the opposition that is crucial to this chapter. Ultimately, however, the main purpose of this chapter is to bring to light the ambitions and the concerns of the women of Syria, particularly in the aftermath of the revolution.

The state, rebellion and the struggle to live in truth

Life in Syria pre-2011 was much like Vaclav Havel's description in *The Power of the Powerless* of life under a totalitarian regime which 'demands conformity, uniformity and discipline' and is only interested in serving 'people to the extent necessary to ensure that people will serve it' (Havel 1990: 43–44). In an attempt to ensure this the Syrian regime narrated a reality all of its own – far removed from reality itself – derived from its own ideology, creating 'a world of appearances' that perpetuated its

power and dominance over its people. Constructing a reality that was 'permeated with hypocrisy and lies' where 'the complete degradation of the individual is presented as his or her ultimate liberation … the repression of culture is called its development … the lack of free expression becomes the highest form of freedom' (Havel 1990: 44–45), enabling the power structures of the regime to create an inevitable societal paradigm in which its people were forced to '*live within a lie*' created and enforced, directly and indirectly, by the regime itself. It was not important whether or not a person truly believed these lies; ultimately, it was whether they acted as *though* they did. In the thoughts of Jean-Paul Sartre (2009), this state of living could only be described as that of living within bad faith, *mauvaise foi*, where one does not live an authentic life determined by their own free decisions but instead, aware or not, lives a life that is dictated by others in an attempt to escape their own responsibilities, angst and ultimately their own freedom. The problem for the state arises, however, when the people, be it a group or an individual, decide to 'break the rules of the game' and instead attempt to '*live in truth*' and face the responsibilities and anguish that come with such actions. In doing so, they will inevitably 'shatter the world of appearances' (Havel 1990: 55–57) that the system has created and expose it to the rest of the world as a lie; they will have made the fundamental threat to the system and as a result must accept the brutal consequences of their choice to strive to live in good faith, *bonne foi*. It is precisely this threat that those within the Syrian rebellion made, leaving the Syrian regime in a vulnerable position with its lies, oppression and brutality being exposed to all of its people and to the rest of the world:

> We've been living a big lie for a long time, the lie that we live in a state of defiance … stories about our history and glory. Suddenly we awakened. I used to believe this lie I was brought up with. Now I discovered … . No! People are being slaughtered, children are being detained. It is much worse than what their propaganda used to tell us! Then the moment came … . I had to do something!
>
> *(Anonymous female protest singer songwriter, in Ladqani and Aldairy, 2012)*

According to Albert Camus (2000), this decision to cease living in the *farce* is an act of genuine rebellion which is founded upon 'the categorical rejection of an intrusion that is considered intolerable' (Camus 2000: 19), which is not merely an act of rejection of the absurd but is simultaneously an acceptance and an affirmation of another value: the importance of the rights and freedom of individual existence and of humanity as a whole. The sublime worth of this value is clear according to Camus by the rebel's willingness to risk everything, 'if [s]he prefers the risk of death (and we can say of any other punishment …) to the negation of the rights that [s]he defends, it is because [s]he considers these rights more important than [her]himself … [s]he is acting in the name of certain values … which [s]he feels are common to [her]himself and to all [wo]men' (Camus 2000: 21). It is certainly no easy task and takes a great deal of courage and commitment to free oneself from the shackles of a totalitarian regime in an attempt to live in truth. Indeed, were it not for the intolerable nature of the actions of the Syrian regime towards a few young boys[5] of Dara'a, the long awaited eruption of discontent felt by large proportions of Syrians may not have come to fruition. It was the first few protesters in early 2011, involving the men, children and women of Dara'a and their *engagement* with reality, the acceptance of their *responsibility* for their own *freedom*,

the acknowledgement of their *being-in-the-world-for-others* and their *commitment to concrete action* that prompted the quick dispersion of the fear that had for four decades presided over life for the vast majority in Syria, encouraging others across the country to do the same, taking control of their own lives, their own freedom and committing to their choices to do so, both for themselves and for their fellow Syrians, for as Sartre stipulates, 'I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim' (Sartre 1973: 29–30). In this way, while the act may originally begin as an act for oneself, through a personal existential awakening, that personal transcendence soon becomes an almost public one, an act for the *other*, for the all, for all men, children and women who find themselves in a shared experience of oppression. As Mouaz Khatib stated in his speech at the Islam and Transitional Justice Conference in 2013, 'this revolution's goal will be to free humanity'.[6]

Women's multifaceted struggle to live in truth

For Simone de Beauvoir, while both men and women are bound to suffer a life in bad faith at one point or another, it is all the more common for women. This is certainly not to be seen as an innate biological determinate but instead is a result of history and society's ideas, expectations and stereotype of the eternal feminine. 'No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature' (Beauvoir 1972: 295) as the *Absolute Other*, 'the passive principle to the male's active, rational and external principle' (Wilcockson 2013). In this way it is only the woman, through her own choice and action, that is able to rid herself of this ideal by becoming aware, confronting and seeking to change the situation in which she finds herself immersed. She must attempt to move beyond the being-in-itself, *en-soi* towards the being-for-itself, *pour-soi,* the self-conscious being that is able to determine the person they are to become, the woman they desire to be, for 'one is not born, but rather one becomes a woman' (Beauvoir 1972: 295). As such rebellion in women is twofold. In order to attempt to live in good faith, to live in truth, a woman must do so in both the private and public realms. Their radical shift in consciousness must be revolutionary on both counts and they must be willing to take responsibility and at times face the consequences of their free choices. Certainly, this attempt is no less significant, if in fact not more so the case, when fighting to free oneself from the shackles of an authoritarian regime. Moreover, in the case of Syria, women attempting to move towards a life in *good faith*, or for de Beauvoir to *become a woman*, have even more complexities to deal with, given the conservative nature of the society in which they exist.

Traditionally, Syria is a socially conservative society where women are intrinsically restricted by familial obligations and expectations, both within rural and urban sectors of society and a common feature regardless of religion or class. At the same time, particularly among the urban, middle and upper classes, education was common for the majority of women with many holding university degrees and increasing numbers holding jobs. This is likely to be partly a result of the fact that low incomes and increasing costs of living necessitated as many within a family to work as possible. While it has often been claimed that Syrian women overall experienced greater freedoms than those across the Arab world, 'the Syrian constitution and laws contain many articles that are unjust to women and treat them unequally' (Ahmed 2013). Issues of primary concern to many women's rights organizations included issues ranging from

political limitations (which, although not in the constitution, existed in practice for men too) to a lack of women's citizen rights such as the right of a Syrian woman to pass their nationality to their children. There was also increasing concern over certain social issues including laws against honour killings and marital rape which delivered little punishment to the perpetrators. Despite certain cosmetic changes to the constitution that occurred in the face of the early protests, any real change was blatantly absent, as was the case with most of the regime's proclaimed changes that occurred at this time.

Becoming a woman in Syria's revolution

On the other hand, with the onset of the revolution, radical changes were certainly on the way and that would be no different for women. While the revolution has not yet lead to the liberation of Syria, it has in certain ways enabled the liberation of many women involved in the revolution, and it is hoped that it will eventually lead the way for the liberation of all Syrian women. In the face of so much tragedy and loss it must be the small victories that are brought to light and focused upon. Many women have taken on the responsibility of 'representing the revolution on the streets and via media outlets and social media platforms' and 'this prominence is very important as it is not a role we were used to seeing: public political dissent by Syrian women. It is a barrier that was broken with the walls of fear. Syrians became citizens during the revolution' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). In this way, many women have come to realize that they have a role to play that goes beyond the home, beyond the domesticity of what she has been engrained to believe was her role for so long, 'this revolution also freed us from the tyranny of our homes'.[7] Mona Kareem, a Kuwaiti writer, poet and journalist, has similar ideas to Simone de Beauvoir regarding the *creation* of woman as the absolute other, which has largely been determined by society itself: 'I do not think there is a *traditional* status of women. I believe we are told that there is a traditional status for us but it is nothing but a creation of patriarchy that oppresses both men and women and keeps them thinking that a war is happening between both genders' (interview with Mona Kareem, 26 March 2013). In addition, Khawla Yusuf (interview, 2013) puts part of the blame of this constructed feminism on Arab media which has 'always been a male-dominated enterprise, even when they pay attention to women, they do it in such a manner as to reinforce traditional women roles, failing to acknowledge the emergence of new roles and the desire by many women to play new roles.'

In many ways one could interpret the involvement of Syria's women in the revolution as a step away from the traditionally conservative image of woman and instead a step towards *becoming a woman*, to living in good faith, to living in truth. In the words of an anonymous female protest singer–songwriter featured in the film *Morning Fears, Night Charts*, directed by Roula Ladqani and Salma Aldairy: 'Had it not been a revolution, I would've never experienced this. I would have never been encouraged to do anything, because we are raised since birth to kill our creative impulse … this revolution came to tell us that we're still human.' For Yasmine, a Syrian living abroad, active within the Local Coordination Committees, it was the revolution that introduced her to the 'inner person living inside'; she says: 'I would not have discovered my other personality were it not for the revolution' (quoted in Zeitouneh 2013). In this way, their journey through the Syrian revolution is at one and the same time a rebellion against the Syrian regime as it is against the limited perception of their role in a conservative society. 'Now that they have played a huge role in the revolution … it has made women

stronger, more confident' (interview with M. J. Lynn, 27 March 2013) and as a result they 'have broken the barrier of not being able to express themselves' (interview with Hala K., 26 March 2013). Importantly, these changes have not been limited to those from liberal backgrounds but can be seen across various sectors of society, as Rana, a secular Muslim activist, points out: 'when I go to affected areas … I see another layer of the revolution. In the suburbs, where women used to stay at home, there is a social revolution ongoing. Women get out of their houses and speak out loud' (quoted in Sinjab 2012). This elevation in free expression and a genuine sense of liberation is all the more noteworthy upon reflection of the increasing occurrence of women-led protests and even at times all women protests, a most poignant example of which is the rally in Al Bayda[8] on 13 April 2011. As a result of nearly all the men of the area having been imprisoned, the women rallied and 'marched along the highway … blocked a tank on the highway and spoke directly to the cameras … an elder woman who declares "I am a free woman, daughter of a free woman!"' (Kahf 2011).[9] Another striking example is the peaceful movement developed by Rima Dali, an attorney and prominent dissident, and a few of her comrades in their representation of the 'Brides of Damascus' who dressed in traditional white wedding gowns, held bright red signs stating *Stop the killing: We want to build a Syria for all Syrians*, and handed out roses in the streets of Hamadiya Souk in Old Damascus.[10]

Interestingly, what has been overwhelmingly positive in most situations is the mutual respect and reciprocity in the relations between the male and female compatriots of the Syrian opposition, where women have 'worked side by side with their male counterparts' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013) and whose roles have more often than not been 'acknowledged and appreciated by men' (interview with Ola Rifai, 10 April 2013). On the other hand, given the dominance and importance of the family in Syrian society, it has sometimes proved to be those closest to the women who created the most tension. While on most occasions those within a family share their positions and perspectives on the conflict, whether anti- or pro-Assad, there have been instances when both men and women have radically split from their families as a result of their conflicting ideologies. Samar Yazbek, an Alawite writer and television presenter who refused to go along with the pro-regime line of her family, was denounced by them as a traitor and following numerous arrests and threats to her daughter she was forced to leave Syria. Another one of the most vivid examples of this has been with the anonymous female protest singer songwriter in *Morning Fears, Night Chants*:

> My family and immediate community were still pro regime. They don't see! June 2011 I decided to live. To leave this 'voluntary detention' I was in. … my fear began to dissipate. Singing became synonymous to participating in protests. I used every excuse … . If I came home looking livid, I said that a microbus hit me or that I fell down. In the past lying was a necessity to be able to live. Everything being prohibited to a girl in this oriental society. The dos and the don'ts. We had to lie to be able to live. Now, lying has such a sweeter taste. It has become a means for a noble end, for us never having to lie again.
>
> *(Ladqani and Aldairy 2012)*

In addition to the adoption of roles that may be viewed by some as controversial, either in terms of ideology or traditional gender roles, there have been times when women have broken with tradition quite overtly, maybe out of choice but certainly out of

necessity. With the absence of men in many areas as a result of them joining the Free Syrian Army or quite frequently a result of detainment by the regime, kidnapping or even death, women have had to take on some of the more traditional roles of men. A key example of this can be seen in the rising numbers of women organizing and attending funeral processions, which are traditionally only attended by men. Furthermore, and also as a consequence of the escalation in violence, many women have resorted to joining the armed rebellion. 'It is the same escalation we have witnessed across the spectrum of Syrians who support the revolution. Many people moved from being peaceful protestors to militant fighters' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). This is by no means the norm and is certainly occurring in a limited capacity, which may be seen to be due to 'the conservative nature of our societies and increasing religiosity of many fighting groups make[ing] this particular barrier too hard to break at this stage' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013). However, while this is likely to be the case among the more 'Islamist rebel ranks that have the fewest women taking part' (AFP 2013a), there are at least two all-women brigades. In addition, 'I have heard of several women who abandoned their lives abroad to go back to Syria and serve in the Free Syrian Army' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013). There are also numerous individual cases of defected regime army officers as well as civilian local women who have seen the adoption of their new role as the only logical thing to do. While understandably apprehensive to start with (if sometimes only for fear of regime infiltration), many of the men have come to welcome these women into their ranks and see them as a source of inspiration and guidance. Some of the ex-regime army officers have proved indispensable as a result of the military training they have been able to offer women who have chosen to join in the fight. It is worth noting that the recruitment of women has not been limited to that of the opposition. The regime has recently announced the establishment of the *Lionesses for National Defence*, a new paramilitary force. Many recruits have been encouraged by their husbands and feel that their newly learned skills of handling weapons, carrying out raids and manning checkpoints will enable them 'to support the army and defend the fatherland' that is 'suffering' at the hands of the foreign terrorists (AFP 2013b). For many in the opposition movements this tactic is viewed as 'pure state propaganda' (interview with Mona Kareem, 2013) that is not very original given the adoption of a similar strategy by Hafez Al Assad during the 1970s and 1980s (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013) against the opposition movements of that period. On the other hand, it is also seen as a symptom of the 'fatigue of the regime's military forces as there are fewer men to recruit to the army' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013) and an expression of its 'desperation due to high casualty and defection rates' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013).

At this point it is important that we make clear that a total break with tradition is certainly not what is desired here, by the women, men or youth of the revolution. For the majority of those involved, the ultimate aim of this revolution is freedom from oppression, and for the women of this revolution this implies freedom from all forms of oppression, including that of gender-related oppression. The achievement of this however is not only attainable through a dissolution of tradition, for the two concepts are certainly not mutually exclusive. In fact, tradition and culture have been prominent features of the revolution, for both men and women, with the adoption of rallying cries and slogans that were derived from traditional Arab poetry and music. This has also been evident among the protesters of the revolutions across the Arab world, including in Tunisia and Egypt, where lyrics were taken from the poem 'To the Tyrants of the

World' by the Tunisian poet Abul Qasim Al-Shabbi. According to Constantine Zurayk, it is from within the realm of culture that the conditions of possibility for creativity and freedom of thought are able to emerge and for Sinan Antoon the real agents of a revolution are the men and women who have access to a society's collective memory of the struggle for freedom through its traditional music, poetry and art. It is for this reason that culture has suffered such severe repression under both Assad regimes and that, in the words of George Sabra, 'the people of Homs sing for freedom even while they lay dying … our sons and daughters will be proud of it for generations'.[11] In addition to this it has been tradition that has often played a role in allowing the women of the Syrian revolution to be so successful, using to their advantage the stereotypical perception of women as submissive homemakers uninterested in politics and rebellion. The veil too has enabled women to cover their faces and remain anonymous and avoid arrest and possibly much worse, to smuggle and move goods under their long coats and to gain less suspicion from those arming check points. Examples of this have been described by many of those interviewed, including Mediya Daghstani (interviewed 19 April 2013), a housewife turned activist who has been active since the second opposition protest in Homs on 25 March 2011 and who subsequently founded the opposition media outlet *Basma Syria*. 'The women were hiding the revolution signs under their clothes, using the scarf also to hide their faces, holding a man's hand to pretend that they are lovers to protect him from being detained, holding shopping bags to pretend that they are not in the demonstration but shopping, hiding the memory cards [with recorded images and videos] in their hair [under their head scarf].'[12]

Representation, ambitions and concerns

> It is difficult to start a revolution, more difficult to sustain it. But it is later, when we've won that the real difficulties will begin.
>
> (Giles Pontecorvo, quoted in Sajjad 2004: 10)

At this moment in the revolution many Syrian women have pointed out that it is not women's rights that are the priority, but rather a matter of being able to effectively work together as cohesive groups: 'I am not that involved in women-specific groups, we work hand in hand, men and women' (Rana, quoted in Sinjab 2012) in order to achieve the 'original goals of the revolution – freedom, dignity and justice' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013) – ambitions stipulated by all those interviewed. At a time when such risks are being taken by so many and when so many are under constant threat of being killed, 'women's rights are considered a luxury' (Maya, Syrian activist, quoted in Sinjab 2012). Also, in light of this level of 'brutality and violence on the ground', being able to ensure the occurrence of such a social revolution will be very difficult since as Amal Hanano highlights: 'we have much mending and psychological healing to do before real social change can occur'. Nonetheless, while this is undeniably and tragically the case, it is vital that these issues are not side-lined. For Khawla Yusuf, the key in dealing with this lies not in focusing on women's issues as such but rather focusing on all issues 'with women taking the lead in running and managing the project, ensuring that women's voices are always present whatever the issue being discussed'. While it is recognized by all the Syrian women who were interviewed that 'the current period and the phase immediately following the collapse of what is left of the regime will be particularly difficult for women' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013), a

common theme that emerges among all of them is that of the importance of ensuring that it is today and not tomorrow that women are made active participants in rebuilding Syria and contribute to 'creating the future portrait of Syrian society' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). In this way women must be involved and sufficiently represented within all elements of the process that is already under way, including the political process, the economy and law reforms in order to ensure the equality and safety of women and minorities, transitional justice, civil society development, inter-communal reconciliation and peace-making, representation within the emerging local governing councils and 'leading efforts in creating a national reconciliation process, negotiating with armed groups to lay down their weapons, and transitioning from war time to peace time' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013).

Unfortunately, however, if we are to look at the official political opposition bodies, women are overwhelmingly under-represented, especially given their extensive role on the ground. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Oppositional Forces, the body recognized by many in the international community as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, only has three female representatives out of a total of 60 seats. According to Khawla Yusuf, this has been largely strategic, with ideology dominating decisions: 'there are many qualified women out there who have been side-lined, mostly because they tend to be on the liberal end, and have expectations beyond simply toppling the regime: they want guarantees that women will not be relegated to a secondary status under the new system. Obviously this is not something that some of the more organised opposition groups are comfortable with' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013). Alternatively, if some of the 'traditional opposition groups are unable to accommodate women in their ranks' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013), with creative thinking and planning these issues can be overcome with the establishment of parallel structures that are happy to embrace, encourage and endorse women in their pivotal and potential leadership roles within Syria's political landscape. With a population that is made up of 60 per cent of women, 'any opposition group or interim government that marginalises such a proportion of society cannot be sustainable' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013).

There are, of course, other concerns that go beyond the realm of political representation for many of the women who have been actively involved in the revolution, both for themselves and for all the women of Syria. A large part of this concern stems from the 'Islamist extremism (and incorrect interpretations of Shari'a law) on the rise' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013) among some within the conflict, one explanation of which may be seen to be a result of the escalation in violence and the existential effects of witnessing the tragedies and horrors of war. Complicating things even further is the involvement of foreign players who have their own motivations and whose ultimate objectives are unknown. 'It's very murky now with many radical elements and foreign interests at play' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). In this way 'Syrian women must band together under an umbrella cause of securing their rights in the future' and taking 'a stand against any attempts to subjugate women or deny them their natural human rights' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013). This will involve going beyond the realm of politics alone and ensuring that adequate skills development, training and education are available to women across the spectrum of class and ideology, encouraging independence and critical thinking. This is particularly important given the fact that many women will be, by the end of the conflict, if not already, the 'single breadwinners of their families' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013). Women are

also likely to be those 'at the forefront of children's education and psychosocial support as Syrians attempt to restore what may very well become a "lost" generation – children who have been deeply traumatised by systematic aerial assaults, forced displacement, and loss of loved ones' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013).

What becomes clear upon reflection of the role of women in Syria's revolution is that many of Syria's women have realized that *living within the lie* is no longer possible and certainly not desirable, and as a result have chosen to rebel against the intolerable. At the same time as putting themselves at risk of the atrocities of the regime, these women have confronted both the private and public struggles that have come with their roles and positions within the rebellion, a struggle that will continue post-revolution with a renegotiation of their new identities in the post-conflict period. 'Many women today are quietly leading a revolution within a revolution in order to get greater recognition for their basic rights and aspirations' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013). One thing is for sure: the women involved in Syria's revolution, those who have lost much and risked even more, will not tolerate a return to the way things were. Indeed, they are well on their way to *becoming women*, becoming *Syria's* women. Ultimately, given the suffering so many Syrians have and continue to experience, 'it will be up to the Syrian people to decide how they want their future to look' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013) in order to 'ensure that the Syrians who paid so dearly during the revolution are able to achieve their original goals' (interview with Rafif Jouejati, 2013): 'dignity, freedom, and democracy for all Syrians' (interview with Khawla Yusuf, 2013), which is 'to be pluralistic, vibrant, and representative of Syrian society' (interview with Amal Hanano, 2013).

Notes

1 Sheikh Mouaz Al Khatib, speech at the Conference of Islam and Peace among Syrians. Posted on the Facebook page of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 19 April 2013.
2 For information on the Damascus Spring, see Alan George's work *Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom* (George 2003).
3 For a biography of those interviewed, see 'Biographies of Interviewees' (opposite page).
4 All those involved in the peaceful protest were detained by the regime.
5 According to Lina Sinjab, in a talk given at the University of St Andrews on 11 October 2013, these boys were, in fact, reacting to the regime's detainment of their female teacher who expressed support of the fall of Hosni Mubarak.
6 Speech of Sheikh Mouaz Al Khatib at the conference on Islam and Transitional Justice Conference, posted on his own Facebook page, 17 April 2013.
7 Husband of activist Amina Ahmed Abd' quoted in Giglio (2012).
8 Incidentally, Al Bayda came under attack in early May 2013, eliminating nearly all of those who remained in the village, numbering into the hundreds.
9 For a link to the video of this protest, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=WsJSu88ylEY.
10 All those involved in the peaceful protest were detained by the regime.
11 George Sabra, Speech at the Support Homs Conference in Turkey, Posted on the Facebook page of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 29 April 2013.
12 Of course, it must be noted that as the conflict progresses the ability of women to move about so freely has decreased significantly.

Biographies of interviewees

Amal Hanano: correspondence 17 April 2013. Amal Hanano is a pseudonym for a Syrian writer and blogger from Aleppo, based in America. She is also an associate editor of *Syria Deeply*.

Amal Hanano has published over 50 articles on the Syrian revolution since 2011 in *Foreign Policy*, *The National*, *Jadaliyya* and *Syria Deeply*.

Hala K.: correspondence 26 March 2013. Hala K. is a pseudonym for a Syrian currently living in America but whose family still live in Syria.

Khawla Yusuf: correspondence 16 April 2013. Khawla Yusuf is a Syrian pro-democracy activist dedicated to democracy promotion in the broader Middle East and North Africa region. She is also co-founder of the Tharwa Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC.

Mediya Daghstani: correspondence 19 April 2013. Mediya Daghstani is a housewife turned activist early in the revolution who later established the media organization Basma in July 2012, which is a Syrian media and production entity based in Istanbul.

Mona Kareem: correspondence 26 March 2013. Mona Kareem is a writer and journalist who published two poetry collections at the age of 14 and 16. She has a BA degree in English Language and Comparative Literature from the American University of Kuwait and is currently undergoing her PhD in Comparative Literature at Binghamton University, New York. Mona is the founder of BedoonRights.org and also writes on her own blog, monakareem.blogspot.com.

M. J. Lynn: correspondence 27 March 2013. M. J. Lynn is the pseudonym for a Syrian student who is currently based in Jordan but whose family still lives in Syria.

Ola Rifai: correspondence 10 April 2013. Ola Rifai received her BA in Journalism from the University of Damascus, Syria, in 2006. She worked as a freelance reporter/photojournalist for the Associated Press in Damascus. She also worked for the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, where she produced several articles and videos concerning Syria's politics. She then obtained her MA in International Politics from City University in London in 2011. Currently, Ola is pursuing her MPhil in International Relations at the University of St Andrews.

Rafif Jouejati: correspondence 19 April 2013. Rafif Jouejati is the English spokeswoman for the Local Coordinating Committees in Syria, a network of Syrian activists. She is also the director of FREE-Syria, a non-profit humanitarian organization that focuses on women's empowerment, and a member of the Day after Project, which is developing a transition plan for Syria post-Assad.

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22

Tunisia's Women

Partners in Revolution

Andrea Khalil

Introduction

Women's presence in group struggles, revolutionary crowds and anti-colonial wars across the Middle East and North Africa has long shaped the historical development of the region. The importance of women in social change was recognized with the awarding of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to Yemeni Arab Spring activist Tawakkol Karman. This chapter focuses on the participation of women in the Tunisian revolution as a rare moment of gender equality in which women's rights were secondary to the primordial concern for collective equality and freedom for all citizens. The gender politics of the former regime, its brand of 'state feminism', was not the sole target of popular opposition to the government. The way in which the state had historically 'gendered' its brand of secular modernism, an ideology that was used to gain and maintain power, was deconstructed in the gender-neutral crowds and subsequently came under scrutiny in the wake of the revolution. If the revolution aimed to ensure equality, justice and dignity for all Tunisians, including women, the post-revolutionary period began a transition process where national reconsolidation effectively reconsidered how the regime had 'gendered' society and politics. Valentine Moghadam's assertions about the gendered character of political and social change in the region could be noted here:

> Change in women's social positions has come about through a combination of long-term macrolevel processes-notably industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, the demographic transition, globalization- and forms of collective actions that include national liberation movements, revolutions, and social movements. At the same time, such processes have been gendered, in that men and women have different roles, experiences, and outcomes, while concepts of masculinity and femininity have infused a range of political processes and policies.
>
> *(Moghadam 2013: 1)*

Broadly speaking, social change has affected women's rights in Tunisia in ways that have been largely beneficial to Tunisian women, and the 2011 revolution is a continuation

of that long-term process. However, the revolution ushered in a period of intense political competition between secular and Islamist social projects where debates about gender were central, and this new political field rife with debates about gender has at times come great at peril to women in new forms of exploitation ranging from political exclusion, discursive violence and physical violence against women. The post-revolution period restored the Third World nationalist discourse of the new nation being ushered in by women (Shohat 1997). Yet, it also repeated the failures of Third World nationalist ideals that suture together gender, religious and national liberation. In this chapter, I address the uncanny and restorative gendering of the post-revolutionary transitional governments, electoral activism and party politics.

The particularity of gender activism in the post-revolutionary period in Tunisia was the visible and widespread mobilization of Islamist women, or *islamiyyat*, mostly those affiliated with the Al-Nahdha party. Vigorous Islamist gender activism during the electoral period after the revolution, however, did not signal a break with the past. It was part of a restoration of Islamist women's political activism that was increasingly dynamic throughout the region since the 1980s. What was new after the Tunisian revolution was how Islamist gender activism shifted from the position of opposition to an emergent form of political centrality. This new centrality of Islamist gender activism ushered in the diversification of voices about women's rights which reinvigorated the familiar, polarized secular/Islamist debate. Secular feminists were also organized and mobilized after the revolution. However, their brand of 'feminism' was largely rejected by women in rural communities because of association with the Bin Ali state. The political parties with which leftist feminists were generally affiliated (within the Modern Democratic Pole, or PDM) did not lead successful campaigns among poor, grassroots communities and rural women to the extent that Al-Nahdha groups did. These two opposing contingents of female, gender activists (secularists and the *islamiyyat*) were not allied but rather were adversaries and competitors in the newly opened political field.

Women in the political field

The diversification of voices on 'gender activism' reflects the social dynamics of crowd uprisings. Moments of revolutionary uprising momentarily suspend and subvert binary structures of masculine/feminine, public/private, etc. that constituted the hierarchies of dictatorship. As I explore elsewhere, when political crowds are diverse and inclusive, they deconstruct state-imposed binaries. They are fleeting events that open a liminal space outside the polarizing oppositions such as individual/crowd, secular/Islamist, civilization/barbarity and masculine/feminine (Khalil 2014). Structuralist theories of subjectivity and structural political ideologies that oppose the individual subject to a crowded collectivity are suspended by the crowd. Subjectivities (in/as crowds) are constituted by an already collective and crowded discursive terrain. The deconstructive dynamics of crowds explains the power to move beyond gendered hierarchies in moments of social progress and collective liberation. Crowd participation, according to those interviewed for this study, was part of a struggle for collective political enfranchisement beyond gender politics. The women interviewed here emphasized their common, collective goals beyond particularistic gender identities.

Women's participation in crowds of the 2011 revolutions testified to their commitment to collective social justice. Women's activism in the Tunisian revolution buttresses the observation that women:

> take the initiative in the struggle and … forge a new relationship between the individual and the collective. This relationship is premised on care for each other and on the hope for survival for oneself and by extension for the society as a whole. *(Cooke 1995: 21)*

This longstanding commitment to 'society as a whole' resonates with comments made by women of the Tunisian and Libyan revolutions, many of whom explained in interviews that their activism was motivated by a concern for the freedom of all citizens and human rights, and Muslim rights, the rights of the economically exploited and excluded, not just women's rights. Struggles for gender equality in society, women asserted, were subordinate to larger, collective goals of human dignity and freedom. This conviction was widely expressed by women of both secularist and religious/Islamist positions.

Women's participation in the Tunisian revolution

In the case of Tunisia, testimonies, photos and videos circulated on Facebook, Twitter and blogs documenting women's active participation in the demonstrations and crowds of 2010 and 2011. Photos illustrated that working and professional women were part of the street crowds of the revolution. During the lawyers' strike, female lawyers and women of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) stood side by side with their male counterparts in the street. Rural women also participated in uprisings in the Tunisian countryside, according to accounts from outside Tunis (interview with Wafi, 17 August 2011; interview with Haddad, 31 December 2011). Women across the regions shared in the suffering and bloodletting prompted by the government's crackdown. Many women spoke publicly about their children's death at the hands of government security forces during the uprising. One of many public forums that took place was organized by the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Thela, Kasserine province, on 23 July 2011. At this forum, a group of women testified to their experiences as mothers of those shot by the security forces during the Tunisian revolution. In one testimony of collective consciousness presented by these women, a mother stated that she considered her son, killed by the security forces, to be a son of all the Tunisian people.

Images showed women being held on the shoulders of men during the demonstrations in Tunis. Indeed, by all accounts, the participation of women in the crowds of the Tunisian revolution occurred on a basis of gender equality. The women of the Tunisian revolution were not only present throughout Tunisia between 17 December 2011 and 14 January 2011, but also during the critical 'aftershock' protests of Kasbah I (23 January–8 January 2011) and Kasbah II (20 February–4 March 2011).

In addition to the presence of women in the streets and in the crowds of the revolution, female bloggers also played an important role. Activist bloggers such as Lina Ben Mhenni, in her blog 'ATunisian Girl', have long advocated for the freedom of all Tunisians and spoke out against the repression of speech by the dictatorship. During the revolution, Ben Mhenni blogged from Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid, the regions where the revolution began and actively contributed to the national spreading of the movement by her online documentation. She affirmed: 'I always wrote to try to change things in my country. My causes ranged from the struggle against censorship on the Internet to support for students, journalists and bloggers imprisoned for their political and union activities' (Ben Mhenni 2011: 120). There was consensus among those Islamist and secularist women interviewed that not just women, but also all Tunisians, were

oppressed by the dictatorship, and that women's involvement was aimed at universal freedom not women's rights in particular.

Other female bloggers also formed an active part of the cyber activism and media contagion that sparked the revolution. Emna Ben Jemaa's criticism of the Bin Ali regime in her blog led to her arrest and detention for participating in an anti-censorship demonstration in May 2010 as part of the 'AMMAR 404' campaign, the code name for censorship. She testified that she fought not for the freedom of women *per se*, but for freedom of expression for all Tunisians (interview with Ben Jemaa, 20 August 2011). Blogger Neila Kilani, who participated in the Kasbah I movement, explained that she engaged in online activism for collective rights and in favour of 'Tunisian secularism' (interview with Kilani, 16 August 2011). Female Tunisian bloggers posted images of state violence seen in the Tunisian capital and around the world.

Female Al-Nahdha a members made statements similar to those made by self-proclaimed 'secularist' women bloggers about women's involvement in the liberation of the country. During an interview in mid 2011, practising lawyer and current member of the Constituent Assembly Farida Labidi stated: 'Under Bin Ali the problem for all Tunisians, not just women, was a lack of freedom. Neither men nor women were free under Bin Ali. So a lack of freedom was not particular to women' (interview with F. Laabidi, 17 August 2011). There was consensus among Islamist and secularist women alike that female involvement in the revolution was not surprising given that, despite the oppression of the dictatorship, Tunisian women had long succeeded in playing a major role in Tunisian economic and social life. Labidi explained that 'women already played a major role in Tunisian society before the revolution and had gained a clear professional competence and have significant legal standing' (interview with F. Laabidi, 17 August 2011).

Many other Tunisian interviewees, both secularists and Islamists, reinforced this position. Another point of consensus among women was the importance of the Family Code (or *majella*, *Code de statut personel*, hereafter CSP). She and other female Al-Nahdha members stated their personal and political commitment to defend the CSP promulgated on 13 August 1956. Labidi elaborated that the party considered the CSP to be of Islamic inspiration and accepted by the Zeituna *ulema* (interview with F. Laabidi, 17 August 2011). The women from Al-Nahdha consistently asserted their party's political agenda of maintaining the CSP and of increasing the role of women in public life. Secularist activists remained incredulous, viewing these claims as part of the Islamists' 'double discourse' in order to garner support for the October elections. Secularist women that were interviewed continued to assert that, despite their claims to support the CSP, Al-Nahdha women actually aimed at returning women to the home, excluding women from the workforce and enforcing Islamist dress. In response to those accusations, and consistent with the Islamist women's perspective since the resurgence of women in Islamist activism of the 1980s, Al-Nahdha women activists proclaimed their goals in favour of women's economic, political and social rights.

For Islamist-identified women, the role of religion in the revolution was a motivational factor. Religion, they described, had a primordial role in their participation in the Tunisian revolution. Islamist women described pushing their family members to revolt against Bin Ali because of the imprisonment suffered by the Islamists. The head of the Al-Nahdha Tunis Women's Committee, Huda Mansouri, said that women whose husbands had been imprisoned or tortured had especially poignant reasons to encourage their children to participate in the revolution (interview with Mansouri, 19 August

2011). Several other Al-Nahdha women did not hesitate to point out that the 30,000 Islamist political prisoners under Bin Ali had families, wives, daughters and sisters on the outside dealing with the repression of the dictatorship. The existence of political prisoners incited Islamist women to encourage their children to topple the regime that unjustly imprisoned their fathers and brothers. According to this restorative narrative, the Tunisian revolution would restore Islamic values and was prompted by Islamist mothers and wives. The 'Arab-Muslim woman', according to this point of view, was the foundation of the Tunisian revolution. These women made the clear point that Islamist women had been especially oppressed by the dictatorship, first as human beings in Tunisia, second as Islamists and third as women. Islamist and Muslim-identified people were oppressed because of their religious practice, and women suffered especially under Bin Ali's secularist policies because of the female Islamic identity made visible by the veil. Under the dictatorship, men and women could only get promoted if they had some direct relation to Bin Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), and because the veil is a visible sign of religiosity, professional women were particularly vulnerable to this form of socio-economic discrimination. Many veiled women recounted having their head scarves pulled off in public by Bin Ali's security forces. Hundreds of women were imprisoned and harassed for being Islamists. When asked about their opinions of the freedoms of women after the revolution, many women expressed a similar sentiment that the revolution was a 'step in the right direction. We now have the freedom to wear the veil' (interview with Mansouri, 19 August 2011; interview with Wafi, 17 August 2011). Freedom from secular authoritarianism was seen as part and parcel of restoring the Islamist goals of freedom, justice and equality, all values inherent to Islam.

The centrality of women in nation-building

How has women's participation in the Tunisian revolution translated into real inclusion in the politics of the new Tunisia? Tahar Haddad's saying 'It is its women who make a nation' points on the one hand to the essential role of women in movements for social change such as the Tunisian revolution of 2011 and the North African nationalist struggles for independence in the 1950s. On the other hand, it is also suggestive of the way in which women, or a woman, can be mobilized as a symbol shaped by politics to advance the nationalist projects of those in power. Valentine Moghadam's thoughts about the importance of women during times of upheaval, war and revolution have re-emerged with renewed clarity in the context of the Tunisian revolution:

> Because of their reproductive capacity, women are seen as transmitters of group values and tradition and as agents of sociability of the young. When group identity becomes intensified, women are elevated to the status symbol of the community and are compelled to assume the burden of the reproduction of the group.
>
> *(Moghadam 1994: 18)*

Post-revolutionary language about women as symbols of national identity in Tunisia resonated with historical antecedents of women as symbols of the nation during the moments of intense nationalist consolidation after independence from France. Scholars have investigated the way in which the concept of nation has historically been gendered as feminine. In her discussion of the way in which the nation-state has been gendered, Suad Joseph discussed how nation-building projects in both European and Middle

Eastern contexts have projected women as national icons. Modernist, secularist-leaning nations such as post-colonial Tunisia used the image of the modern woman to represent that political project. Similarly, writes Joseph, Islamist national identity has made use of the female body: 'Resistance movements, particularly Islamic movements also have used women's bodies and behavior for imagining their political community in opposition to dominant national visions' (Joseph 2000: 6). In the past, Islamist movements defined their views on women based on an oppositional response to accusations among secularists that have caricatured the Islamist position on women as backward and retrograde. After the Tunisian revolution, the Islamist movements were no longer 'resistance movements' but became dominant political parties. This shift to the centre of the political field initiated a process of discursive redefinition of women's rights in terms of Islam and a 'restoration' of women's rights (inherent in Islam), thus moving beyond a reaction to assumptions about the gender politics of Islamist movements. Yet, assumptions about gender in Islamist movements are difficult to overcome as they are deeply rooted in Tunisian politics.

Historically, Tunisia was no exception to the use of women to construct political, nationalist discourses. As Mounira Charrad points out, women's status was critical to the nation-building process after Tunisia's independence from France in 1956. The swiftness with which the CSP was promulgated – only five months after independence from France, and almost a year before the monarchy was outlawed and the Republic of Tunisia was proclaimed – suggests the interconnectedness of Tunisian nation-building processes and the definition of women's legal status (Charrad 2001: 222). Women's advantageous legal status, Charrad argued, was instrumental to the construction of the modern Tunisian state. Freedoms for women contained in the CSP were granted primarily as a logical extension of a nationalist political project that defined itself in opposition to patriarchal tribal and Muslim loyalties. The CSP was part of Bourguiba's reformist political project to de-legitimise kin groupings, where women often had inferior status to men, rather than as part of a vision of the inherent value of the equal rights of women. This image of the modern woman in Tunisia was part and parcel of the larger agenda of setting up a modern, secular nation-state, which aimed to dislocate and uproot tribal and Islamic community loyalties.

In this respect, post-revolutionary Tunisia is at a similar juncture in the sense that the formative process and imagination of the new, post-Bin Ali nation is debated in many instances through the question of women's role in society and on images of women as symbolic of national consolidation. The massive social shift brought about by the revolution ushered in renewed interrogation of the reformist principles upon which the CSP was built. The politics of secular reformism, now discredited by the revolution, which were behind the crafting of the CSP, were replaced by a political hegemony dominated by Islamist-leaning political actors. Thus, although all of the women interviewed in this research (representing a wide range of ideological perspectives) maintained the continued validity of the CSP, there was vigorous debate about its underlying principles. This debate was evident in interviews and was made most visible on an international scale by competing political tendencies that projected divergent discourses about gender and women.

The centrality of the gender debate in Tunisia's post-revolutionary period is, in this way, a reiteration of the country's nationalist history. After the Tunisian revolution, the verbal and iconographic linkages between women and Tunisian national identity resurfaced, signalling a shift and reconsideration. Two anecdotal examples illustrated the

ways in which images and language were symptomatic of the prominence of women in debates about national identity. A flyer handed out during the post-revolutionary electoral campaign featured a picture of a pregnant woman's belly to encourage people to vote, analogizing the realization of people's dreams for the future Tunisian nation to the birth of a baby. Above the picture of the pregnant belly is an Arabic language text which reads: 'The star of our dreams 14 January: We vote on 23 October'. The 23 October 2011 elections were pictured as a delivery, or a giving birth (Ettajdid party flyer August 2011).[1] In the iconography of this image, the delivery of the revolution is vectored through the female body: through the electoral process, the 'new' Tunisia will be born.

Another example of a new national identity was articulated through women as symbols, which can be seen in a comment made on 13 March 2012 by Minister of Interior Ali Laârayedh. He commented after a young woman removed a Salafi flag from atop a building of the University of Manouba campus, the site of a drawn out controversy involving veiled (*niqabi*) female students. 'Khaoula Rachidi is a symbol of the Tunisian woman', declared the minister of interior during an award ceremony in her honour. The minister's very public praise of her exceptional patriotism was rendered as a form of symbolic participation and re-codified a lexicon of women as symbols of national identity. Women as 'bearers' of the nation recur as a linguistic, symbolic and historical pattern of Woman as part of the formation of Tunisian national identity. Third World nationalist movements, although including women's rights in their agendas, failed to usher in real emancipation for women. In this way, the post-revolution transitional period repeated what Ella Shohat has described as the 'gendered limitations of Third World nationalisms' (Shohat 1997). Does Arab Spring 'nationalism' provide a real opportunity for women's rights or does it restore an uncannily similar gender failure of Third World nationalism of the 1950s and1960s?

Bin Ali's image of Tunisian woman

During the dictatorship, the image of the modern Tunisian woman was embodied in the persona of Leila Tarabulsi, the wife of Bin Ali. Both during the revolution and in the post-revolutionary period, there was evidence of widespread hostility towards the image of woman promoted by Bin Ali. Graffiti against Leila Tarabulsi and signs urging her to get out were widely displayed. Some street performances against Tarabulsi made fun of her hairdressing career. According to transitional Minister of Women's Affairs Lilia Labidi, the ministry under Bin Ali centred its celebration of Women's Day (13 August) around Leila Tarabulsi, instead of being a celebration of all women or certain outstanding female citizens (interview with L. Labidi, 22 March 2012). Women's Day celebrations were held at Leila Tarabulsi's residence and she was offered plaques and awards. This, according to Lilia Labidi, was one of the reasons that the Ministry of Women's Affairs was widely resented by the population at large as well as by the employees of the ministry itself (interview with L. Labidi, 22 March 2012). According to my interviewees, Tarabulsi's image was as offensive to Muslim-oriented women because it marginalized their religious identification as it was to 'liberal' women because Tarabulsi lacked any real cultural and intellectual attainments with which they could identify.

Bin Ali's regime produced an image of women, which, although buttressed by favourable statistics and a progressive discourse of 'liberation' inherited from the

Bourguiba project, actually instrumentalized and politicized the female body and feminist movements in Tunisia for the purposes of maintaining political power. In the early 1990s, for example, Bin Ali used the CSP to mobilize both autonomous and state-affiliated feminist organizations against the Islamist political opposition. According to one observer, 'Part of Bin Ali's efforts to consolidate power and cripple the Islamist opposition involved rallying women against the threat of retrograde changes in the Personal Status Code that would likely result from the increased political power of an-Nahdha' (Gilman 2007: 109–210). In this way, Bin Ali used the Tunisian women's legal status for political reasons, to garner national and international support and to demonize the Islamist social forces of Tunisia.

Women in post-revolutionary politics

During the months after 14 January, it became clear that the role of women in society continued to be pivotal in debates about Tunisian national identity. It also became clear that the state itself was being discursively gendered as masculine and, despite the rival groups of gender activists, largely excluded women from political participation in the state. It was a historical moment where 'women, at times, have been caught between the conflicting demands of nation-building and state-building projects' (Joseph 2000: 7). Tunisian women, although partners in the revolution, were in the minority in the reconsolidation of state institutions after the dictatorship. This exclusion from state-building, however, must be seen against the trends of Tunisian women's high share in Parliament. After the 23 October elections, there were 49 women in the Constituent Assembly, out of a total of 217 seats – in other words, 24 per cent of the Constituent Assembly seats were occupied by women, higher than the 17 per cent in the then current (112th) US Congress. It should also be noted that of the 89 seats won by the Al-Nahdha party, 42 went to women (Ajmi 2011), among them Farida Labidi and Souad Abderrahim, the head of Al-Nahdha's Women's Committee.

This high percentage of women in parliament was consistent with Tunisia's pre-revolutionary record. Tunisia had long boasted impressive numbers of women in parliament, impressive both at the regional and global levels. In 2010, the female share of parliamentary seats in Tunisia had reached 28 per cent (Moghadam 2013: 7). These impressive statistics, however, concealed a form of 'state feminism' that effectively marginalized poor, rural and Islamist women, and according to many was not part of a feminist agenda at all. Leaning on these high figures of women's presence in Parliament to gain legitimacy, the Bin Ali regime maintained that it promoted female liberation as part of its public image on the world stage. A conference entitled 'Women in Arab Parliaments: Representation and Incorporation of a Gender Perspective' was scheduled to take place in Tunis on 24–26 January 2011. According to the flyer, 'Her Excellency Ms. Leila Bin Ali, President of the Arab Women's Organization' organized the conference. The flyer provided statistics on female parliamentary participation, and cited world averages at 19.2 per cent, and in the Arab region 10.5 per cent (Inter-parliamentary Union 2010). Yet these statistics eclipsed the reality of a 'state feminism' that neglected real women, poor women and women outside the power circle of Tunis and the RCD. The history of 'state feminism's' exclusion of marginal women was replicated in the transitional government. There were only three female appointments at the ministerial level in the transitional governments and two were quick to resign. Faouzia Charfi, the secretary of state to the minister of higher education, resigned from

the second Essebsi government on 28 January 2011. Habiba Ezzahi Ben Romdane, minister of public health, resigned as well on 1 July 2011 (Mfarej 2011: 11). Only Lilia Labidi, the transitional minister of women's affairs, stayed in her position during the entire transitional period. Labidi explained that before and after the revolution, the Tunisian state's marginalization of women was institutionalized through ministerial hierarchies. According to Labidi, women were appointed to the weakest government ministries, and the Ministry of Women was the least powerful of them all. The Ministry of Women's Affairs had the smallest budget and suffered from poor organization and professional incompetence. In addition, outcomes were low due to the lack of experts, professionals and the absence of feminist-oriented personnel. During the transitional period and during her tenure there, the minister embarked on several initiatives to raise awareness about the lives of women, children and the elderly, and she often focused on the realities and negative effects of domestic violence. Labidi observed that the personnel lacked informed and committed professionals and that most were purely political appointees. Having worked with the staff appointed under the Bin Ali regime, she perceived widespread unprofessionalism and indifference regarding improving women's lives. For example, the director of the file on 'Rural Women' had not obtained a high school diploma and rejected the idea of organizing field trips to rural areas of Tunisia. It was clear, according to Labidi, that Bin Ali 'took the feminist discourse without including the feminists', a trend that continued after the revolution (interview with L. Labidi, 22 March 2012). The 'state feminism' of Bin Ali's regime amounted to an ideological, secularist language that failed to carry out policies to help Tunisian women, especially rural and poor women.

Women in party politics

Before the revolution, there were few prominent women in party politics, which was heavily dominated by the RCD. Maya Jribi was an exception, having participated with Nejib Chebbi in the creation of the PDP in 1983. Jribi was the first woman to lead a political party in Tunisia, when she was elected secretary general in 2006. Of the 107 parties legalized on 30 August 2011, only three were led by women: 'the party of Social Center directed by Salma Ammar, Afek Tunis by Emna Menif (co-directed by Mohamed Louzir), and the Movement of Democratic Edification and Reform by Emna Mansour Karoui' (Mfarej 2011: 14).

There was overwhelming consensus among women with both Islamist and secularist convictions that women have been virtually absent from the transitional government, de-prioritized in political parties, and virtually absent from the media. With respect to women's participation in political parties, women gained a symbolic victory after the 2011 revolution with the passing of the Loi de Parité, the Law of Gender Parity. The internationally lauded Loi de Parité, approved on 11 April 2011, required that the political parties registered for the October 2011 elections have equal gender representation, alternating between male and female candidates on their lists (the so-called 'zipper rule'). It was evident, however, that women were generally not placed at the head of the political party lists but were listed in second place. Only the PDM, a political coalition including several leftist parties, featured a significant number of women at the head of their lists. The victory of Al-Nahdha, with only 3 per cent of women (or one woman) as head of the list shows to what extent the gender question had been critical to debates over national identity but were put in second place in the real stakes

of state-building. The paltry number of women as heads of lists made women's representation in the National Assembly effectively weak in all cases with the exception of Al-Nahdha who gained more than one (the first) person on their electoral lists. Of the 49 women in the National Assembly, 42 were from Al-Nahdha. According to many, the transitional government itself did not follow the ideal behind the Loi de Parité. As journalist Azza Turki points out, the interim government did not provide a good example for political parties to implement and respect this new law since there were only one or two female ministers in the transitional government (interview with Turki, 20 August 2011). Al-Nahdha's electoral victory suggests that despite the prominence of debates about women's role in society, the social project of a restored religious identity was more important to voters.

Women in the four 'high commissions' after the revolution

The gender-neutral crowds of the revolution were followed by a gendered political process during the transitional period. In contrast to the numbers of women who participated in the revolution, women were in the minority in the post-revolutionary transition's 'high commissions'. Four 'exceptional' or transitional commissions were set up after the revolution. The largest was the High Commission for the Realization of the Objectives of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition. This commission was divided into two committees: the Expert Committee and the Committee of Representatives of Political Parties, Neglected Regions, Martyrs, and NGOs. The former had 6 female members out of 18, and the latter committee had 36 women out of a total membership of 155. Second was the National Commission for the Establishment of the Facts about Corruption. This commission was also divided into two committees. The Technical Committee had 2 women out of 11 members, and the General Committee had no women members. Third, the Commission to Establish the Abuses and Violations against the Population since 17 December 2010 was set up to deal with human rights violations during the revolution. On this commission there were 9 women out of 15 members, representing a majority. Fourth, the High Commission for the Elections, featured 2 women out of a total membership of 13 (Mfarej 2011: 18–19). Journalism professor Fathia Saidi interpreted the relatively low membership of women on these post-revolutionary commissions as a result of the masculine gendering of post-revolution politics (interview with Saidi, 17 August 2011). The Loi de Parité, Saidi said, was a 'transitional strategy to give women a chance to gain access to the political sphere' but the law did not succeed in guaranteeing women's participation in politics (interview with Saidi, 17 August 2011). Saidi noted that women were fleeing politics (in the interim period) and finding refuge in associations, which have a higher percentage of women.

During the transitional period, many women expressed concerns about female participation, including Boshra BelHaj Hamida, a lawyer and a former president of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD). It was her opinion that since the revolution, women had been virtually excluded from political institutions, both in the transitional government and the political parties. Hamida argued that, although women struggled side by side with men to oust the Bin Ali regime, they had not gained the right to serve in public and political positions. With regard to the Loi de Parité, she said that even if the law was accepted by most of the members of the High Commission, it was not accepted by consensus, nor was it being implemented in reality. The

detractors of the Loi de Parité, Hamida explained, argued that it was degrading for women to be admitted by quota legislation to public and political life, and that they should strive to achieve this admission through merit and competence. She concluded that in the post-revolutionary period women had been prevented from entering into political parties at a high level because 'the hopes have never been so high in Tunisia and the egos of political actors have never been bigger, and there is a sense that women are additional and unwanted rivals in the political field' (interview with Hamida, 16 August 2011). Hamida stated that the only woman in a political position in the transitional government, Lilia Labidi, the minister of women's affairs, was not a popular choice of the ATFD but was placed in that position despite their objections, indicating divisions within groups of gender activists. The ATFD's dissatisfaction with the only woman in the transitional government was echoed by journalist Azza Turki, who noted the failure of the transitional minister of women's affairs to use her platform to make high-profile or symbolic gestures in favour of women. Turki argued that the minister could have made public statements in favour of lifting Tunisia's reservations with regard to the 1979 United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). According to Turki, the minister made no major statements, provided no feminist leadership and had failed to generate significant media attention for women. A draft resolution for the lifting of Tunisia's reservations on the CEDAW was voted in on 16 August 2011, four days before that interview took place. However, Turki clearly did not credit the Ministry of Women's Affairs with this achievement.

Women in the media

Following the revolution, women's absence from the media formed part of a broader, institutionalized marginalization of women from the public sphere. Women on both sides of the 'Islamist/leftist' divide agreed that although women were active in the revolution, they were almost entirely absent from the media's public debate about politics and society during the transitional period. According to preliminary statistics gathered by the media-watch activities of the ATFD, the percentages of women in the media remained low: 10 per cent on the radio and television and only 2 per cent in the print media (Mfarej 2011: 7). Media studies professor Fathia Saidi associated the lack of women's presence in the media with the political marginalisation of women (interview with Saidi, 17 August 2011). Saidi said that only two women, Bochra Belhadj Hamida and Selwa Sharfi, appeared on TV on 13 January to analyse the situation in Tunisia, but since the revolution of 14 January, women were absent from television and print media.

Farida Labidi gave a similar account, adding that veiled and Islamist women in particular were absent from the media. In contrast to the few unveiled women on television during the transitional period, she explained, veiled women were not seen on television shows nor were they present in the print media. When women did appear, they were neither veiled nor from the Islamist parties. According to her, the interim government and the dominant classes that controlled the media had inherited and were continuing in the tradition of Bin Ali's anti-Islamist ideology. Interestingly, Fathia Saidi and Farida Labidi appeared in a debate on BBC Arabic about the role of women in the Tunisian revolution that aired on 22 August 2011, but it was not broadcast on Tunisian television. The situation where women played a key role in the revolution, and were

vigorous campaigners, restores a paradox of women being side-lined in the public and political discussions of the transitional period (when the reconsolidation of power was taking place). This paradox of women's presence/absence in transitional politics was consistent with the hypothesis that 'although the forms of patriarchy have differed and changed, the discursive linkage of woman/mother to nation (and man/father to state) has reinforced the reproduction of gendered hierarchy, facilitating the institutionalization of gendered citizenship in state-building projects' (Joseph 2000: 7).

Women in rural areas

Exclusion from politics was even more pronounced for women in rural areas, since regions outside Tunis had historically been isolated by Bourguiba's and Bin Ali's Tunis-based politics. In the interviews conducted with dozens of women from the regions of Kasserine and Tataouine, many women expressed their feelings of exclusion from the legal and social gains enjoyed by Tunisia's urban women. Due to the entrenched and institutionalized marginalization of rural Tunisia and class differences between them, the concerns of women outside Tunis differed from the concerns of women located in the capital. Suffering from poverty and a lack of infrastructure, rural women in Tataouine perceived the comments of urban-based women as provocative, bourgeois and irrelevant (interview with Zrizer, 1 January 2012). Journalist Azza Turki explained that mistrust was founded in class differences. Turki stated that 'the feminist discourse that is being propagated by the leftist women (ATFD and others) is perceived as bourgeois in its private preoccupations in a time of great distress and problems' (interview with Turki, 20 August 2011).

This was an indication of how Islamist notions of collectivity (as opposed to the individualism of secularists) were shifting into the centre of the public sphere. In the Tunisian south, women voiced disagreement with the ATFD not only because their discourse did not represent Muslim women, but also because of a broader mistrust of Tunis-based privilege that left the regions outside the capital in a state of economic neglect and isolation. Women from other rural regions as in Thela in Kasserine province also expressed this sentiment. Women there voiced their rejection of the interim government and any Tunis-affiliated political entity. The people of Kasserine, these women said, remained socially isolated and received no financial relief from the transitional government. Miriam Zrizer of Tataouine explained: 'Women in the north can do everything, drive, divorce, work, etc. But in the south they just stay home and work with the children' (interview with Zrizer, 1 January 2012). In the countryside, where witnesses attested to some participation of women and girls in the revolutionary protests, there was a general resistance to women and girls participating in public life, debates and associative life. Many women stated that men and women of their region considered the public and political sphere to be a masculine space. These rural areas were more conservative about gendering than urban Islamist women. In the case of the female-run En-Nour Association of Tataouine, three of the seven founding members (all women) were forced to quit because of family pressures. Likewise, Jazia Najah of Tataouine expressed the specificity of the condition of southern women, in contrast to women in the north. She stated that the tribal mentality of the region 'erased' women. The southern woman was 'crushed by the weight of others' (interview with Najah, 5 January 2012). Interviews with women in rural areas consistently showed their awareness

that their lives were governed by a different set of conventions and opportunities than women in Tunis.

The role of women in the future of Tunisian politics

During interviews with women throughout the transitional period, both Muslim-identified and secularist women advocated for women's participation in the public affairs of the new Tunisian state. The predominance of Al-Nahdha women on the National Constituent Assembly was foreseeable in the pre-electoral period, when women played a major part in the party's mobilization activities. During the pre-electoral campaign the Al-Nahdha party's headquarters has a large percentage of female staff, and women were intensely engaged, mobilized and organized in the electoral campaign. In addition to Farida Labidi's presence on the political bureau of the party, the party was campaigning via 240 Women's Committees in Tunisia's 24 *wilayat*, with 320 women acting as heads of these committees. In this respect, Al-Nahdha's party organization was more effective than the other political parties in their mobilization and inclusion of women in the post-revolution, pre-election period. Nevertheless, the party put only one woman, Suad Abderrahim, as their 'head of list'. This interim pre-election period in Tunisia was a time of intense Islamist women's activism especially by Al-Nahdha members, and marks a continuation of Islamist women's political involvement throughout the region since the mid 1980s.

Conclusion

Three conclusions can be drawn. First, the discussion of women's status after the revolution was largely embedded within an ideological debate between 'Islamist' and 'secularist' discourses. Clearly, the two discourses were based on fundamentally different frames of reference. The religious discourse on women's rights looked towards Islam as its source, which treated women and men differently. The secularists, on the other hand, mobilized a discourse based on universal human rights, according to which all humans have the same rights regardless of their gender. Islamist gender activists repeatedly stated that their agenda did not contradict the principles of human rights, the values of human dignity, the principles of tolerance, economic and social justice, and the moral codes of fair political conduct in as much as they were grounded in the doctrines and teachings of Islam. Their enmity to feminist and human rights discourses was due to the way in which those agendas were imposed through Western-backed 'democracy promotion' that usually meant support for authoritarian, secular rulers. Gender activists of these two main ideological tendencies remained competitors in the question of women's rights.

Second, during this part of the Tunisian transitional period, many urban women from both sides of this Islamist/secularist ideological divide repeatedly articulated shared objectives. Epistemological differences (between Islamists and secular leftists) did not preclude women's common struggle against authoritarianism. Urban Tunisian women on both sides expressed common goals: preservation of the Personal Status Code, freedom in dress and religious worship, increased participation of women in political and public life, and freedom for all Tunisians. However, because of the ideological differences, many women did not acknowledge this overlap in real objectives. The quarrel was not about the presence of women in politics, but rather the ideological

difference between an Islamic versus a universalist, human rights reference. Yet, in the absence of any progress towards a deeper understanding of shared values or compromise between discourses of Islamism and human rights, this polarization only threatens to become increasingly contentious and unproductive for the advancement of women's rights.

Third is a more significant stumbling block for the advancement of gender equality in Tunisia. A continued rural/urban, poor/elite class divide inherited from the post-colonial regimes produces a split between Tunisians of the two socio-political classes. The gendered aspect of this class divide was manifest in Bin Ali's state feminism that was radically slanted in favour of urban and power-privileged women and advanced a policy that neglected rural and poor Tunisian women. According to my interviews after the revolution, women in the rural areas of Kasserine and Tataouine perceived themselves as on the 'other side', or excluded from the rights accorded to Tunisian women in positions of urban privilege. The potential for bridges between rural women and Al-Nahdha women activists, with whom many women expressed a shared Muslim referent, was weakened by a deep mistrust of party politics centralized in Tunis and perceived as elitist. The exclusion of rural and poor women (and men) from a human rights agenda, from rights enjoyed by urban and upper class women (and men), remains the major obstacle to the advancement of women's rights in Tunisia.

Notes

I would like to thank the *Journal of North African Studies* for permission to reproduce this article, originally published in volume 19, issue 2.

1 This is a flyer made by the Ettajdid party which I picked up at a rally for the PDP (Modernist Democratic Pole) in August 2011.

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Part V

Arab Spring

Breakdown of the Old Social Compact

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23

Breakdown of the Authoritarian 'Social Contract' and Emergence of New Social Actors

An Ongoing Process?

Lahcen Achy

The pillars of the authoritarian regimes

Authoritarian regimes in the Arab region have survived over decades in which democratic waves have rolled across different regions. Such regimes have relied on two pillars: redistributive policies, and the politics of fear and repression.

Redistributive policies

Economic and social policies in the Arab region have been utilized to channel benefits to loyal supporters. In the first era of the authoritarian bargain (before the 1980s for most countries), policies such as land reform and nationalization of private assets were used to alter the prevailing social balance and to build a new social order in favour of peasants and workers. In order to deliver benefits and secure the loyalty of the educated elite and urban dwellers, regimes set up a large bureaucracy.

In the second era, with structural adjustment programmes and market reforms, the terms of the bargain were dramatically affected. Liberal policies slashed or phased out most of the benefits and restricted access to public jobs. Authoritarian regimes started to lose their legitimacy within their traditional supporters, mainly landless and small-sized farmers, public-sector employees and poor and middle-class households. The regimes gradually shifted their social base to a minority of influential business elite and built new networks of patronage through privatization and other large private-sector-friendly policies. By doing so the regimes achieved two goals. First, they created a new social coalition as a counterweight to their traditional supporters hit by market reforms. Second, they avoided any potential threat that an autonomous business community may represent for the stability of an authoritarian state. The regimes in the Arab region managed to form a loyal elite made of private-sector capitalists, landed elites, the military officer corps and top state officials (King 2009).

Politics of fear and repression

The authoritarian social contract faced opposition, from its early days, and was challenged by those who refused to trade freedom for bread or by the crowds who occasionally took to the streets to express their anger and dissatisfaction. The regimes co-opted or harshly repressed dissidents and potential rivals. Sporadically, the regimes granted some degree of freedom and political rights as a security valve to avert a radical uprising and to secure their survival. Frequently, the authoritarian rulers implemented legal means of repression through 'emergency laws', and restricted people's freedom of expression, assembly, movement and residence. They also resorted to massive and disproportionate use of force and violence against bread riots and peaceful protesters, as well as arbitrary arrests, cruel torture and widespread intimidation.[1]

The dismantling the authoritarian regimes

Beyond the toppling of the authoritarian rulers or formally introducing constitutional reforms, the shift towards a new state–citizen relationship cannot occur without pulling apart the foundations of the authoritarian bargain. The latter relies on a strong network of alliances entrenched in the business sector and within a wide range of state institutions including the security sector, the bureaucracy, the media and the judiciary. It also relies on high-profile corruption, the abuse of position and the embezzlement of public money. So far, too few of the fundamentals of social and economic pillars of the authoritarian bargain have been contested effectively and there is little down the road that ensures that the ongoing transitions are reaching crucial institutions or setting the scene for a new social order.

The resilience of the repressive apparatus

A key pillar of the Arab Authoritarian Bargain Model (ABM) is repression, which is administered by the security sector. The latter refers to the police, the intelligence services, the military and paramilitary forces and government agencies in charge of them (Chutter 2006). The reasons behind the security sector development, the various bodies' position, their institutional interactions and the general apparatus architecture are issues that lie at the heart of the political and social decision-making process (Saaf 2012).

Authoritarian regimes in the Arab region used the security sector to ensure people's safety and security, as a repressive apparatus and as an extension to their executive power to repress domestic political opponents. Such patterns persist even when political leaders in some of the countries are now showing a willingness to tolerate more open political expression and civic participation. The disconnection between political openings and the behaviour of security personnel trained to prevent change and to oppress all forms of opposition stand as an obstacle to change.

The process of transition in Tunisia was hampered by the police resorting to excessive force against continuing protests, delays in adopting decisive reforms towards a more independent judiciary, and challenges to freedom of expression that the interim government did not properly address (Human Rights Watch 2012).

The military's involvement in the economy also represents a barrier towards a different social model. The Egyptian armed forces have their own hospitals, stores and manufacturers. Recently, the military has shifted into electronics services, tourism and

the aviation sectors. Although these activities are legal, they can cause unfair competition to the private sector and it is not clear how much they are subjected to outside audit and transparent accounting, including paying taxes (Sayigh 2007).

The status of Egypt's governors is also revealing of the military's hegemony. More than half of Egypt's governors come from the military or the police (Said and Bakry 2011). Some military officers were routinely deployed to ministries, government agencies and localities to exercise political control on the Egyptian bureaucracy (Said 2007). Most of the new governors appointed by the Military Council on 14 April 2011 were chosen from the military and the police (*Almasry Alyoum* 2011).

In Morocco and Tunisia, the army is not a major economic actor. But the origin of the security-sector personnel's wealth remains highly opaque. In Morocco, officers have been granted certain privileges and material advantages, thereby making them more influential. This includes facilitating the acquisition of permits for sand pits, marble quarries, fishing concessions and exceptional bank loans (Saaf 2012).

Parliaments in some of the countries in the region are formally vested with overseeing the powers of the military and security sectors; however, in reality, these parliaments have little effect. The Equity and Rehabilitation Entity (IER) created in Morocco to investigate the state's human right violations under the former monarch requested in its 2006 final report that statutory provisions on the duties, organization, decision-making processes, modes of operation and system of monitoring and evaluation of all Morocco's security and intelligence services be clarified and made public. This recommendation has received no follow-up since then.

A real shift away from the authoritarian social contract requires changing the security system's culture and reforming all components of the security sector. Security forces should become accountable to elected civilian authorities, and comply with the same principles of financial management and transparency as the non-security sectors. Such a shift would also need to build capacity within civilian government and civil society in order to engage in effective debate (Sayigh 2007).

Corruption and rent-seeking

Corruption and cronyism can be broadly defined as the abuse of state power in issuing laws, decrees and regulations that would allocate public assets or ensure favoured market positions to a politically selected few (Adly 2011). Cronyism may not be illegal and usually takes subtle forms of close ties between the state and big businesses. It favours few cronies over all other market actors in clear violation of free market competition. Crony capitalism and corruption have frequently been underlined as major sources of discontent and have fuelled uprisings in the region.

In Tunisia, the investment code under Law 120–93 and its multiple amendments each year costs the equivalent of 2.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), or 11 per cent of the state's fiscal revenues (Ghazouani 2011) without effectively stimulating private investment. By discriminating between enterprises on the basis of their characteristics, such as size, economic sector, location and export orientation, the investment code in Tunisia has granted significant discretionary power to bureaucracy and generated large misallocation of state resources (Achy 2011).

In Egypt, for instance, three main segments benefited extensively from corruption and cronyism. The first is high-echelon officials and their families. The second segment has been made up of businessmen and business families who could establish mega

enterprises operating in diversified sectors. The third segment consisted mainly of foreign and Arab capital that could get involved in the domestic networks of corruption and cronyism through bribery of officials or partnership with local cronies.

The elected governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco – led by the Islamist parties of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Al-Nahda party and the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), respectively – highlighted in their electoral platforms the urgent need to fight corruption and rents, to revamp state incentives to the business sectors and to introduce more transparency in public procurements. In Tunisia, Al-Nahda's platform pledges the establishment of a high commission for combating corruption and the adoption of disclosure policies for senior officials' assets (Saif and Abu Rumman 2012). Morocco's PJD has emphasized that the party's first priority is 'fighting corruption', and the phrase 'good governance' has frequently been touted as a party slogan. The party has also expressed considerable interest in improving Morocco's standing in global economic indices, including Transparency International's Index.

The results so far, however, have fallen dramatically short of expectations. A recent report published by Transparency International (June 2013) shows that the situation has worsened in the region since the end of 2010.

A national commission investigating corruption and wrongdoings was established in the weeks after Bin Ali's overthrow, and included public accountants and legal specialists in administrative and real estate laws. The commission examined some 5000 complaints and released its first report in November 2011. The report revealed a vast system of structured corruption by which the Bin Ali in-laws and their cronies put their hands on the most lucrative businesses, extended their ownership to public land and escaped from tax and customs duties (Chayes 2012). The commission has built evidence on 400 cases that it transferred to courts.

Seven months after the commission issued its report, few concrete steps had taken place. The stalemate is partly due to the death of the commission's president in January 2012. A new president was only appointed in May 2012. The commission has over 6000 files to investigate and to refer to the as yet unreformed court system. Parties, both inside and outside the government, refuse to grant the commission too much power and fear that it might abuse its authority to target specific interests. So far, many of those who benefited from corruption remain in power and have influence over ministries in the new government. The head of the commission declared that the main obstacle lies with those people who gained from the old system and their defensive strategy (Aliriza 2012).

Recently, Morocco's head of government declared that it is 'difficult to fight against corruption' and expressed his willingness to pardon corrupt officials on the grounds that bringing to justice corrupt officials can spark chaos in the country. Oddly, the head of government used the Quran to justify his 'new philosophy' to stop fighting corruption. Transparency Maroc (TM), the Moroccan branch of the corruption watchdog Transparency International, emphasized that the PJD head of the government's attitude towards fighting corruption has come as a real shock at a time when Moroccans have been waiting for the government to put an end to all forms of corruption. TM indicated that the head of the government encourages impunity. Yet, the government is not in a position to decide whether to abide by the law when it comes to the embezzlers of public funds. The fight against corruption 'is not an option for the government but a constitutional, political and moral obligation and the cornerstone of accountability'.

It is essential to understand the role and influence of crony capitalists empowered by the old regimes. They tend to act as a counter-revolutionary force. Vested interests, threatened by meaningful economic change, could bring together the crony capitalists of the old regime with their supporters still embedded in the highest ranks of the state's bureaucracy. Alternatively, and more likely, as has already happened in Egypt, vested interests may use their collaborators within the state to place clear limits on how transformative the post-revolutionary governments can be.

The new elected governments are facing resistance in tackling crony capitalism and pervasive corruption. This, in turn, may discourage private domestic and foreign investment and undermine the credibility of any announced reforms.

Emergence of new social forces

Authoritarian regimes in the region have mastered the art of using government-organized non-governmental organizations especially well. They created and nurtured a clientelistic solidarity network, which, though not part of the government, was led by the ruling party's elite. The network, by granting access to favours and social services in exchange for the regime's support, transformed the culture of patronage into widespread corruption across all segments of society. Strict restrictions have been imposed on independent civil society organizations as well as on the freedom of the press. Different forms of civil society share a common core meaning that refers to the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centres of political and economic authority (Kaldor 2010).

Strong civil society provides venues for participation in the public sphere; helps to fight corruption and forces accountability of public officials. The civil society's impact is conditional, to a large extent, on its ability to generate sufficient public pressure, which, in turn, depends on the press being free (Themudo 2012). Such findings point to the need for policy to target both civil society and press freedom in order to promote a new and balanced social contract in Arab countries.

The empowerment of civil society

Civil society forces in Egypt and Tunisia contributed through their cohesive and yet spontaneous uprisings to end the ruling of their former autocrats. From an organizational point of view, however, most civil society components remain weak and fragmented. The adoption of new decree laws on political parties and associations in Tunisia allowed various social groups to demonstrate, express themselves, and form parties and associations. For instance, since Bin Ali has been deposed, Tunisia witnessed the legalization of more than 106 political parties (El-Issawi 2012a). Yet most of them are unknown to Tunisian voters. They lack experience and need time and resources to develop in order to counterbalance the pressures of status-quo forces and to keep the momentum for authentic change. New social forces have failed so far to come up with a common political and economic platform for the future.

The business sector

The political economy of previous policies regarding the private sector was straightforward: ensure support of the influential business community in order to secure the survival of the regime. By promoting corruption, rent-seeking, poor rule of law and

lack of transparency, such arrangements impeded the process of structural transformation and led to a growing informal sector and high unemployment rates. In many countries in the region, the image of the private sector has been tarnished by scandals of corruption and misuse of public resources. The rehabilitation of the private sector is critical: no country can grow sustainably and create jobs without a vibrant private sector.

The relationship between the state and the private sector can take different forms depending on the nature and bargaining power of the business organization. Such organizations can be set by the state to perform specific duties that the bureaucracy fails to do as they serve to secure close control of the business community from within. In such settings, business organizations behave as a mere extension of the state bureaucracy (Maxfield and Schneider 1997). In a context of high concentration of the private capital, both the state and large business interests may prefer to deal directly with each other rather than through a formal organization. Each of the individual businesses lobby for its own rents and privileges and the state is immune from any threat a coalition of business interests may represent. Tunisia's case seems to fit within the first framework and the Egyptian within the second.

In both cases, not all the business community has benefited from the former regimes. Small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs but also wealthy people who earned their money independently of government support suffered from cronyism and the politics of selected privileges. Although those entrepreneurs did not organize collectively to take part in the uprisings, some played an important role as individuals. Those whose income did not depend upon state favours or privilege, or those who saw themselves as losing opportunities owing to corruption and inequality, supported the uprisings (Kinninmont 2012).

The moderate Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt have presented a 'business-friendly' face for 'clean' entrepreneurs and more balanced policies towards small- and medium-sized enterprises, referring to the neo-liberal Islamist AKP in Turkey as their model (Levinson 2012).

So far, there are no cases where business organizations have come up with full-fledged proposals for reform and pushed them effectively in the policy-making arena. However, the undergoing political change has been gradually opening opportunities for a broader and mature contribution of business organizations in the reform process. Even so, implementation of policies may still be problematic due to bureaucratic red tape and ineffective administration.

The dynamics of the business community in Egypt

In Egypt, the most prominent businesspeople were very close to the old regime. They formed their networks incrementally ever since the first partial liberalization took place under Sadat in the mid-1970s. The 1990s and the neo-liberal reforms of the Nazif government (2004–2011) provided more space for expansion and sophistication of such networks. They often used their money to acquire power and then used their power to make money (Adly 2011). The top ten companies in the Egyptian stock exchange in 2008, comprising more than 45 per cent of market capitalization, were controlled by less than 20 families, while almost 40 per cent of private-sector credit went to just 30 companies (Osman 2011).

During the first few months following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, some businessmen began to flee the country, particularly after the fall of steel magnate and ruling

party leader Ahmed Ezz. From the army's perspective, the revolution's most important dividend was to see off the potential threat to its economic and political prerogatives posed by the aggressive privatization agenda of the Nazif government and Mubarak's would-be heir, Gamal.

After the revolution many businesspeople became active in advocating for parties or movements opposed to what remains of Egypt's former Mubarak-led regime. The Brotherhood includes some powerful and wealthy business figures with significant interests in consumer goods and services, as well as in the financial sector. In July 2011, they recently established a new business association, the Egyptian Business Development Association (EBDA), which intends to reach out beyond the Brotherhood's own support base and takes its inspiration from Turkey's 22-year-old Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), with whom it has a cooperation agreement.

Officially, the EBDA is inspired from a 25 January spirit, when a community of Egyptian businessmen sought to stimulate, enable and integrate the business system, aspiring to sustainable development within society. The EBDA started with 100 members and has currently over 250 selected members, representing different sectors and industries in Egypt. The EBDA offers a wide range of services to support members' business development and opens channels of communication between businessmen, investors and decision-makers. The ultimate purpose of the EBDA is to convey current key business issues and lobby for the best positions at the country, regional or international levels. President Morsy has tasked EBDA's president to chair the new council for business development in order to research the recommendations of the business community to attract more investment (Abdelhameed 2012).

A broad section of entrepreneurs, both large and small, remain sceptical about the inclusiveness of the EBDA. Some businessmen fear the Brotherhood will elbow out entrenched companies in favour of firms run by its members.

Naguib Sawiris, the founder and owner of Orascom Telecom, claimed to be the largest private-sector job provider and one of Egypt's richest men, co-founded a new political party, the Free Egyptians in 2011. It is a secular and liberal party that aims to counter the influence of Islamists but at the same time advocates social programmes to reduce poverty. The party publicly opposed the proposal to increase capital gains tax during summer 2011. Ahmed Heikal,[2] chief executive officer of the private equity firm Citadel Capital, co-founded the Justice party. This party takes a more socially conservative approach than the Free Egyptians party and essentially offers a non-Islamist alternative for social conservatives on the centre-right.

A number of young entrepreneurs have launched initiatives designed to stimulate political and economic participation and debate. For instance, the movement *Masrena* (Our Egypt), established in December 2011, brings together Egyptians from all socio-economic and intellectual backgrounds and provides a vibrant channel for youth to present proposals for the country's social and political development. *Tahrir 2* is another initiative that offers a mentoring scheme to assist young entrepreneurs to develop new business models.

The dynamics of the business community in Tunisia

Bin Ali's regime in Tunisia used different public policies, such as privatization, the investment code's fiscal and financial incentives as well as export promotion grants, to

create and nurture a form of crony capitalism in which businessmen were heavily dependent on the state for access to power and favours (Achy 2011). After the 'Jasmine revolution', some 480 wealthy businessmen suspected of corruption were forbidden from traveling abroad.

The Tunisian business union UTICA (Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts) was an instrument in the hands of Bin Ali's political party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD). Only after the revolution did the administrative board of UTICA announce its separation from the RCD and its autonomy from any political influence. UTICA has renewed a large part of its top administration, elected a new president to regain confidence and stopped the wave of dissidence.

Yet, a veteran member in the executive committee of UTICA and a former president of the National Chemical Federation decided to break UTICA's monopoly and established a new employer's organization in September 2011, the Confederation of Tunisia's Citizen Enterprises (CONECT), with the objective of becoming 'the reference entrepreneurial partner for a fair economic and social development'.

To a large extent, UTICA gained credibility under its new presidency. Heading a delegation of business leaders, UTICA's president accompanied the country's president in his working visit to France in July 2012. UTICA has also signed a framework agreement on labour negotiations with the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) at the Ministry of Social Affairs. UGTT played a critical role in the uprising that led to the overthrow of Bin Ali.

The involvement of UTICA in the policy-making process, however, is still limited. In early 2012, UTICA's president presented an outline of the organization's views on how to save Tunisia's economy and boost its investment at the headquarters of the National Constituent Assembly. The organization exhibited its dissatisfaction with the negligence of its proposals in the 2012 supplementary budget law.

Recently, Tunisia's minister of investment and international co-operation held a meeting with the presidents of the two Tunisian employers' organizations, UTICA and CONECT, in order to have their views on the incentives granted under the new Investment Code, which was submitted to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in December 2012. UTICA's president insisted that the incentives should be region specific to encourage private investment in the deprived regions and recommended a partial revision of the current code to save time so that measures could attract investment in inland regions. She complained about the bureaucracy that delays the implementation of projects and called for an easing of administrative procedures. The president of CONECT requested a full revision of the code. For regional investment, he recommended strengthening the decentralization of services and creating appropriate infrastructure to attract investors.

Labour movements

Trade unions are essential social institutions. Beyond their role in managing the relationships between employers and employees, they mobilize workers to strengthen political participation and ensure that government policies are responsive to the needs of workers. The nature of state–labour relations varies substantially across the Mediterranean countries. In general, however, trade unions have historically been captured and repressed through co-optation and close control.

Labour movements played a crucial role in the uprisings against the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, although they were largely overlooked by analysts. They are tempted, now, to establish themselves in the political field by focusing on issues beyond labour relations. In the Declaration of Trade Unions from Arab countries for Democracy and Social Justice (International Trade Union Confederation 2011) signed by 77 national trade union centres and sectoral trade unions across the Arab region, the signatories asserted that trade unions are an indispensable vehicle for change and transition from dictatorship to democracy and rule of law. They also insisted that workers' rights are at the heart of the region's development issues, such as democratic governance, job creation, and economic and social justice.

The dynamics of labour movements in Egypt

Prior to the downfall of Mubarak, the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation, (ETUF) was the sole trade union in the country. The ETUF was established in 1957 by the President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to incorporate 23 general syndicates in all economic sectors across the country. Since its creation, it opposed demands by workers and their movements and condemned strikes and sit-ins.[3] The right to form and join trade unions other than the ETUF was denied by the law and the key role of the trade union was to secure labour's loyalty to the government and, later on, to the private business. The ETUF was run by appointed government bureaucrats and NDP members.

The years leading up to Mubarak's ousting saw an undermining of the federation's power as independent trade union movements, formally illegal, grew and carried out mass strikes. The shift towards independent unionization has only grown after the 2011 revolution. Before its dissolution, EFTU board included 23 members, 21 of whom were NDP members.

Two major independent workers' unions have been established: the Egyptian Federation of Independent Unions (EFIU) and the Egyptian Democratic Labuor Conference (EDLC). The first was founded by a member of parliament and president of the independent union of Real Estate Tax Authority employees. The EFIU boasts 2 million members, including the independent syndicates of the real estate taxes, health and education sector employees. The EDLC was formed by the Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services – CTUWS, a pro-labour non-governmental organization (NGO) established in the early 1990s which played a critical role in providing support and guidance to labour strikes and protests in Egypt. It includes 220 independent syndicates mostly representing the employees of business-sector companies.

Since the outbreak of the 25 January revolution, wave of strikes by workers were sparked throughout the country, with a multitude of demands expressed, including a higher minimum wage, permanent contracts and better working conditions.

As these strikes are hurting an already fragile economy, labour movements are increasingly being involved in government consultations. The general coordinator of CTUWS (Kamal Abbas) pointed out that he met the minister of manpower (El-Boraie) several times to draft a new labour union law. The draft was, however, shelved by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which issued a decree criminalizing workers' strikes and blaming trade unions.

More recently, with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leading the government, more meetings with union leaders are expected in order to amend labour laws and address workers' concerns, including the trade union freedoms law (*Almasry Alyoum* 2012).

The MB and the associated Freedom and Justice Party have made social justice a core theme of their political programme (Gold 2012). The prime minister has decided that every ministry will allocate one day per week to address the demands of respective sector workers (*Ahram Online* 2012).

The working force has more space than before to voice their economic and social demands. Their effective participation in the policy process is still to be seen. Despite the emergence of new unions, the ETUF remains a key force and its leaders have recently met the Egyptian prime minister to discuss a plan to halt workers' protests and strikes at all production sites for a year.

The dynamics of labour movements in Tunisia

The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) had a greater degree of leverage against the Bin Ali regime than the ETUF, although it opted for an obedient stance towards the regime since the late 1980s. The union played a crucial role in the 2011 uprising, and acted as one of the key forces that helped not only to take down Bin Ali's regime, but also to determine the shape of the post-Bin Ali government (Lee and Weinthal 2011).

After the October 2011 elections, in which the Islamist Al-Nahda party took power, relations between the UGTT and the ruling party treaded a fine line between tense, polite cooperation (Ajmi 2012) and mutual distrust, finger-pointing and suspicion. In a recent TV interview, the prime minister indicated that Tunisia's future could not be planned as part of a conflict between the government and UGTT. In the interview on 5 August 2012, the prime minister insisted that the government welcomed the union's initiatives; but events had occurred to paralyse the dialogue process pledged by the government.

UGTT has taken an active part in the country's political life, to the extent that some observers compare it to a political party. The union presented several candidates running as independents at last October's elections to the Constituent Assembly and proposed its own draft constitution. UGTT is perceived as a threat to the Al-Nahda party (Wolf and Lefevre 2012).

Youth's participation dynamics

Demographics have for a long time been highlighted as a key determinant of social transformation in Mediterranean countries. These countries are characterized by a large number of youth in their population, which is often referred to as the 'youth bulge'. The literature on young people has shifted from an emphasis on youth as problematic to young people as an asset. To this end, youth need to participate in their society to build their capacity and benefit their community. Youth, however, cannot 'participate' effectively unless political and cultural structures allow them to do so (UNESCO 2011). The context of the political engagement of youth has been significantly shaped by the recent youth-driven uprisings in the Mediterranean countries.

The youth movement in Egypt is diversified in its social composition and in its political ideological expressions; yet, it still considers itself a leftist opposition. The 6 April movement has been the most active, effective and dynamic youth coalition to emerge out of the region. Originally formed in solidarity with a 2008 workers' strike in Mahalla El-Kubra, the movement was a tremendous force in Tahrir Square and has been actively involved in bringing young voices to post-Mubarak political arena in Egypt.

The core focus of the 6 April movement concerned free speech, nepotism in government and the country's stagnant economy (Shapiro 2009). The movement endorsed the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate Mohammed Morsi, driven by the fear of disappointment that might follow the victory of Mubarak's former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq.

It remains to be seen whether the 6 April and coalition of 25 January revolution youth have the ability to maintain momentum and serve as an effective pressure vehicle on the new president. The revolution's youth in Egypt seem to pay the price for opting to focus on protests at the expense of engaging in mainstream politics by establishing political parties. The youth who were branded as heroes after autocratic leader Mubarak left office on 11 February may not have any significant role to play in the future of Egypt (Maher 2011).

In Morocco and Jordan, the youth movements on 20 February and 24 March both initially focused their demands more on a process of democratic transition, including constitutional reforms, the dissolution of the present parliament and the creation of a temporary transitional government, rather than on policies addressing corruption and rent-seeking (Lalami 2011). It appears until now that the regimes in both countries have been successful at holding back the protests through a minimal package of socio-political reforms. Despite continued demonstrations and sit-ins, youth coalition movements have lost momentum and become sporadic and disorganized.

In Tunisia, un-politicized youth took to the streets in protest against Bin Ali's authoritarian ruling. After the revolution, youth seized the opportunity of political openness and became aware of the benefits of organizing to achieve the objectives of their revolt. They developed into three categories of movements: youth-driven political parties; non-governmental organizations; and unstructured youth groups working together, reporting and informing the public on various political and social developments in the hope of safeguarding the 'right to know' (Halesh 2011). Overall, Tunisia's youth influence on the policy process has been on the decline since the revolution. While they have staged some protests and walkouts, they have become increasingly apolitical and disillusioned.

Women's participation dynamics

The expansion of women's rights and their broader economic and political participation are essential ingredients for a more inclusive and balanced society. Women's lack of empowerment has been identified as a key deficit in the Arab region by the first Arab *Human Development Report* issued in 2002 by the United Nations Development Programme. Women in the region face strong barriers in gaining access to education and job opportunities. They are also severely constrained in their participation in the decision-making process. Yet, women account for half of society and their effective participation is essential to their countries' prosperity (UNDP 2006).

Women's movements in the region have a long history. Overall, their main focus was on three key issues. First, organize and campaign for changes in national laws that discriminate against women. Second, fight against institutional, social and domestic violence against women. Third, contribute to the struggle for democracy and democratic states that fully recognize and respect the rights of women (Regan 2011).

Women have played a pivotal role in the uprisings that led to the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and put pressure for reforms in other

Mediterranean countries. They have been a consistent voice in the demands and agendas for democracy. The Coalition of Women's NGOs in Egypt, for instance, articulated clear demands for a place for women in decision-making in the process of democratization (Regan 2011).

The issue of women's representation in political offices has re-emerged as a policy concern after the uprisings, although in many countries quotas and gender equality laws were put in place before 2011. Women's issues frequently served authoritarian regimes in the region to publicize their modernity and to shift attention away from their human rights abuses. The new imposition of quotas in some countries did not always result in more gender equality in parliament; neither has the 'Islamic wave' resulted systematically in an abrupt decline in women's representation in parliament (El-Shanawi 2012).

The most impressive progress in women's political representation occurred in Algeria's May 2012 legislative election in which women took nearly one third of the seats, making Algeria's national assembly the most gender-balanced in the region. Tunisia's new parliament, elected in October 2011, counted more than one fifth of women (49 seats out of 217), supported by the decision to impose gender parity on electoral lists made by the Elections' High Independent Authority. The number of seats reserved for women in Morocco's parliament increased in 2011 from 30 out of 325 to 60 out of the 395 seats, which is the equivalent of 15 per cent of the seats. The election held in November 2011 allowed 67 women to enter the parliament. In Egypt, however, the share of women in parliament fell to 2 from 12 per cent in the first post-Mubarak election. The Egyptian Alliance for the Participation of Women, which is made up of 450 associations and NGOs, is calling for at least 30 per cent of women in the constituent assembly to draft the new constitution.

Overall, although women were active and engaged in initiating and sustaining uprisings, their participation and visibility in the post-uprisings' power positions remain modest and their role in the future development of their own countries remains unclear. History reveals an abundance of democratic paradoxes: cases in which progress on women's rights regressed or even reversed in the aftermath of revolution (Goulding 2011).

The struggle for the media freedom

Immediately following the ousting of their respective dictators, Egypt and Tunisia seemed to be on track to roll back decades of censorship and make steps towards substantive media reform. The sector has been shifting from a tedious and uniform content that broadly echoes the state line to a more vibrant and diverse output. According to the National Authority for the Reform of Information and Communication (INRIC), the body that was tasked with overseeing the reform of the media after the revolution, in total, 228 new Tunisian print publications sprang up after the uprising (El-Issawi 2012b).

Meanwhile, the legal framework and state institutions governing the media sector are being reformed. The reforms, however, are not deep enough to prompt tangible changes. 'Red lines' remain that cannot be crossed. The boundaries of what is and is not permissible are certainly not as narrow as they used to be, but they are not clear either (El-Issawi 2012b). The media sector remains a favoured ground for manipulation

and intimidation, and media outlets are becoming the main field for the fierce political and ideological battle between the opposing camps.

The interim military government had issued directives for any media coverage of the military to be sent to the Armed Forces Morale Affairs Department for review before broadcast or publication (Mickell 2011). Censorship and manipulation of the media remain routine, and pro-democracy NGOs are persecuted with much the same caprice as they were during the Mubarak era (Stein 2012). The expiration of the emergency law on 31 May 2012 did little to alter the Egyptian government's practices of detaining journalists and activists for allegedly criticizing the government. Use of excessive force, arbitrary detentions and military tribunals has continued in the months following the lifting of the state of emergency. The recent law passed by President Morsi in late August 2012 to ban pre-trial detention of journalists was referred to by the Freedom House (2012) as 'window dressing' and a shallow detail that does nothing to remedy the 'broader campaign against freedom of the press and free expression in Egypt'. Journalists have recently condemned attacks on freedom of expression. Moreover, editors-in-chief at state-owned newspapers were replaced in a major reshuffle in early August with a number of new appointees from the Muslim Brotherhood.

In Tunisia, Islamist-led government gradually awakened to the ongoing influence of the national media and turned to old regime tactics. For instance, the Ministry of Communications was shut down after the revolution, but the functions of that institution did not entirely disappear. After the October 2011 election, a special committee was formed at the office of the prime minister to manage relations with the national and international media. The majority of post-Bin Ali legal suits against journalists have been brought on religious grounds—that is, the journalists are accused of violating Islamic values—and are simultaneously presented as charges of disturbing public order. Yet, the Islamist-led government and its supporters are raising their voices against what they view as the 'leftist lobbies' that are using the media as a weapon against government policies.

The struggle to transform the media sector from a closely controlled tool that serves the regime's interests into a free voice that reflects diversity and pluralism in society remains an unfinished business. Such state of affairs offers strong evidence that the transition from an authoritarian bargain model to a more balanced and inclusive social order requires not just regime change at the top but changes in all the regime's institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that although the former political leadership in Egypt and Tunisia collapsed, the foundations of the authoritarian bargain proved to be solid and resilient.

The authoritarian bargain is empowered by state structures either in charge of redistributive policies or those dedicated to repression. It secured its grip on society thanks to a network of support coalitions in the business community, the security apparatus as well as in the bureaucracy. The experience so far shows that toppling the political leaders has been the easiest part of the transition process. The shift in state–society relations toward a more balanced social contract requires tangible changes in power equations. State structures that have long been dedicated to channel rents to supporters, co-opt or to intimidate opponents should be transformed into transparent entities, serving people's interests and subjected to checks and balances.

So far, too few of the fundamentals of social and economic pillars of the authoritarian bargain have been contested effectively and there is little down the road that ensures that the ongoing transitions are reaching crucial institutions or setting the scene for a new social order. Even among the more advanced transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, the process has proven to be obstinate and little progress has been achieved. Overall, the shift away from the authoritarian bargain is unclear.

Such findings are not unexpected as the transformative process ignited by the so-called Arab Spring is very recent. It would, indeed, be a naïve understanding of local politics to imagine that a system over half a century in the making could be undone in a number of months.

The Arab Spring has certainly blown a wind of change in a long stagnant political landscape. The implications of the regime change for state–society relations are still uncertain, however. On the one hand, unstable governments and difficult economic situations have been imposing constraints on the scope of reforms. On the other hand, the pockets of resistance mostly apparent within the business community and the old regimes' military and security apparatuses seem to be using their collaborators within the state to place limits on the new governments' policies. International experience reveals that when political change is not accompanied by extensive economic change, there is widespread reversion on the political front. Old vested interests regain control over the political process through their dominance of the economy (Amin et al 2012).

The challenge of reforming the 'pillars of the authoritarian bargain' is intimidating and complex, but focusing on some influential components could be a wise strategy to keep up the momentum of change growing forward. In particular, providing support for a growing free press, independent business and labour organizations, and the fighting of corruption would be effective focus points for moving forward.

In the long term, certain ossified institutions and alliances will have to be dismantled to ensure a full transition. Which institutions act as the biggest obstacles is a question with a different answer for each country. Deep reform of the security sector and the bureaucracy seem, however, to be a common priority in all Mediterranean countries.

The scope and depth of reform will very much depend on the capacity of political and civil society forces aiming for change to take active part in the transition process and influence the course of policies. Pro-change civil society forces remain weak and fragmented in most countries, lack experience and need time and resources to counterbalance status-quo forces and to keep the momentum for an authentic change.

Notes

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1 According to Friedman (2011) the slogan among the Arab autocrats was: 'Rule by fear – strike fear in the heart of your people by letting them know that you play by no rules at all, so they won't ever, ever, think about rebelling against you.'
2 Ahmed Heikal is the son of Mohammed Hassanien Heikal, who was an adviser to President Gamal Abdel Nasser.
3 According to the *Ahram* journalist, 'the words "Trade Union" in Egypt automatically bring to mind the following stereotypical image: On 1 May of each year, the president of the republic, who is also chairman of the ruling party gives his address on May Day. He repeats the same words on this date of every year over the past 30 years, amid applause and praise from an audience of key state officials, businessmen and trade union members who are all members of

the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP).' See Haitham Mohamedein's. 'The Road to Trade Union Independence', *Ahram Online*, 20 September 2011.

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24

The Tunisian Revolution

Narratives of the Tunisian General Labour Union

Hèla Yousfi

The 'Tunisian Revolution' has often been portrayed as a sort of 'mythical' event in which a 'moderate' and 'harmless' Tunisian people miraculously managed to confront their dictator and drive him out of power. The historical causes and consequences of the revolt were neglected in favour of a depoliticized narrative that saw a spontaneous movement of young bloggers rescue their people from a despised dictator; however, this narrative essentially denied the importance of the years of resistance and the accumulation of a series of collective battles waged against the dictatorship. Moreover, the majority of observers and media interested in Arab politics often focus on the persistence of Arab authoritarian structures or on the development of Islamist movements, creating a myopia in relation to the various social dynamics that have emerged over the past two decades (Dakhlia 2011). It was, in fact, different collective mobilizations conducted by various groups of actors (the Tunisian League for Human Rights, the lawyers' association, the union of unemployed graduates, and so on) and affected by their collective struggles that led to the historical events surrounding the departure of Bin Ali. The labour movement, as embodied by the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union), was one of these key players, and contributed greatly to the revolutionary process. Historically, this organization has been a site of convergence for militant trade unionism and the struggle against autocratic regimes in Tunisia. Moreover, it has played an important political role in the various popular revolts in Tunisia, and has been crucial to the unfolding of what is now termed the 'Tunisian Revolution'. It has been involved in this revolution since the initial uprisings in Sidi Bouzid on 17 December 2010 and is currently playing a central role in the country's democratic transition process.

One of the characteristics of the Tunisian Revolution is that in all Tunisian towns, the events that led to the fall of the Bin Ali regime originated in the offices of the UGTT. The labour union leaders, who had been mobilized since the beginning of the uprisings in December 2011, gave protesters open access to the UGTT offices and helped them to be heard on international media outlets. They also organized rallies, marches and regional strikes in various governorates, and the pressure that they exerted led their executive board to call for a national strike on 14 January 2011, which ended

with Bin Ali's departure. It is worth noting that the UGTT is the only 'intermediate' structure in the country, and despite several shortcomings (such as the centralization of decision-making power and the low representation of women in some sectors and regions), UGTT played a decisive role in the protests that would eventually lead to the regime change and the subsequent election of the National Constituent Assembly on 23 October 2011.

By drawing on an ethnographic approach, this chapter aims to shed light on UGTT's complex role in the Tunisian Revolution and, more generally, in the current transformation within the Tunisian political sphere.[1] It aims to restore the important position that UGTT occupied regarding protest and revolutionary dynamics, including the ambiguity of its role as an 'intermediary' between social movements, the government and political parties. This role generated a heated debate between those who thought UGTT's mobilization to be salutary, those who demanded that it limit itself to a labour role, and those who simply called for its dissolution and assimilation into the RCD (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique), the former ruling party. This chapter raises two central questions. What type of interaction did UGTT historically have with the social movement, and what impact did it have upon the popular uprising of 17 December 2010? What new challenges must UGTT face in the renewed political picture?

UGTT: The 'social movement' versus the ruling regime

UGTT is Tunisia's largest (with 517,000 members) and for many years its only union organization.[2] Centred on the public sector, this union is made up 24 regional unions, 19 sector-based unions and 21 grassroots unions. It brings together a wide range of political persuasions and has members in every part of the country and from many different social groups, including factory workers, civil servants and doctors.[3] More than a labour union, UGTT is rather a political organization in which social claims have historically been closely linked to political and national claims (Hamzaoui 1999). UGTT was founded in 1946 by Farhat Hached following a break with the French CGT (General Confederation of Labour). Following its establishment, the UGTT served as a cornerstone of the Tunisian national movement during the colonization period, and has since played a central role in Tunisian political life. Over the years, UGTT leaders joined the nationalist movement headed by Habib Bourguiba, and also actively participated in the struggle for independence (Hermassi 1966; Bessis 1974; Haddad 1985 [1927]). Once in power, Bourguiba attempted to mobilize UGTT's prestige to establish his own domination, leading to a complex relationship between UGTT and the Tunisian state. However, unlike other Arab unions which are entirely integrated into the machinery of state authority, UGTT remains an exception due to its peculiar combination of two positions that it has succeeded in maintaining: first, its submission to the ruling power, which borders on full integration into the state machinery and is embodied by the union's bureaucracy; and, second, its tendency to resist the ruling power, especially during times of crisis (Gobe 2008). The latter tendency is embodied in a number of federations, such as those related to education, the postal service and telecommunications, as well as a handful of regional and local unions. Despite the certain degree of ambivalence that the union bureaucracy has maintained with the single ruling party, the various Tunisian social movements have always been structurally and politically supported by UGTT. In 1978 and 1984, for example, the union was at the heart of the social unrest that led to the resistance of liberal reforms and privatization projects.

Indeed, Ben Salah's (the former UGTT secretary) socialist model, created in the 1960s, was discarded in the early 1970s in favour of a project of openness in relation to the outside and to foreign investment. The latter was implemented by the Nouira government, which broke entirely with both the options presented during the 1960s and with the privileges granted to the domestic market in favour of a special status granted to international markets. At this time, Tunisia was also opened to foreign investment, a model of exporting development that would initiate a true economic transformation. However, these years of modernization led to their first crisis during the late 1970s. On a political level, this period saw a rise of contestation among large segments of young people attracted by leftist ideological values. In addition, several unions launched sector-based strikes, allowing UGTT to become a major player in the struggle for social demands and greater union freedom. The revolt of 26 January 1978 was the first instance of bloodshed as social protesters opposed the authoritarian regime face-to-face. This triggered a period in which the government fiercely repressed labour unions and all forms of social protest. However, these years of repression were also fertile with strong labour movement mobilization and resistance. During this time, UGTT was figuratively beheaded as many of its leaders were thrown in jail. Later during the early 1980s, which coincided with Reagan and Thatcher's liberal offensive, labour movements around the world experienced defeat. In Tunisia, as in many Third World countries, financial institutions were urged to push liberalization and to integrate into the international market. The Tunisian authorities were subsequently forced to decrease consumption, devaluate the dinar and raise interest rates. In December 1983, the lower-class revolt broke out from south to north, burning everything in its path. Again, UGTT found itself at the heart of the revolt, and was divided into two factions: one calling for moderation and another, more radical one, supporting the labour movement and the dispossessed. It was also during this time that Islamism emerged as a strong protest movement. Since 1987, Tunisia has adopted a structural adjustment programme featuring a total liberalization of the economy, which had been only half-liberalized following the departure of Ben Salah. Macro-economic measures were then put into place: the liberalization of most prices, the reformation of a number of public companies and the privatization of others, the liberalization of the financial sector and imports, the creation of laws regulating competition, and so on. The presence of the state remained strong in areas such as infrastructure, industry and banking, and it maintained an important economic weight due to its substantial role in the field of public investments. This new development model enjoyed a few weeks of glory during the 1990s and succeeded in boosting the economy and ensuring a relatively high growth rate that was above world and regional averages, later praised as 'the Tunisian economic miracle'. It was only in 1989 that UGTT's executive management would align itself closely with the Bin Ali government. Unionism had tremendously suffered under Bin Ali. According to a UGTT executive:

> Union activity was impeded by the ruling regime, especially due to privatization programs. Reinforcing the private sector structurally meant weakening union activity.

According to another union activist (a school teacher in Sfax):

> UGTT has always played a major role and occupied an important position in historical turning points; it has always been present at the heart of meaningful

> periods in history. We can go as far back as the war of independence during which Hached paid the highest price: he was assassinated. At the time of the construction of the State there was unity between UGTT and the ruling party during the first constituent assembly and the drafting of the constitution. It was an important historical point in time as far as the construction of the State. UGTT was even at the time almost emptied of its leaders, who had all become ministers, mayors and governors. There was a time when it was alienated from power; then later, under Nouira's liberalism, the need was felt to establish a contract-based relationship with the authorities and to undertake negotiations and social dialogue; so it then acted as the main partner with the authorities: it has been among the founders of the new era of the 1970s. But then it was again subdued, destroyed and domesticated. With the advent of November 7, the ruling regime aimed at alienating UGTT; and in order to achieve that goal, it carried out very few favourable concessions.

However, a number of trade union sectors such as education, the postal service, telecommunications and health services, as well as some regional sections, have remained centres of protest against the ruling regime. This division between the executive level of the trade union and some of its federal and regional branches – which had become bastions for leftist and Arab nationalist political trends that had no freedom of political expression – has led analysts to refer to 'two UGTTs' (Chouikha and Geisser 2010). Yet, to understand the functioning of UGTT, its complex history must lead us to break away from the binary representations that position this organization either as 'a powerful arm of the ruling regime' or a as a simple labour union. The UGTT is neither one nor the other. Rather, it is an organization that had always played an important political role, sometimes as a partner of the political regime charged with explaining that regime's economic and social policy to workers, and other times as an opposition force, aspiring to be a political party in line with the Anglo-Saxon labour party model. In fact, twice during its history, its leaders Ahmed Ben Salah and Habib Achour attempted to transform the trade union into a labour party, directly threatening the hegemony of the ruling party.

Consequently, as demonstrated by Khiari (2000), issues of social and economic policy have never been the main causes of dispute between the executive level of the trade union and political authorities. Such issues have always been conveniently used in order to both neutralize the independent trade union bodies and to exert pressure aimed at redefining union status within the political system. In the light of this political battle, it was more practical for different actors to shift the focus from socio-economic issues to the important political matters that concern the very foundations of the state, thereby uncovering the lack of attention paid to the social question. In doing so, it is clear that despite its complex relationship with the ruling regime, UGTT has paradoxically served to legitimate the successive waves of dissent in its support of economic liberalization.

UGTT: A refuge for the popular uprisings that led to the fall of a dictator

Ironically, it was this social question and the entailing socio-economic demands that collectively brought the image of the 'Tunisian miracle' into question and ended the regime. Regions in the south and central-west of the country have suffered from unequal regional development, which has been reflected in massive unemployment,

precarious work conditions and a lack of infrastructure. A rapid political and economic mapping of Tunisia demonstrates that socio-economic disparities align with the 'protest map' of recent years (Ayeb 2011). Impoverished areas have been the sites of strong protest movements, such as the south-western Gafsa mining region in 2008, the southern region of Ben Gardane in August 2010, the Sidi Bouzid region in December 2010, and the central-west region of Kasserine in January 2011. Early in 2008, supported by immigrant associations in France, the revolt in the Gafsa mining region and the town of Redeyef, further to the south, emphasized the seriousness of the situation (Amin 2010). Following these events, UGTT began experiencing early internal divisions. Some of its national unions – education, postal services, healthcare – as well as its local and regional leftist sections were tempted to join the protest, while the executive leaders close to the regime considered playing a mediating role at best. Furthermore, these protest movements were strongly repressed by the Bin Ali regime. As one of our respondents (union member, engineer, Gafsa) commented:

> I believe that the revolutionary process began long time ago, the apparition of a combative left movement in the 70s, the various revolts such as the 26 January 1978 or the bread riots in 1984, the closest key revolutionary episode is called the 'mining region revolt' which was heavily repressed by the Bin Ali regime, this region saw their activists put in jails or fired from their jobs, this region is also home to martyrs who were killed by the bullets of the police.

The revolutionary process that was initiated on 17 December 2010 following the immolation of a young unemployed graduate in the town of Sidi Bouzid was in many ways inspired by the 2008 social movement in Redeyef. Union members were determined not to commit the same mistakes and to resist the police repression. The union's role in organizing the protests in Sidi Bouzid as well as in the surrounding regions proved to be fundamental (Hmed 2012). The local sections of UGTT both organized and ensured sustainability. UGTT was mainly described as a 'refuge'. One of our respondents (member of doctors section, Bizerte) commented:

> It was a popular protest movement, there was no party, no movement, no clear goal … and then you have the intervention of the trade unionists, mainly school teachers, joined by lawyers and some activists, we started to support the popular movement. What does this support mean? It means that as the political parties or Tunisian human rights league didn't have offices, the only accessible office was the UGTT. Most of the protests and demonstrations were programmed within and started in the UGTT offices. Everywhere in the country, the UGTT became a refuge.

Another union member (postal-service worker, Tunis):

> We organized rallies at Mohammed Ali Hammi Square [UGTT's office in Tunis]; we knew that the police wouldn't dare to touch us in front of UGTT – it was our refuge.

Our respondents put also placed emphasis on their coordination roles:

> During the day, you could see the SBZ inhabitants, the unionists, women, the unemployed together in marches and demonstrations … the new thing in SBZ – actually

> inspired by what happened in Redeyef in 2008 – is that during the night, you had the other revolution, the youth revolution, you had violent battles with the police … . This lasted for 12 days, we were under siege during 12 days … . It was like in Gaza, we felt ourselves to be like the Palestinians.

Union members coordinated with young people and progressively adopted a strategy of political confrontation vis-à-vis the regime, a strategy that went beyond a single social issue and embraced a number of political claims. As a union member union from Sidi Bouid commented:

> We immediately called on the population to consider the action not as suicide but rather as a political assassination, with Bouazizi to be perceived as a victim of the system. …
>
> At the beginning, the slogans only had social dimensions, such as 'the work is a right bunch of thieves', invented by a teacher. Then in January we started using clear political slogans: 'No to *trabelsi* (the president's wife's family) who steals the country's money.' On 11 January we were chanting: 'We great people, we say no to the renewal of the president mandate', and the police got crazy and came to us. The police chief said to us: 'You are trade unionists; I like you, I respect you, but I do not agree on this kind of slogans, and until now I haven't repressed, you so don't get me started.'

The trade union dynamics that initiated at Sidi Bouzid spread to other regions, affecting the entire centre region of the country. Union members mobilized their contacts throughout the entire region – from Regueb to Menzel Bouzaiane, even all the way to Sfax and Bizerte – 'to mitigate the pressure':

> When we discovered that the repression was focused on Sidi Bouzid and that additional forces were being moved from Tunis to help, we decided to create multiple fronts and organised riots in other regions.
>
> *(Union militant from Sfax)*

In 2010, union members would view the mobilization in Redeyef in 2008 and the subsequent struggle with the political power as important lessons in combating the regime's repression:

> The difference with the Redeyef events is that the regime managed to isolate Redyef during six months. It managed to confine the Intifadha to a very specific region … . The Sidi Bouzid isolation was broken quite quickly thanks to the other regions which joined the protests – menzelbouzaiyne, meknassi, jelma … . They broke SBZ's isolation, which confused the police and the regime.
>
> *(Union leader from Sidi Bouzid)*

Repression, especially the massacres in Tala and Kasserine (where more than 50 people were killed), tremendously strengthened the movement. As one respondent (a civil servant, telecommunications, Tunis) noticed:

> How did the Sid Bouzid Intifada turn into a revolutionary process? It is because local and regional sections of UGTT have supported the protests. The police

> repression in Kasserine and Thala led to injuries and martyrs. It was the turning point. All regional sections of UGTT declared their support and announced regional strikes, the two major events of Sfax on January 12 and then that of the UGTT on 14 January played a key role in the fall of the regime.

The gathering of UGTT as the executive bureaucracy proved decisive in the uprising, albeit a late development. The early statements made by UGTT's executive board attempted to place the trade union in a mediating position, calling on the ruling regime to 'release those who were arrested' and to 'adopt immediate measures in order to put in practice the statements made concerning the employment of youth'. UGTT deputy secretary general explained the tipping point for the union:

> At first we just stood there listening to protesters and asking for their release. But following the repression at Kasserine, we broke away from the social partnership state of mind and clearly moved to the political level, calling for the overthrowing of the government.

On 14 January, the day that Bin Ali fled to Saudi Arabia:

> … it was during a general strike called for by UGTT. The matter no longer concerned only Sidi Bouzid or Kasserine, but the whole country, including the capital. The general strike meant surrounding the presidential palace at Carthage.
>
> *(Union activist from the postal services in Sfax)*

Another union activist, a professor from Tunis, explained:

> As usual, the UGTT bureaucracy tried to avoid direct political confrontation with the regime. But when you put pressure on it, when the local branches put all their pressure on it, the bureaucracy is forced to adopt the political demands of the local branches … . I remember when the slogan 'The people want the regime to fall (*echaab yourid iskat ennidham*)' was heard at Mohammed Ali Hammi Square on the 12th of January, Jrad, the Secretary General of UGTT, made a declaration saying that UGTT was not concerned with this kind of slogan … . Generally speaking the role of UGTT's bureaucracy is to mediate, which is why they joined the protests only after a large amount of pressure from the local branches and structures. They historically support the social movement only when they are forced to do so.

One of the members of the executive board gave the following summary of UGTT's mobilization:

> This Intifada lacked a central brain, but there were UGTT local leaders everywhere, and most of them were union members. Sometimes, we organized our own riots, other times we joined the movements already in process and added a political note, imposing catch phrases that raised the question of the 'regime' and not only the social issue.

More generally, unlike the proponents of the 'Facebook revolution' theory, union members see the revolution as the result of a long struggle and a cumulative process of

resistance. The reactivation of the collective memory organized around major historical moments such as 26 January 1978 or the events of Redeyef in 2008 served as an inspiring source of support and inspired union-member strategies during the popular uprisings of December 2010. These strategies were largely determined by the specific way in which the organization has operated over history, with a distribution of roles among its 'reformist' faction likely to compromise with the government, and its radical group aware that with sufficient pressure, the central union will eventually give in to popular demands. After Bin Ali fled the country, UGTT continued to play a central role, both as a key element in the committees for the protection of the revolution and as a source of support for the two sit-ins at Kasbah in January and February 2011, which led to the fall of both of Ghanouchi's transition governments and to the advent of elections for the constituent assembly.

UGTT: A powerful balance?

The long history of the complex relationship between UGTT and Tunisia's ruling party is at the heart of the present battle between Al-Nahdha[4] and UGTT, which to date has lasted for six months. The Al-Nahdda–UGTT face-off began on 25 February 2012 with a riot in the country's capital that involved around 5000 people. Responding to UGTT's call, participants denounced the dumping of waste that was carried out, according to them, by militants of the ruling party, in front of various offices of the central union. These attacks by the Islamist movement, they said, were initiated following the social movement of 'municipal employees', one of the poorest categories in the country.

'They are trying to silence us in order to enjoy the freedom to shape our destiny themselves. They want to put fear in our hearts so that we will be unable to make claims or defend our rights, but we shall not give in and we shall not submit', said Houcine Abassi, UGTT secretary general. According to Noureddine Arbaoui, a member of the executive board for Al-Nahda, UGTT is subject to manipulation by forces of the old regime, which are determined to hamper government action.

This confrontation reached its climax on 1 May 2012, when rioters began to reference the social and economic issues of the revolution. The central motto, 'Employment, Freedom, Dignity' was drowned in a cacophony orchestrated on one side by Al-Nahdha supporters who chanted 'With our soul, with our blood, we shall defend you, O Government' and by their enemies on the other side, who retorted 'Let the government of shame fall!' According to Sami Souihli, secretary general of the doctors' union, these attacks were not the first of their kind: Al-Nahdha did not begin the anti-UGTT campaign. The union has been the target of criticism by each of the transition governments put into place following Bin Ali's departure, and has repeatedly been blamed for the economic crisis and the prevailing anarchy. They want to bend UGTT because it is the only organized counter-power.

More than mere disagreements on solutions for social and economic demands, this face-off is a political struggle. Strengthened by its electoral legitimacy, Al-Nahdha aims to take a firm seat in the political landscape, which must be secured by negotiating power relations with UGTT. During a television debate in May, the head of the government, Hamadi Jebali, said in regards to the stalemate in negotiations in the public-service sector:

> We have told the UGTT that everyone should stick to their proper role and mission. The escalation should stop: the government is not the enemy of the workers and civil servants. We don't believe in the theory of class struggle. The unemployed are our children. We don't need so-called 'social negotiations' or pressure to approve wage increases; at the moment we have other priorities.
>
> [The UGTT's] aim is to force the government to give in. Their declarations are political, not social: they are trying to obstruct our work! This government is popular and secure in its electoral legitimacy. We will not give in.

It may be that Al-Nahdha is tempted – like the former Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD), the party state in power under Bin Ali – to bring the UGTT under government control. The influx of new UGTT members of an Islamist persuasion, especially from the private sector, gives credence to this theory. However, the UGTT's new executive bureau, elected at the Tabarka Congress in December 2011, largely consists of 'left-wing consensus' candidates and has loudly affirmed its political autonomy.

Tension has been particularly strong between the two protagonists, so much so that at one point, UGTT decided to challenge the weakness of the opposition parties, the degradation of the economic and security issues in the country, and to engage 'on the side of civil society and the Tunisian people, whatever its diversity, to endorse the cause of the working masses but also and especially to protect the Republic and its institutions'.[5] The actions called by the UGTT to defend individual liberties and denounce the violence of small Salafist groups or the police occasionally take precedence over strikes and demonstrations over pay and conditions.

Recalling the historical legitimacy of the organization, UGTT leaders assert that if the union is concerned with workers' rights, it must embrace a political role during times of crisis. This is how Samir Cheffi, UGTT deputy secretary, replied to the above quoted address from the head of the government:

> We are a large national organization with a history of participation in the national and social struggle. UGTT can by no means acknowledge this kind of statement. This is interference. We have been in full control of our mission since 1946 and we shall not relinquish our national and social mission.

Moreover, the alliances that developed around UGTT during this episode reveal the bipolarity of the Tunisian political scene. The political opposition seeks refuge in UGTT. Liberal groupings such as the PDP (Progressive Democratic Party) and Afeq Tounes, which merged to form the Parti Républicain, and a coalition of former members of the RCD and of other 'democratic' organizations, have rallied around former Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi to form the Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) movement. In this, the very people who had formerly accused UGTT of promoting anarchy in the country are now side by side with parties of the left, such as Watad Al-Watad (Movement of Democratic Patriots) and the Tunisian Workers' Party (formerly the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party), offering their support to UGTT in its confrontation with Al-Nahdha. This reversal of roles is combined with a series of regular arguments. Among those siding with the government, the common argument is 'UGTT is being manipulated and used by the union bureaucracy to achieve purely partisan ends; it must stick to its labour-union role.' Among those who support UGTT, the argument is: 'UGTT should be independent and must actively intervene in political life as a counter-power.'

The significance of the social issue in the political struggle surrounding UGTT

While social and economic demands are often highlighted by UGTT, they have been historically subordinated in its quest for political autonomy vis-à-vis the ruling power and as it has negotiated its role in the political field (Khiari 2003). It is true that UGTT has mobilized in order to defend the rights of municipality employees and to claim wage increases, and it is undeniable that it has made many gains. Among these, one can cite a ban on the use of temporary labour in certain sectors (such as textiles), and a monthly bonus of 70 dinars (US$44) for civil servants. But the organization offers no socio-economic plan for guiding the country out of its current crisis. In fact, no economic or social alternative has been offered to oppose Al-Nahdha's neo-liberal agenda.[6] It stands that such issues do not determine the political party alliances in UGTT; such alliances are determined by political strategies – that is, influencing the government through UGTT. In this light, the new alliances that have taken shape around UGTT between liberals and certain far-left groups that oppose Al-Nahdha have taken on a different significance altogether. Mohamed Kammoun, a unionist teacher, expresses the tension between the need to protect the organization against Al-Nahdha's urge to dominate, and the necessity of providing an alternative economic and social vision:

> As grassroots union members, we are weary of the struggle. It used to be against RCD, now it is against Al-Nahdha. We had rather deal with our internal problems and difficulties like the need to restructure, to bring economic solutions, to offer alternatives, and so on. We feel trapped between Al-Nahdha and a centrist political front around UGTT, in which one could even include followers of Béji Caid Essebsi; there is no time left to propose alternative paths.

More generally, the regular attacks against UGTT raise the issue of where political elites of all persuasions stand in regards to social and economic problems. Besides the failure to break with the old practices of the former regime in dismissing social movements as criminal, there is true difficulty, especially for groups on the left, to move beyond simple proclamations of principles and to integrate social and economic issues into the heart of proposed political agendas. The current sclerosis in the media and political debate around a matrix opposing 'Islamists' and 'democrats' shifts the focus from the socio-economic issues to those concerned with the conquest for political power, thereby side-lining questions of social struggle. The recently formed popular front around the leading figure, Hamma Hammemi, leader of the party of Tunisian workers, has attempted to fill this void with the motto: 'Neither Jbali nor Essebsi, our evolution is that of the small and humble people.'

This turbulent political transition involves a ruling party that is willing to maintain the same neo-liberal political and economic system that governed Tunisia for more than half a century; and a weak opposition failing to find an identity, and encountering great difficulties in thriving outside of the UGTT. UGTT may indeed serve as an intermediate structure that represents the already-organized social categories, but what about the marginalized, such as the unemployed, the powerless, the voiceless?

As an activist from the UDC (Union of Unemployed Graduates) emphasized:

> The UDC is also used by UGTT as a means of pressuring the government; UGTT could have an opportunistic relationship with UDC. In fact, we can see the

> reproduction of the class struggle in the relationship between UGTT and UDC: they treat us as if they are superior. For example, during the demonstration on 25 April to protest against the attacks carried out on UGTT, several representatives of civil society were invited to the balcony of the UGTT, but we were not – we are the marginalized and we are not seen as being as noble as the political leaders. Yet, we are still very attached to the UGTT because it remains the only existing counter-power in the country.

Tunisia entered into a severe political crisis on 24 July 2013, when left-wing member of parliament Mohamed Brahimi was killed, following the assassination of Chokri Belaid under the same circumstances in February of the same year. On one hand, the opposition demanded the resignation of the Islamist-led government and the dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) without suggesting any viable alternative. On the other hand, the Troika government, Al-Nahdha, in particular, clung to the electoral legitimacy, thus refusing to relinquish power. At the time, the national dialogue, mediated by four national organizations (the UGTT, the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts, which represents employers, the Bar Association, and the Tunisian Human Rights League) advanced a consensual roadmap based on three axes: preserving the NCA, forming a non-political government and setting the dates for the general elections. After several political negotiations, consensus overcame confrontation between legality and revolutionary legitimacy, which led to the adoption of the first democratic Tunisian Constitution on 26 January 2014. The national dialogue has also led to replacing the Islamist-led government of Ali Laarayedh with a new government headed by Mehdi Jomaa whose main mission is to organize elections away from political interactions.[7]

While the Tunisian General Labour Union, UGTT, continued to lead several sector-related movements and to ensure the interests of the organized middle class, the national dialogue focused on political issues, which raised internal disputes within the union. Under the dictatorship, the historic dispute was about the union rules. In fact, many confronted the executive board of the union, which was associated with the authorities, and demanded the union's independence from the ruling party. However, this historic dispute was replaced by another kind of dispute. Today, the dispute revolves around the extent of importance that should be accorded to social issues, including the privatization of public services, the abolition of public debt or the unemployment issue.

The main sponsor of the national dialogue (i.e. the UGTT) has succeeded in reconciling between the old elite in power and the newly elected one, thus saving the country from an Egyptian scenario. However, the social movements do not have the same temporality as the political battle. In view of the alarming deterioration of the economic situation in Tunisia, anger is again rising and social movements are again raging in most areas of the country. The biggest challenge for the UGTT and the Tunisian political parties is to be able to reintegrate the revolution's social and economic demands into the heart of the political battle in order to avoid widening the gap between social and political spheres.

Notes

1 Quotations are drawn from interviews carried out in a field survey that was conducted between January 2011 and May 2012. This research will be the subject of a book: *L'UGTT au cœur de la*

révolution tunisienne (*UGTT at the Heart of the Tunisian Revolution*), Mohamed Ali Hammami (ed.) (December 2013).

2 The Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (General Confederation of Tunisian Labour, CGTT) was launched in February 2011 by Habib Guiza, former member of the UGTT. The Union Tunisienne du Travail (Union of Tunisian Workers, UTT) was founded in May 2011 by Ismail Sahbani, who was secretary general of the UGTT in the 1990s.

3 UGTT, Département des Etudes et de la Documentation, Vers un Renouveau Syndical: Diagnostic Quantitatif de l'UGTT par ses Cadres, November 2006, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/tunesien/04797.pdf.

4 Al-Nahdha won the last elections of the constituent assembly of 23 October 2011 with 37 per cent of the votes and forms, along with CPR (Congress for the Republic) and FTDL (Forum for Labor, Democracy and Freedoms), the Troïka at the present government.

5 Declaration of 29 April 2012 on the official website: www.ugtt.org.tn, accessed 15 May 2014.

6 In this regard, the absence of any debate on the finance law seems quite revealing.

7 See http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/03/tunisia-labor-union-political-balance.html.

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Revolutionary Contagion

Social Movements around the Mediterranean

Gianluca Solera

What has happened over the past two and a half years around the Mediterranean is extraordinary. Millions of people, especially young people, conquered the squares urging the 'fall of the System'. A sort of contagious effect spread the call for rebellion from Sīdī Bouzīd to many other cities, nurturing the insurgence of protest movements in different countries of the region, both in the South as in the North. But what are the similarities among those movements? And do these similarities represent a space, an opportunity for common political action? Thinking of similarities to Cairo, Athens, Benghazi, Tel Aviv, Ljubljana or Madrid, the following elements come to mind:

- the occupation and the reappropriation of public spaces;
- the creation of spontaneous and voluntary structures of assistance and support to the population;
- the mistrust towards the mechanisms of institutional representation;
- the public denunciation of collusion between politicians and economic interest groups;
- the fight against corruption and against the expropriation of resources for the benefit of a few;
- the demand for 'Bread, Freedom and Social Justice' (the Tunisian slogan which reached the other squares), or in other words, 'Commons, Democracy, Equality and Solidarity';
- the mobilization through networking, interpersonal relations or through the *social media*;
- civil society as guardian of constitutional principles and democratic accountability;
- the need to go beyond the borders, to look beyond the national or cultural fences; and
- a strong sense of dignity and respect, rejecting identity-related divisions.

What fascinates mostly is the idea of reappropriation of the city, the heart of the social action. When I was studying in Venice, it was quite common to see in the quieter streets or squares, a family bringing outside, in front of the door, the kitchen table or a pair of chairs, to consume the meal or enjoy a refreshing drink: this intersection between the public and private spheres, favoured by the absence of cars and bicycles,

was to me intriguing. Walking around in the city of the Doges, you could easily taste a unique feeling of familiarity, of physical proximity between the spaces of social action and domestic intimacy. It was this spirit that probably inspired the most important Italian students' movement after 1968, the so-called Black Panther Movement, in early 1990. At that time, I could witness the occupation of the Institute of Architecture of Venice, the first Italian faculty to rebel together with Palermo's Faculty of Literature and Philosophy. The students were protesting against a reform project aiming at privatizing the Italian Academia. For the first time, in those days without sleep, students were feeling citizens and not just enrolled numbers. During the occupation, they opened the library until midnight and organized public seminars. Workshops on the rediscovery of the city were held in secondary and high schools. These workshops were called *Eutopolis*, the 'City of the accomplished good'. Twenty-one years later, the Greek poet Costis Triandaphyllou writes from *Plateia Syntagmatos*, the occupied Constitution Square: 'The open Assembly continues / standing up / breathing at last / storms lie ahead of us / she knows / speak up!' (Triandaphyllou 2011: 4). There was something that evoked the motion in those peaceful acts of re-conquest of urban territory occurring on both sides of the Mediterranean, something fluid which was flowing between people and places, recalling common questions and a shared political subjectivity. Something temporary, but persistent at the same time, something intimate and demonstrative, fragile and practical. That something was embodied by the tent, the tents which have been planted at the centre of many cities, the camps suddenly appearing in the urban fabric. That something was bringing us back to the nomadic condition, the condition of the one who moves and never arrives, who is chased away and always comes back to life, who ties the past to the future, who does not accommodate in the enclosure of the *status quo* and is as well able to enjoy the little things in life. The tent has symbolized the nomadic character of these movements, both in the spatial as well as in the philosophical sense, carrying transnational values from one place to another. The fact that the Nomad is rejected in modern society – the Nomad represents, in fact, the unsuccessful, the marginalized – makes a 'movement of campers' a revolutionary agent in itself, something which does not combine with the dominant idea of what human achievement should look like. And it fits perfectly with the history of this region, of the Mediterranean, a land (and a sea) of fugitives, colonized, merchants and travellers. A land of intermingling blends, of transition, a land of the middle.

I would like to tell two stories which explain a lot about the common ground between expressions of social uprising in the Mediterranean region. The first one is about Occupy the Buffer Zone, a movement that invaded during several months the interstitial zone which is administered by the United Nations between the Greek and the Turkish sides of Nicosia. The occupation began on 15 October 2011, on the occasion of the celebration by the Spanish *Indignados* of five months since the beginning of their movement. Greek and Turkish Cypriot activists occupied the check-post of Ledra /Lokmacı Street; then they put up tents, then entered abandoned buildings and reopened them for political and cultural activities, until the police intervened brutally and pulled away the occupants on 6 April 2012, after a campaign in which they had been accused of being drug-addicted, libertines and destabilisers. What was an empty space, abandoned, which was ratifying the definitive split of the city since 1974, became for a few months a meeting point for those young people who wanted to get rid of that political, social and territorial fracture. By redefining that space, the Occupy the Buffer

Zone movement (that many dismissed as a radical one) contributed to call into question the identity of the inhabitants of Nicosia. Even a few immigrants including Arabs who were in the Turkish part settled in the Buffer Zone, although they knew that, if they went back, they would have been arrested. 'This movement is important because it's different from other movements, it happened in a no man's land. Nobody owns it. No country, no flag, no nation. It's a free zone, a gap', says one of the occupants (MIG@NET 2012: 40). It is a remarkable story because it took place in an area formally of nobody, suspended in an interlude of oblivion, and which for this reason symbolized the vacuity of current dominant policies, unable to solve the problems, but only to put them aside. Those youngsters were questioning the power relations which lie behind the production of urban space, 'fundamentally shifting control away from capital and the State and toward urban inhabitants' (MIG@NET 2012: 41). The Mediterranean Sea has proved to be a kind of Buffer Zone, which someone would like to be a divisive border in order to preserve unjust power relations, and what has happened in Nicosia was a personification of it. The occupation of Nicosia's Green Line was removed before the Cypriot presidency of the European Union began (1 July 2012). It was, however, a cosmetic removal because only a few months later the entire island, still divided, was brought to its knees by the economic crisis, and therefore became an entire 'buffer zone', where nobody owns anything.

The second story is about a very special act of protest which was organized by the Group of Independent Syrian Artists. This group offers its best talents to encourage demonstrations to take place in their country peacefully, trying to create embarrassing situation which disarm reality, as with the Brides of Freedom action. Four girls, with the white dress of marriage, are silently standing in the Bāshā Medhat market of Damascus. It is autumn 2012. They wear long skirts embroidered with flowers and a light veil on their heads. The girls unravel a red fabric in their hands, on which is written: 'Syria is one family. Stop killing.' These beautiful virgins stand immobile and silent for 13 minutes among passers-by. Their looks are not serene; they count the minutes going by until the regime's security arrives, holds them and imprisons them for 70 days and 70 nights. During the captivity, a poster circulates on Facebook with the smiling pictures of Kanda, Līnā, Rīmā and Ru'ā, the four girls. It was an act of marriage with the destiny, an act of voluntary adherence to the life they have to go through to pass to a new one. An act of will and love at the same time, a contract with themselves and with their own people. This is exactly the spirit in which many young people challenged life and death, pouring themselves in the streets, with their heart and their mind, not for themselves but for their community, for those who will be able to benefit from their act of rebellion. Like a marriage, it is a promise that looks at the future, not at the miserable gains of today. When Fādī al-'Assāf, one of the leaders of the group, sent me those pictures,[1] my thoughts went to the 'weddings of sea' I knew about, but not those celebrated by the ancient Venetian Republic to affirm its dominance over trade routes in the Adriatic Sea – *Desponsamus te, mare. In signum veri perpetuique dominii*.[2] Rather, the ones of three fugitives who left Libya during the uprising in May 2011 with a boat, landed on Lampedusa Island, and were transferred to a small town in the Alps, Santo Stefano di Cadore, where they fell in love with three women, Chiara, Veronica and Julie (Moscatelli 2012)!

Fundamental demands shared between the Arab Spring and the *Indignado* movements did not only include effective democracy, social justice and freedom of expression, but also the question of reclaiming dispossessed common goods. Take the case of the

Tunisian Union of Unemployed Graduates, whose youth has played a major role during the Jasmine revolution, and which has been pushing for reforms leading to a fairer and more transparent labour market and to the redistribution of public lands in depressed areas of the country. This union has 10,000 affiliates, 24 regional offices and almost 200 local ones: it is a kind of brigade of a much larger army. Out of the 700,000 Tunisian unemployed, between 200,000 and 250,000 are young graduates, and the employment rate among graduates who complete their academic studies does not exceed 10 per cent per annum. The issue of the long-term unemployed is not a post-revolutionary phenomenon. In a country that had focused on higher education and learning, today's state of unemployment is catastrophic. Unemployment among graduates grew 150 per cent in five years, between 2005 and 2010. Among the technically qualified, the number of unemployed persons rose from 17,900 in 2005 to 57,900 in 2010, making it the most severely hit category by unemployment, with 41.6 per cent of the total number of university graduates (Ben Hammādī 2011).[3] Young people like Sālem al-'Ayārī, the union's general coordinator, would like to have a proper job, but aim at becoming development actors in their communities as well. 'In the Northwest, we are supporting local authorities which think intelligently about rural development centred on regenerating agriculture, including organic farming projects. But all that requires stability and investments', Sālem al-'Ayārī says. 'We are asking for direct public investment, because the private sector controls all major projects.'[4] The union has been seeking dialogue with the National Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicraft, and wants to think big: transforming the movement into a centre for studies, research and training on development and employment in order to devise new policies for the professional integration of young people. 'If I had 500,000 Euros and could invest this sum in Tunisia, I would think [of] a rural development project with young people, focusing on regional productions, and I would invest the benefits in other young people through vocational training and retraining', said al-'Ayārī, aware that large businesses do not invest in these local projects, but seek benefits at close range. This is why he is struggling so that his union is assigned the management of 3000 hectares of state land in Sīdī Bouzīd for agricultural development through young unemployed graduates, instead of waiting for it to be sold to foreign investors. 'It is not fair that our generation pays for the public debt accumulated by Bin 'Alī's regime', he concluded.

On the other side of the sea, even artists are struggling against the privatization of common goods. On 14 June 2011, the same day that a national referendum stopped privatization of water utilities in Italy, a group of artists occupied and reopened *Teatro Valle* to the public, the oldest theatre in Rome (built 1727), engaging in a 'constitutional process for culture as a fundamental right that can spread and contaminate every public space, triggering a profound transformation of the way of acting and thinking' (Teatro Valle Occupato 2013: 3). Since that day, the *Valle* has become a platform of expression for several citizens' groups who are fighting for civil rights, solidarity, justice, peace and the environment. A unique case in Italy and Europe, *Teatro Valle* proposes events which mix social and political debates with artistic performances. With donations (entrance to events is free), it covers living costs for the occupiers and stage equipment rental, while none of the occupying artists receives a fee for the work he or she does. They are 100 participants, of whom 30 are accommodated in the theatre on a rotational basis. 'We receive proposals of any kind, groups are looking for us', explains Simona Senzacqua, actress, now director of communications. 'The issues our events

address are diversified: privatization, landfills, violence against women, Palestine, immigration, labour, prisons, and so on. The theatre became the symbol of the struggle for common goods, and many groups are approaching us because they recognize the political significance of an artistic scene.'[5] Over the past two years, *Teatro Valle* has never closed, providing a variety of activities from morning to night, representing at least six years of performances in a normal theatre. After a long process of online participatory consultation, on the second anniversary of the theatre's occupation, the final version of their constitution was presented on stage; the theatre is now registered as a foundation owned by its 5000 members. The constitution reads, among other things: 'With the present act of private autonomy, we hereby proclaim that an ancient and unique physical space like *Teatro Valle* is a fully common good. It is inseparably connected with culture, a fundamental need and right of every person, and as such it should be part of a large project that involves the workers of culture and all citizens for the full recognition of their crucial economic, political and cultural role of resistance to commodification and social decadence' (Teatro Valle Occupato 2013: 3).

There are many examples of structures created following the uprisings and offering alternative opportunities to socialize or to meet basic needs which are not guaranteed by the state's institutions. One of them is *Ibda' bi-Nafsik* (Start by Yourself), a serial of artistic and social events launched by *Agora*, an association created after the revolution in the city of Alexandria for creative community involvement through education, dissemination and artistic production in order to self-generate opportunities for development and art crafts, and to recuperate dismissed urban areas for public cultural happenings. It is a network of volunteering artists which have already replicated these events five times in two years, bringing together young musicians, painters, craftsmen, writers, and so on thanks to the initiative of Rīm Qāsem, a kind of modern Hypatia. 'Locally, we have changed the lives of many volunteers and we have promoted a group of low-income women, who were home maids and now produce and sell jewellery. Our success story is becoming a model for other Arab countries. Local groups in Tunisia and Morocco contacted me and I have authorized them to use our name for similar initiatives', says Rīm.[6] Another success story is the *Time-Exchange Bank* created by the activists of Athens after the occupation of Constitution Square. The bank, which has around 1000 affiliates and is expanding in different districts of the Greek capital city, aims to exchange services using time instead of money: an hour of service may be exchanged for another hour, and you can also exchange products that you create yourself, always using the same units of measure it takes to produce them. One of the founders, Georgia Bekridaki, explains: 'With *Time-Exchange Bank* we have created a culture of participation and self-organization in situations of crisis even between persons who are not normally politicized.'[7]

Interesting similarities can be discovered if we compare some of the manuals produced by activists in different moments of the social protest in the region. Three of these manuals, which have been produced by those who have stood up and have occupied public spaces over the past few years, came into this author's hands. The first two are from the Middle East: *Keif tuthawwir bi-Hadā'a* (How to Make the Revolution with Cleverness) is a document that was circulated between Egyptian activists who picked up part of the *Anomymous* network's instructions and reshaped them with common sense and creativity. It is a document in Arabic on the objectives, tools and tactics of the popular uprising against Mubārak's regime. The second was compiled by Barak Segal, one of the leading activists of the occupation of Rothschild Boulevard in

Tel Aviv in July 2011 to protest against the high cost of living (particularly housing), the deterioration of public services and corruption. The difference is that it is a confidential document, *in fieri*, which had been prepared with a view to launching a revolution. The facts were then faster than this plan, and Rothschild Boulevard was occupied spontaneously before Barak Segal had time to prepare the uprising. The name that was proposed for the revolt was *Ad Matai?* (*Until When?*). The third document is the manual of the students who twice occupied the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb in 2009, protesting against the introduction of tuition fees, a measure that was presented by the authorities as necessary for the modernization of the country, with a view to its entry into the European Union. From this experience came most of the struggle and protest initiatives that have appeared on the Croatian scene. *The Occupation Cookbook* was written by some of the students who controlled the faculty, applying the same direct decision-making mechanisms that were used during the mobilization. Unlike the other texts, this manual was written after the initiatives, accurately describing organs and working mechanisms, and the kind of alternative government, run by direct democracy, that was put in place at the university. What these three documents have in common is significant.

First is the emphasis upon the principle of non-violence, which is not intended as passive submission to injustice, but an energetic form of struggle and conflict management that must comprise the modalities of passive or active resistance depending on the contexts, but never responds to injustice with injustice. The idea expressed in *Keif tuthawwir bi-Hadā'a* that you should deal with an armoured vehicle with a water balloon of soapy water, for example, is as harmless as it is extraordinarily effective.

Second is the principle of self-control: order, discipline, punctuality, systematic character, coordination and cleanliness are the golden rules of the revolutionary; the inspiration of these young people is not based on hysteria or hormones. Without organization and rigour, you cannot thwart a police chain (*Keif tuthawwir bi-Hadā'a*) or expose the collusion between the capital and the political class (*Ad Matai?*), or manage a complex institution like a university (*The Occupation Cookbook*).

Any kind of personalism is viewed with distrust, and team spirit is what makes it possible to deal with the 'system' on equal terms, whether it is about preventing the media from distorting the message of the struggle (*The Occupation Cookbook*) or about transforming passive sympathizers for the cause into active supporters (*Ad Matai?*), or choosing between defending your teammates in front of police officers or making a heroic act (*Keif tuthawwir bi-Hadā'a*).

The language should be simple, understandable and transmissible; it must attract fellow citizens and not keep them away, it must broaden the ranks of those who want to wage the same battle. Demonstration slogans must be easy to understand, state the Egyptians; discrimination between the centre and the peripheries must be addressed with firmness in the name of social justice, state the Israelis; and how the debate is conducted in an assembly must allow for a collective examination of the theme, stress the Croatians.

Finally, the number counts; it can start with but a few, but it must end in many. You must go to the crowds, recruit or, if you prefer, expand: the revolution is not a conspiracy, not an affair of the few. You must systematically call upon the watchers at the balconies and ask them to swell the ranks in an Egyptian rally, create regional teams and then network with mayors and personalities respected by society in Israel, or keep the university and the assemblies open to non-students in Zagreb. And, finally, one

should not believe that the revolutionary atmosphere materializes spontaneously. It must be forged, and often that happens through methods and principles that may appear trivial, and they probably are; but if pursued with perseverance and consistency, they change everything. 'Do not be pessimistic without reason', write the Egyptians; 'We must convince the elected politicians that they work for people' (*Ad Matai?*); 'The goal must be clear, succinct and have its basis in one of the basic human rights', add the authors of *The Occupation Cookbook*.

The fact that these uprisings and protest movements have many things in common in terms of political objectives, strategies and language does not mean that they have reached a mature stage of cooperation for common purposes and campaigns. Despite the strength shown by many revolutionary movements and protest initiatives from 2011 onwards, in fact, frustration over the inability of classical structures of formal democracy to face contemporary crises is increasing in several of the region's countries. Many of these structures tend to restore order and to wave off innovation and change. Furthermore, after having driven dictatorial Arab regimes that were supported or tolerated by European countries to collapse,[8] and after having seized countries in deep economic and political crisis by virtue of an extraordinary effect of contagion, these movements have not yet managed to produce a *leadership* that competes with the political apparatus in power, and that exposes the regional dimension of the economic, financial, military or bureaucratic interests into which this apparatus is tied, whether in Cairo or Tel Aviv, or in Tunis or Madrid. New movements often lack political experience, and much must still be done so that they can seek inspiration from each other and benefit from mutual exchange. Although the desire to change and fight among youth in the region is widespread, infrastructure is still needed for effective and responsible activism, so that activists can respond in a strategic and coordinated way on a regional level. The similarities I have tried to underline among social movements in the Mediterranean region could represent a fertile context for such a development, but this is a field still to be explored.

On the other hand, countries that have led foreign policy between Europe and the Mediterranean and who have played a central role in recent history are in crisis. Consider Spain, who was sponsoring the Barcelona process and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in the 1990s, or France, which launched the idea of a Union for the Mediterranean in 2008. The loss of institutional legitimacy, the weakness of intergovernmental mechanisms and the lack of a bold political vision have made this process an inconsistent intergovernmental paper box without infamy or praise, made of sub-committees, repetitive conferences and limited investments in scope due to the lack of financial resources and political utopias. This, in spite of the fact that the Euro-Mediterranean space hosts 400 million inhabitants, has extraordinary natural resources, the richest cultural heritage in the world, a common lifestyle, and great talents in society, in business and in academics. All of this, according to a perspective of integration, would represent the pillars of a new model of regional development which could drive into the corner models that rely on unsustainable exploitation and oppression, such as the American or Chinese models.

But why should this happen in the Mediterranean, which has been regarded in contemporary history as a backward region? Because of its history of superposition of multiple civilizations, and because of the common values that its peoples embody (a strong sense of community, the attachment to family, the taste for beautiful things, the connection with territory and food, the cult of hospitality, spirituality, creativity

and industriousness, and the practice of coexistence with others), the Mediterranean has become a fulcrum of civil resistance against capitalism, de-democratization and cultural trivialization, all of which constitute a natural antidote to mercantilist globalization and individualism.[9] For all that, the Mediterranean could again become a cradle of a new Renaissance if conditions were put in place for a project of *transnational citizenship*. In other words, a shared political initiative that combines the various experiences of resistance, protest and popular alternatives, carried out mostly by young people and building on a Mediterranean platform, could lead a regional movement towards a new social contract, something that is urgently required in times of profound crisis both in Europe and in the Mediterranean. A social contract that rewrites the foundations of the relations between institutions and citizens, where communities can govern the transformation of their territory and influence the allocation of economic and social resources, would challenge the centralization of capital and resources in the hands of the few and reform the rules of participation and democratic representation.

Such a transnational movement would act as a political entity, operating in a coordinated manner, to launch joint initiatives, form cadres, share knowledge and services, fund innovative practices, or prepare for electoral battle while facing the political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental crisis beyond national borders. The momentum for a new space of political and social engagement for regional integration around the Mediterranean exists. What has happened between the two shores over the past three years shows that the common roots, cultural patterns, history and life style shared by its peoples could be a unique combination in establishing a new social laboratory in the Mediterranean. It will be up to the leaders of these movements to perceive this historical opportunity and shape a common destiny for the region, Europe and the Arab world, West and the East, that regimes and governments are not able to envision because they are prisoners of national or corporate interests, identity-based ideologies and old cultural paradigms.

A specific point to be addressed in this process with regard to the construction of a common destiny for the Mediterranean concerns the role of Islamist movements. Let us take, for instance, the Egyptian crisis after the destitution of President Mohammed Morsī. Egypt has slipped into ideological intransigence and frontal opposition, which does not help the cause of national reconciliation or the revitalization of the 2011 revolution, which has not produced any substantial reform of institutions or public policies. On the other hand, civil society in the region has witnessed further divisions between activists who are pro-dialogue and those who are anti-dialogue with political Islam, thus weakening opportunities for common campaigns and strategies between the two shores. Ibrāhīm el-Hodhaibī, whose great-grandfather Hassan and grandfather Ma'moun were supreme guides of the Muslim Brotherhood, during a long interview in spring 2013, explored with me an interesting review of the roots of the current political crisis: 'In the 19th century, the Grand khedive Mohammed 'Alī [considered the founder of modern Egypt] built strong state bureaucracies that replaced social institutions within the framework of a powerful nation state. The endowments were nationalized and the system of local government centralized; those institutions that traditionally exercised a very important social function have not been replaced by modern indigenous institutions, which reflect the complexity of our times' (Solera 2013: 130). The policy of centralization and control of social instances which started with Mohammed 'Alī was continued by his successors until Mubārak. The result is that, now, there are no intermediate bodies between the individuals and the state; no spaces, therefore, exist

to facilitate the process of socialization and there is no culture of social consensus-building: today's fractures are thus the expression of this development. In order to drive society out of crisis, el-Hodhaibī proposes dealing with two spaces, municipalities and trade unions. Developing these two spaces would help Arab societies to resolve the current polarization. When you manage a city or defend workers, it does not matter whether you are secular or Islamist. You must provide services and preserve rights. Building democracy from the bottom up helps to encourage leaders who are not the expression of an authoritarian vision of the state, and winning elections at the local level or in a factory costs less, so there are more chances for off-siders to win. 'At the end of the day, those who represent the majority or the minority are always wealthy persons, who are rather conservative', el-Hodhaibī pointed out during our interview. 'Our problem is that the division between Islamists and seculars is a division between the extreme right and the extreme right, so it is no division! They are both centralist and neoliberal in their views.' And what should the goals of Mediterranean citizens and European activists be in order to avoid the worst of this 'Arab Fall', when the achievements of the 2011 revolutions seem to be losing ground? They should show firmness in rejecting any kind of bloody violence, whether it comes from state institutions or organized political forces; in demanding an independent investigation into such dramatic events as the evacuation of Rābi'a al-'Adawiya Square in Cairo or the killing of prominent politicians such as Shokrī Bel'aid; in condemning massive incarceration campaigns such as the one led against the Egyptian Brotherhood in the second half of 2013; in supporting the role of civil society as an independent supervisor of post-revolutionary developments; and in facilitating the rapprochement between political and cultural communities in post-revolutionary countries. But that's not all.

To give a perspective on regional solutions to the recent turbulences, and to curb regime propaganda that encourages theories of international conspiracy and breaks progressive revolutionary processes, channels of exchange should be strengthened between revolutionary and democratic forces of post-revolutionary countries, including Islamic forces, on the one hand, and European activists who want to develop Mediterranean freedom, sustainability, equity and cultural exchange, on the other. It is time to convene a 'General State' of social movements in the Mediterranean; clearly, there are no local solutions to the current crisis. This would involve a militant forum from which scenarios of institutional renewal and social reform can be drawn and a new historic era inspired. Such a forum would set the basis for cooperation between the movements of the north and south Mediterranean. It could later evolve towards establishing common projects and regional campaigns, with the aim of returning politics to citizens, and isolating corrupt oppressors and manipulators. This, of course, is not easy; but nothing is. We must be moved by the ambition to design a new forum for political, social and economic integration based on the cultural diversity that characterizes its people. The Egyptian crisis is not only about Egypt, and the same can be said for Greece, Spain or even Syria. Such crises show that the cycle of 2011 revolutions and protest movements is not yet complete, and that the legitimacy of governmental and state institutions continues to be problematic wherever we go, whether in Rome, Cairo, Madrid or Tel Aviv. The same can be said for supranational institutions. The relationship between state and citizen need to be reinvented, and the dialectics of identity called into question. A new concept of identity, a multipolar and regional identity, is needed. Independent civil society has a special responsibility in preparing for the future, reanimating the spirit of 2011, bringing together religious and secular

wings in order to address regional socio-economic, political or cultural problems beyond national borders and in spite of regime propaganda. This is the best social legacy the Mediterranean region deserves.

Notes

1 See Facebook page سورية إلنا كلنا ('Syria Is No More than All of Us').
2 It means: 'We wed thee, sea, in the sign of the true and everlasting Lord.'
3 In the first trimester of 2013, there were 231,000 unemployed university graduates, representing 33.2 per cent of the total number of unemployed (Blaise 2013).
4 Interview April 2012.
5 Interviews April 2012 and June 2013.
6 Interview March 2013. See Facebook page 'AGORA.Arts.Culture'.
7 Interview July 2012. See http://www.time-exchange.gr/.
8 For the uninitiated, the National Democratic Party of Hosnī Mubārak has been a member of the Socialist International, which gathers all Socialist parties, including the European ones, until 2011!
9 A survey conducted by Gallup-Europe and the Anna Lindh Foundation on intercultural trends shows that the majority of respondents in 13 Euro-Mediterranean countries associate the Mediterranean with the idea of positive values (lifestyle, family, cultural heritage, and so on) rather than factors that divide or issues of political, environmental or social crisis (Anna Lindh Foundation 2010: 19).

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Part VI

Uprisings

The Technology of Protest

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26

A Public Sphere Revolution?

Social Media versus Authoritarian Regimes

Armando Salvatore

The state and the public sphere: Two faces of the body politic or strange bed fellows?

There have been cyclical calls for interdisciplinarity between Middle East studies and international relations, as well as, in general, between the social sciences and Arabic and Islamic studies in response to ever new challenges and crises in the region. The so-called Arab Spring has probably inaugurated a new such cycle. This chapter responds to the need for a renewed interdisciplinary focus on Middle East societies and polities by addressing the complex relation between old and new media, the public sphere, and the political culture of socio-political actors in the Middle East. It also points out some implications of the transnational dimension of the relation between politics and publicness.

The recent success of pro-democracy movements in the Arab world is just the latest stage of a much longer and deeper wave. In particular, it brings the state (not necessarily a clone of the European, Westphalian state, but in the form of a postcolonial 'developmental' state; see Ayubi 1995) more forcefully back into the comparative picture, to the extent the Arab Spring has evidenced that underneath authoritarian structures (both at the level of governance and of social relations) public spheres have existed and claimed social and political relevance for several decades now (Salvatore 2011).

The events associated with the Arab Spring have been, therefore, a big surprise only for those observers who did not pay sufficient attention to public sphere dynamics over the years. Yet it should also be mentioned that others made the inverted mistake of pretending to discover that the new media, and particularly the social media, represented a technological panacea allegedly brought from the West to the Middle East, and singled them out not only against the rest of the mediascape, but also against society and politics at large, ignoring that their role in the uprisings was important, yet circumscribed to specific dimensions of the mobilization endeavours. No doubt, therefore, the Arab Spring has had the merit of pushing forward the boundaries of lazy thinking about politics in the Middle East. It has prompted various interrogations not

only concerning the role of new media in the revolutionary events, but also with regard to the factors that allow for public spheres to unfold their transformative potential, up to the point of becoming incubators of revolutionary arenas.

The presuppositions, at the level of political culture, for the formations of the citizens participating in the public sphere do not need to be perfectly aligned with those distilled out by Habermas in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989 [1962]), which was based on the comparison (through a secondary analysis) of the historical trajectories of the emergence of public spheres in England, Scotland, France and Germany. The approach I have been adopting in previous studies (Salvatore 2007, 2011), and which can be also applied to the Arab Spring, is at the same time consistent with this main tradition of social-scientific enquiry, yet sufficiently critical of its shortcomings, which are also due to an inevitably Eurocentric perspective of the theory (Salvatore 2012). The socio-cultural embeddedness of the public sphere (and, in the specific case of modern Arab societies, the pioneering role played by Muslim reformers in its emergence) is either ignored or wilfully bracketed out (for an exception, see Eder 2006). In this context, the diffusely Western, normative expectation according to which a prerequisite of a democratic public sphere is a democratic political culture would be no more than a neo-colonial tautology. Its collateral, though perhaps unintended, damage has been to provide justification to a time-honoured, Western *Realpolitik* consisting in supporting docile dictators, pending a 'democratic maturation' of non-Western peoples. Habermas exposed himself to waves of constructive criticism and enrichment in the last 15 years, not least through scholarly trips to Egypt and Iran. Yet, both empirical research and theory conducted on the topic of the public sphere have moved forward ever since, in spite of whatever integration and revision Habermas himself has been ready to acknowledge or not.

The most important legacy of his work should be carefully assessed in view of present and future challenges and research goals. The Habermasian public sphere fulfils a strategic function within modern and modernizing societies since it mediates between the media or the communication environment at large (down to face-to-face interaction and socialization) and the political arena. Not only has he never maintained that there can be no public sphere under the shadow of authoritarian government, but he showed that actually the opposite is true: namely, that the condition for a public sphere to emerge is the necessity to respond to absolutism. Therefore, the continual existence of an authoritarian government is the condition of possibility for the emergence and thriving of a public sphere. Actually, in the last part of his famous book he decried the decay of the public sphere in the context of a democratic welfare state (Habermas 1989 [1962]: 181–235). He also showed that in spite of the fact that the European revolutions of 1848 largely failed, the legacy of public sphere cultures and practices survived the events and became an asset in future struggles.

In this spirit, while examining the Arab Spring from the viewpoint of the public sphere, one should both adopt a longer-term perspective and avoid identifying the political effectiveness of the public sphere with short-term democratization gains. The evolution of a modern public sphere in the Middle East goes back at least to the last third of the 19th century, if not earlier, as it coincided with the rise of the periodical press (Salvatore 2009). The growth of a public sphere in each and every country of the region and most notably at a pan-Arab level has created over time a contentious space, whose careful analysis had heralded (long before the onset of the Arab Spring) a potential to unsettle the various diagnoses of the allegedly resilient authoritarian shell of Middle Eastern states.

A sense of viable public communication bridging debate and confrontation can be supported by diverse public identities. Subsequent generations of reformers and revolutionaries have worked in this direction with the communicative instruments and normative tools of the printing press and other forums of discourse and communicative action, such as clubs, learned societies and charitable associations. Their sometimes highly formalized, more often semiformal articulation of a public discourse often explicitly oriented to the notion of the 'common good' (*maslaha* or, more precisely, *al-maslaha al-'amma* in the terminology of Islamic legal theory) was particularly suitable to push forward a program of social change and reform, while managing an ambivalent relationship toward the institutional structure of the colonial and postcolonial states. The movement of reform (*islah*) that provided the normative hub to the rising public spheres of Muslim majority societies in the colonial era played a key role in establishing the conceptual frame defining the patterns of internal cohesion and the external boundaries of society.

On this basis, the contours of the collective body, soon to take the form of a European-style nation state, were defined via shifting lines of exclusion and inclusion (first of all, between city and countryside, urban literati and rural population). Theorizing about 'social ills', the reformers saw in key resources of the Islamic juridical and ethical traditions the proper medicine (Gasper 2008). The public sphere represented not only the arena that gave expression and provided coherence to the aspirations of increasingly autonomous actors within society – starting from a stratum of educated urbanites – but also the network of physical and virtual public spaces where a mediation between traditional notions of the common good and the differentiating imperatives of political modernity could be sought. Since the late 1920s, Islamist voices have inherited this type of vocation and extended it to a wider circle of participants and activists.

In the process, the new arena, the public sphere as a whole, provided the institutional platform for the formulation of a normative notion of societal interconnectedness: an idea of social and national cohesion based on a rational division of labour and supported by emerging forms of solidarity. In the Egyptian case, an organic notion of solidarity was still latent under the crust of the traditional idea of the *umma* (Islamic 'community'). Yet, this framework of communal reference, as rearticulated in the discourse of Muslim reformers, and later of Islamists and liberals alike, showed a scalable size and expandable boundaries and could be flexibly upgraded into a modern frame of belonging and interdependence ranging from the local community to the transnational *umma* – both necessarily and strategically passing through the sovereign hub of the nation state, which has ever since emerged as a frame of social solidarity and political mobilization even for the most 'internationalist' among all political forces, including Islamists and communists.

This modern Arab–Islamic trajectory proves that the idea of the public sphere is at the same time culturally embedded and comparable across various epochs and civilizations. The way in which a sense of the public contributes to social life varies considerably, depending on several factors: the modalities of transaction over the definition of the common good; the search for equitable solutions to collective problems; shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion; background notions of personality, responsibility and justice; but also the evolving degree of legitimacy of existing states and their capacity to control, manipulate or repress autonomous public sphere dynamics. An enlarged focus on the genesis of public spheres opens the door to a comparative look at various trajectories of their emergence within societies situated outside of the Western

core of modernity. In sum, the public sphere cannot be understood as the exclusive prerogative of modern, Western societies or of mature democracies based on solid, formalized templates of individual rights and political participation. Semiformal articulations of identities and modes of connectedness and mobilization can also facilitate the emergence of public spheres, while the coercive and institutional power of the modern state may both further and limit this potential. Therefore long before the eruption of the Arab Spring, it was clear that taking the public sphere into account within the political equation requires a comparative perspective and, to a large extent, an interdisciplinary effort.

The most critical dimension of analysis concerns whether the state and the public sphere in the Middle East can be said to evolve along parallel or divergent lines. One key work in the literature on Arab authoritarianism was Nazih Ayubi's seminal *Overstating the Arab State* (Ayubi 1995), published just before he prematurely passed away. Ayubi was himself very interested in the role of culture and intellectuals in state formation, somewhat following a Gramscian approach on hegemony, and acknowledged in his book the importance for politics of the main frames of social solidarity and cohesion. Several other books on the authoritarian structure of the Arab state followed up in the last 15 years, particularly to make sense of the frustrated hopes after the wave of civil society and democratization radiating from Eastern Europe, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire, had created vain expectations of a spill-over into the Middle East. Yet, the literature has ever since oscillated between a diagnosis of a resilient authoritarianism and the vagaries of a 'transitology' of sort, the new science of transition to democracy. This kind of literature never took seriously into account the dynamics of the public sphere. While scholars have listed a vast array of reasons for the resilience of authoritarianism (ranging from oil rents through inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies and crony capitalism to patriarchal political cultures), public spheres have existed and, to some or large extent, even thrived in the shadow of authoritarian rule for decades, thus preparing the terrain for the so-called Arab Spring. Therefore, while there is still much value in the literature on authoritarianism and the Arab state, its main limit has been that it did not adequately interact with the analysis of other developments. It did not organically link the diagnoses of authoritarianism with the ongoing socio-political movements in the public arena which sometimes directly targeted authoritarian rule, and most often created a sense of common resistance and a shared language among oppositional groups even across the secular-Islamist divide.

A famous caricature a few years ago in Egypt had Mubarak congratulating the founder of Facebook for his ingenious invention – only the character appearing in the caricature was not Mark Zuckerberg but 'Umar Sulayman, the powerful and sinister head of military intelligence. The caricature reflected a popular endorsement of the paradigm of authoritarian resilience, implying that even a popular social network like Facebook, instead of favouring participation and critique, facilitated the work of the intelligence services to collect information about actual or potential oppositional activists. This also shows that the dominant paradigm of scholarship on Middle East politics laying stress on an insurmountable authoritarianism was reflected mirror-like by a bitter self-view of society which eclipsed the visibility and relevance of other processes of aggregation and mobilization that were at the time unfolding on the ground, both offline and online, under the shadow of corrupt authoritarian rule.

Among concurring developments that have been given some attention since the late 1990s, while being mostly analysed separately from the issue of state authoritarianism,

one should mention first of all the rise of Arab satellite television, various forms of transnational (not only Islamist) activism also beyond the pan-Arab level, and the re-emergence (not for the first time in the history of the region) of a specific issue of youth (*shabab*) as both the major victims of unemployment and as the harbingers of hopes for a deep change, cultural as much as political, in a sclerotized gerontocratic society.

What is new in the 'new media'? Shared language and collective subjectivity

In spite of the wider theoretical and political implications of the Habermasian model, it is not surprising that much research on the public sphere has turned to investigate modes of communication through the increasingly central role of modern mass media, on which Habermas's original theory was either reticent or pessimistic. This is why focusing on the role of 'new media' as instruments of democracy is not anything that can be taken for granted, either in the West or in the Middle East. Yet, a longer-term perspective on the political relevance of the public sphere should make us consider first of all that several newly emerging media since the advent of the periodical press in the late 19th century (most famously Nasser's radio station *sawt al-'arab*) have contributed to amalgamate the political culture and political communication landscape of the Arab world in spite of structural differences among societies and rivalries among state elites.

While more recently the internet might be seen as having both cohesive and fragmenting effects, satellite television and especially Al Jazeera have pushed most strongly in a homogenizing direction. This development has actually created the idea itself of the 'Arab street', a vernacular version of the notion of the public sphere which was first employed, to my knowledge, in English and then adopted in Arabic (not unlike many other keywords of public communication). Yet the 'Arab street' is significantly a keyword used both in the media and on the street itself. The watershed of the launch of Al Jazeera in 1996 cannot be overestimated: the new TV channel started to broadcast several news which state-owned TVs blissfully ignored and, most critically, to push forward a widening public sense of the fading legitimacy of basically all Arab governments (with the partial exception of the Gulf monarchies, for obvious reasons), in spite of their purported differences in terms of regime type and international alliances. Satellite TV also affected internet and the booming blogosphere from its beginning by inspiring (and, to some extent, concretely contributing to training) a surging generation of 'citizen journalists'. More in general, the Qatari news channel gave expression, enthusiastically as much as astutely, to a long repressed sentiment which goes back to the beginnings of the press in the Arab world and to the discourse on the *nahda* ('renaissance'), a sentiment of critique and an aspiration to political change and reform.

This is the best known part of the story of the recent transformation of the Arab public sphere, to the extent that the existence itself of Al Jazeera provided a growing sense that it is possible to circumvent the censorship and muzzling on the national presses and TV stations. Yet the less known part of the story is that while Arab regimes where intent, with mixed results, to minimize the impact of Al Jazeera on their grip on power, during the 1990s in Egypt, the country that later became the epicentre of the Arab Spring, two important developments were unfolding: the first, consisting of the fact that a pioneer generation of internet activists and hackers started to operate within what we should retroactively call the web 1.0, where you had to be a computer expert

to be an activist (a phase of breeding skills which has been virtually ignored by scholars, who have only focused on the years 2000s and the web 2.0 represented by blogs and social networks). The second poorly stressed transformation consisted of the fact that several new newspapers, beyond those aligned with the regime, saw the light in the late 1990s, mainly on the initiative of a significant bunch of young, largely independent journalists. Nor should we forget that the 1970s, which were also a period of intense social protests by the youth, had already propelled up audio cassettes, especially in mosque circles, as the rudimentary yet easily manageable 'new' medium defying the regime's monopolistic control of mass communication.

Even more notable is that the founders of the new independent newspapers (such as *al-Badil*, *al-Dustur* and *al-Misri al-Yawm*) were increasingly aware of the change effected by the blogosphere and the emerging social networks. Therefore, it is not just that 'new' and 'old' media became strange bed fellows, but that a certain kind of communicative and practical mutual dependence emerged between the oppositional newspapers and the blogosphere: while on the one hand many stories were taken over by newspapers from blogs, on the other, it became common for the former to feed stories to bloggers and then quote them in order to bypass censorship and reprisals by the regime. An analogous anonymous circuit was set in motion, this time not just filled with news but with footage taken from cell phones (Hirschkind 2011: 64). Clearly, what counted now was neither reliability nor critique *per se* (both arrows of a mediatized version of the Habermasian public sphere, yet impossible in the shadow of the *nizham* ('system-regime'), but the imperative to keep the story (and the sequence of images) ongoing, documenting the chain of abuses of the regime and cementing the cohesion and resistance of the disfigured collective body.

We see how every 'new' medium depends on earlier ones as well as on its own context of emergence, and responds to it by creating potentially new spaces of communication and new profiles of communicators and activists. Exaggerated expectations on the potential role of new media as tools of democratization had also preceded the revolutionary outbursts. Such expectations were not just the reflex of a technological determinism, but rather of the view that inherited chains of authority within Muslim majority societies can only be changed by virtue of an external inducement, which does not need to be a foreign intervention aiming at 'regime change'. The transformation can also (and more plausibly) originate from technological innovations within the wider mediascape (Eickelman and Anderson 2003 [1999]; Bunt 2009). Whatever the angle from which one observes and judges, a more articulate view considers the network effect as not dissimilar from Habermas's standard view of the public sphere (i.e. as manifesting itself through the gradual emergence of new spaces for debate and criticism, and, potentially, for social and political mobilization).

While at first sight it might appear that in their intensifying activities since the mid 2000s bloggers referred primarily to the dire socio-political predicament of their own country, and that the corresponding blogospheres were mainly national (i.e., reflecting specifically Egyptian, Tunisian or Lebanese views and grievances), the model of transnational satellite broadcasting helped to globalize the blogosphere itself; this time, however, well beyond a 'pan-Arab' audience. The fact itself that many internet activists were socialized into their anti-authoritarian campaigns via such rather global initiatives as Creative Commons (through the respective regional aggregations) contributed to lay ever deeper seeds for a new transversal articulation of the key ingredients of a critical public sphere. They proved to be a treasure of skills and motivations during the

decisive phases of the revolution for the necessary, swift sharing of know-how and instant elaboration on strategies (Valeriani 2011). On the other hand, this development deconstructed the Western idea of a collective body providing a common subjectivity to the public sphere: not because the Arab public spheres emanate from a radically different political culture, but for their specific way to face the repressions of an increasingly illegitimate type of state (or, rather, 'system/regime'). This state, far from reflecting a specifically regional, authoritarian political culture, was ever clearer the agent of a global system characterized by a corrupt, and already post-Westphalian, type of governance. In other words, the relation to the state (both through scolding and via the positive, patriotic identification with a new type of truly constitutional state to come) could not be enacted on the copycat of the development of the modern state in Europe over the centuries of formation and transformation of the Westphalian order. A different type of state induced a different, more complex and fractured, yet potentially richer subjectivity of the citizen, which was, in turn, reflected by the formation of original grammars of critique, alongside forms of aggregation and political socialization.

Overall, and not surprisingly, while the revolution was dubbed the revolution of *shabab al-feisbuk* ('the youth of Facebook'), it also became the revolution of the 'street' and, simultaneously, the revolution of Al Jazeera. Neither should we neglect the role of literature, movies and TV serials. *The Yacubian Building*, originally a novel by bestselling author Alaa al-Aswani, and which made a splash in all three genres (the film was the most expensive one ever produced in Egypt), depicted a few years ago in dramatic tones the corruption of several layers of Egyptian society and especially of a crucial component of the Egyptian bourgeoisie centred on the nouveaux riches, famously dubbed 'the fat cats' after Sadat's launch of *infitah* (economic opening) in the mid 1970s.

'Citizen journalism', a globally used label that designates this type of web-based activism, appears here as the result of an unprecedented fusion of reporting and protesting which can only be understood by observing the inherent multiplicity (and also evanescence) of political subjectivities at play.[1] Clearly what counts here is neither reliability nor rational critique *per se* (both arrows of a mediatized version of the Habermasian public sphere, yet impossible to reproduce in the shadow of the *nizham*), but the imperative to keep the main story of the regime's moral bankruptcy (and the underlying sequence of images) ongoing. This was done by web activists relentlessly documenting the chain of abuses of the *nizham* itself and cementing the resistance of a collective body injured by the violence of the regime, yet, paradoxically perhaps, kept together and alive by the imperative to resist to it. Therefore, and quite paradoxically, the practice of citizen journalism from Egypt to Iran inherently deconstructs the notion itself of citizenship, with consequences that stretch well beyond the two countries or the region.

The movement culminated, in June 2010, in an impressive demonstration of shared body language, transversal solidarity and common resistance in the protests against the assassination of Khaled Said. The silent demonstrations on the streets of many Egyptian cities (mostly by young people, lining up on the shores of the Nile or the Mediterranean) led Mona Eltahawy (a journalist and activist of Egyptian origin writing from the US, who was on her way to become a global spokesperson of the rebellion of the Arab youth against their corrupt and violent regimes) to publish an article in the *Washington Post* in which she proclaimed that Facebook, YouTube and Twitter had become the new means of manifestation of political protest in the Arab world. Eltahawy attacked

those critics who dubbed such media platforms as mere outlets for venting out the frustrations of young people in those countries, otherwise the target of a brutal social engineering by an irredeemably gerontocratic type of rule. She stressed that the silent yet massive protests against the killing of Khaled Said proved exactly the opposite, namely that the web activists had finally proven able, after fighting hopeless struggles, to conquer real public space (Eltahawy 2010). While Eltahawy has, after the Arab Spring, since become a ubiquitous and controversial speaker, her diagnosis at the time was extraordinarily well on target; it was almost like an unheeded prophecy of the upcoming eruption of the youth's wrath.

Repression, torture and a tight security control had been for long internationally legitimized by the fact that the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen (and to some extent also in Libya and Syria) postured as regional bulwarks against terrorism (and equated almost every form of opposition to it). Yet now a metamorphosed public sphere started to thrive against all local and global odds by turning connectedness and critique into tangible mobilization, via exposing the continual abuse of the population by the security forces. At the same time, many bloggers firmly kept the bar of their activities on a conception of the 'common good' that resonates well with the discursive tradition of modern Muslim reformers, while profoundly unsettling their language.

When evaluating the specific impact that the web 2.0 of blogs and social networks had on the beginnings of the Arab Spring, it should be clear by now that the immediate sparks of revolution, namely violent repressions and socio-economic grievances, should not be automatically associated with web activism for the simple reason that they have affected broad sectors of the populations which cannot be reduced to the strata and groups (however growing, also in the countryside) that have been exposed to web activism. Yet, probably the most striking dimension of the impact of social media on the specific forms of protest and mobilization associated with the Arab Spring is that the preparatory work and the ability to transform a rather passive connectedness into a self-feeding wave of mobilization have been the outcome of a cumulative effort in which no single group of activists could easily exercise a formal leadership and in which the social media played a key role. The net outcome of this complex process has been a fast process of wedding a cyber-culture of 'linking, sharing and remixing' to a strategy for street politics (Valeriani 2011). No doubt the fact itself that several social groups ranging from the tech savvy youth to the urban poor became the target of repressive policies has contributed to enhance, at least during the most crucial moments of the upheavals, both the mutual trust among the actors and their capacity to organize horizontally and quickly. The repressive techniques used by the regimes consisting of trying to isolate the oppositional groups from each other and make them mutually suspicious for fear of infiltration of online and offline networks by regime agents did not work as expected during the most intense moments of mobilization.

A serious problem arises, as we have seen during 2012, when it comes to negotiate the terms for a democratic transition. Here a political activism based on the use of social media is probably less effective. Nonetheless, this transformation of the public sphere through sudden waves of mobilization impacts upon inherited perceptions of state power, ideas of citizenship and notions of religious identity, as well as upon the international dimension of such issues including the appreciation of the trade-off between stability and change by foreign audiences and Western policy communities. The rapid shift from the initial and inertial international support for the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes due to fear of instability and an Islamist takeover towards sympathy

for the goals of the revolution within just a few weeks at the beginning of 2011 may be a further proof of how fast new media might decisively affect not just domestic and regional politics but also international politics.

A growing interconnectedness between the public sphere and the state?

We can now better determine how a viable public sphere is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for democratization. Yet, all approaches to democratization that do not take into account the public sphere are too one sided. One needs to enquire into the simultaneous change of the public sphere and the state, while knowing that their pace of change is not synchronized, the latter being yet more resistant to change, but also increasingly vulnerable to pressure from the public sphere. While there is no guarantee that in countries like Egypt and Tunisia dictatorship has been forever erased from the political map, the collective framing of key notions of accountability, transparency, participation and citizenship has effected much more enduring changes. Present and future attempts to restore or reconstruct authoritarian rule might be either vulnerable and short lived, or they will need to be based on a much more sophisticated manipulation of the public sphere. Control itself of national mass media such as the press and TV is no longer a guarantee of control of the public sphere. Such a control now also depends on the quality of the discourse by the regime, and old-style types of populism such as the one pursued by the military junta in Egypt between 2011 and 2012 might not work for long because the material resources to economically satisfy and politically neutralize the wider middle classes that supported earlier populist regimes in the region are no longer available. Such regimes are increasingly dependent on skills that are suitable to manipulate key resources of political culture and communication in ways that cannot be reduced to older types of government 'propaganda'.

Therefore, the approach one should follow to analyse the complex interfacing of authoritarian states and the democratizing potential of public spheres is by necessity multidisciplinary, if not trans-disciplinary. One cannot be satisfied with a merely media-centric approach. The broader frame of reference needs to be centred on concrete instances of the public sphere as the arena of formation of notions and practices of participation and contention, the true relay between society, the media and the political system, and ultimately an aggregator of otherwise fragmented circles of discussions based on specific identities and orientations (be they political, religious or otherwise). In this sense, the public sphere, though originally a Western concept, proves to be, much more than civil society itself, a good antidote against Western bias on the conceptualization and analysis of democratic 'transitions'. If analysed in all its complexity, the public sphere's relation to state power should work to dissolve the one-sided and opaque, overly optimistic and quite a-dialectical notion of transition to democracy.

To recapitulate, framing socio-political processes by paying adequate attention to the public sphere provides a better longer-term perspective on political transformations and allows for a sounder framing of the trade-off, particularly dear to the scholars investigating Middle East politics, between change and stability. While the Arab Spring is forcing social and political scientists to take into account such events that caught them by surprise, this does not mean that one should immediately herald the sunset of authoritarian resilience. Yet, the developments in the public sphere and the political culture they reflect are there to stay even if and where the national, regional and

international forces that have supported authoritarian regimes for decades prove able to respond, regroup and adapt to the new challenges.

Therefore, the public sphere is a strategic field of enquiry both where democratization will unfold and where it will meet new stalemates. But most of all it adds a key strategic dimension to political analysis and social research, which have until recently been submerged by the dominant theorem of authoritarian resilience, built on the assumption of a basically unchallenged capacity of the regimes in the region to exercise highly effective control and surveillance of their populations. Now such regimes are becoming once more, as they have been in the first stage of the postcolonial era at the time of Nasser and the likes, painfully aware of the consensus constraints in the public sphere. Authoritarianism is still alive, yet authoritarian regimes can no longer avoid (as it has been since at least the 1980s) paying serious attention to the fabric of consensus and to its production in the public sphere. This has become evident in the populist, often even xenophobic slogans and measures adopted by the military junta in Egypt (e.g. on the issue of foreign funding of Egyptian NGOs which erupted at the beginning of 2012). At a more capillary level, regimes also require approaching new media, including social media (blogs and social networks), with more than the tools of censorship and intelligence that they have adopted, with mixed results, since their inception.

Moreover, one needs to frame research within an analysis of the long-term impact of public sphere formation and transformation in a historical and comparative perspective. This longer-term perspective allows us to avoid both the easy rhetoric on the revolution 2.0 and the idyllic image of an Arab Spring. Such insights justify shifting the focus away from a sterile debate about the pros and cons of the role of so-called new media within processes of reconstructing viable public spheres. After the mid-2000s, virtual spaces and public spaces have come into a mutual synergy and produced a formidable potential for mobilizing a broad variety of actors thanks to blogs and social networks – a mobilization that, though costing a certain loss in terms of the kind of 'political subjectivity' that was typical of earlier mobilizations and upheavals of the modern and contemporary eras (entrenched on a compact notion of the collective body), seems to fulfil in unexpected ways the promises of the Habermasian theory of the public sphere. Words, images and gestures are processed by the social media machine to be rapidly consumed (in all senses of the word), yet the frenzy process helps to recreate a more diaphanous kind of political subjectivity that is no less suitable to initiate a self-recurring collective action, if circumstances demand so. Whenever the lightening sparks a fire, the mobilization is oriented to different views of the common good than assumed by Habermas's underlying philosophy. A variety of actors are thus mobilized in ways that lay a premium on the capacity to quickly turn mere connectedness into a weapon of resistance to the violence and abuses of the regimes, rather than into a more 'educated' type of political autonomy and critique *per se*.

Whether this growing role of the public sphere will hold in the future can only be ascertained through attentive observation and targeted research. Yet, at least quantitatively, the penetration of new media and particularly of social media is due to grow in the Middle East, and this is why investing in this type of research is likely to be highly rewarding for studies of democratization and of the evolution of political systems.

Note

1 In this sense, the Arab *nashit i'lani*, widely used, if not coined, by Al Jazeera is a better concept than 'citizen journalism' for designating a type of engaged, participating reporter, which particularly

in the case of Syria has become an essential resource for Al Jazeera (as well as one of the reasons for its being accused of partiality in reporting, for the sake of interests which are now seen by a growing part of Arab audiences as no longer disinterestedly prodemocracy, as in the formative phase of the Arab Spring, but rather self-serving, from the viewpoint of Gulf states' geopolitical interests).

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27

The Revolution Never Ends

Music, Protest and Rebirth in the Arab World

Mark LeVine

The revolution continues

As I began writing this chapter I received the following email from the manager of Ramy Essam, the 'singer of the Egyptian revolution' whose song 'Irhal!', or 'Leave!', became the anthem of the Tahrir Square protests of early 2011: 'We've had some really sad news that Ramy will not be permitted to travel because of the military. We only learned of this very recently and are upset, we know what a huge opportunity this represented for him.'

Essam was supposed to leave that morning for the US to appear at the Sundance Film Festival, where a film about him and other protesters from the 18-day revolution in Tahrir Square, appropriately titled *The Square*, was to premier. But as has happened at least half a dozen times since the ousting of Mubarak on 11 February 2011, the military refused to give him permission to leave the country (Essam had previously been forced to cancel concerts I'd organized in Tunisia, Italy, Sweden and the US).

Because he is still under military age and hasn't completed his required military service, Essam cannot leave Egypt without special permission, which the military rarely grants him. Israel has long used a similar tactic to pressure Palestinians who need to leave the Occupied Territories into becoming collaborators, or to punish them for not becoming so. In Egypt, young middle- and upper-middle-class men can often obtain permission to travel without too many problems, but the army often uses this rule to punish activists.

Leaving Egypt was the last thing on Ramy's mind the first time I met him, on 4 or 5 February 2011. It was only a few days after he'd written 'Irhal!' and he was still a relatively unknown singer from the town of Mansoura, a metal-head turned wannabe pop star who, after watching the first two days of protests at Tahrir on his television, felt compelled to pack up his guitar and sleeping bag, and head to Tahrir, whatever the consequences.

Almost as soon as he arrived, Essam became mesmerized by the many chants the swelling crowds were shouting. Within a few hours of sitting in the square with his

guitar he'd composed the lyrics that would launch his career and help define the sonic landscape of the Egyptian revolution. Within a day it became the most important song being played in Tahrir; a few days later it had gone viral on YouTube and had tens (and soon to be hundreds) of thousands of views.

Such is the power of music in a revolutionary situation that an unknown musician with nothing but a sleeping bag and a guitar can, if he has the right ear, absorb the sounds of protest, distil them into their purest and most powerful form, and reflect them back to the crowd in a song that perfectly captures the mood of a nation in revolt. But such moments and connections cannot last.

Three years later, those heady days are a distant memory. By late spring 2013 Tahrir had fallen into a state of semi-, sometimes decrepit, hibernation. One could have imagined it was ever poised to reawaken when 'the People' called upon it; until the people did call upon it by the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, in June and July 2013, ostensibly under the auspices of the Tamarrod (Rebel) movement to force the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of Muhammad Morsi from power only to bring – ecstatically – the military firmly back into control of the country. Essam suddenly, and dispiritedly, could not call Tahrir home.

In fact, he couldn't even recognize it. He played at one protest early on during the Tamarrod protests but 'no one knew my songs, even "Irhal!".' It seemed the people and the military really were 'one hand', which was something Essam, who was tortured by the military and considered it an implacable enemy of the revolution, could embrace. At the same time, there was no place for him in the pro-Morsi protests across town at the Rabi' al-Adawiyya mosque (even though he was, in fact, invited to perform for the increasingly desperate throngs of supporters of the deposed president).

For Essam, the Brotherhood and the army were, in fact, if not one hand, then of one mind in their opposition to the original goals of the revolution: bread, freedom and social justice, as well as dignity. Suddenly, however, neither the square nor the streets belonged to one of the artists most identified with them both since 25 January 2011.

Even before Essam found himself alienated from the space that had made him into an international icon, the revolutionary honeymoon was over. The jubilance of the Tahrir uprising and its immediate aftermath had long since given way to the slog, or grind, of everyday struggle to bring its promises somewhere close to reality. And it's the grind where the next revolutionary anthem will be written.

The manner in which Essam and his musical comrades in Egypt, and other Arab countries, have responded to the increasing challenges of the post-revolutionary period reveal the impact of years of musical maturation among a generation of artists and artists-to-be that corresponds quite directly to the much better documented political maturation of their generation. Any discussion of the music of the 'Arab Spring' must focus not merely on the music that defined the revolutionary moments in each country, as most do, but the various scenes that gave rise to them, and the post-revolutionary struggles musicians and other artists face to participate in and inspire ongoing political change.

Music and the aura of revolution in the Arab world

Great music is a mirror of society, reflecting its contending forces and contradictions back onto itself. Under the right conditions it also refracts them prismatically, acting as both a filter and amplifier that brings (and sometimes forces) subaltern sentiments and

desires into the public consciousness. In so doing, music, like all great art, encourages and sustains social and political change (cf. Zuhur 2010).

In the Arab and larger Muslim world, the longstanding debate over the permissibility of music within Islamic law further complicates its position within and impact upon Arab/Muslim cultures. To give a full rehearsal of the centuries of debates on the permissibility of various types of music in Islamic law and practice is beyond the scope of this chapter. Three points need to be made, however, before a discussion of the role of music in the pro-democracy wave of the last two years can begin.

First, despite the claims of conservative Muslim scholars and religious officials, there is no prohibition of music in the Quran or the majority of Prophetic Hadith (cf. LeVine 2008; Otterbeck 2012). As Jonas Otterbeck (2012: 229) succinctly puts it, the Quran and Hadith are ambiguous and contradictory enough on the issue that it is 'possible to see music as inherently haram or, to a large extent, as halal. … Muhammad is said to have encouraged occupational songs and songs at weddings, but he is also reported as having prophesied that music is one of the signs of the moral chaos toward the end of time.'

At the same time, when one says 'revolutionary music' there are at least three meanings of this term: songs about or in support of the revolution (which these days would be uploaded to and circulated on social networking sites such as YouTube and Facebook or on mobile phones), songs actually performed, played or sung/chanted at protests, and songs that protesters might listen to in order to stay inspired during the revolution. Sometimes a song, like 'Rais LeBled', or Ramy Essam's 'Irhal!', might serve all three capacities, at least for a time. But much of the time different songs or styles will serve different purposes, or be appropriated or re-appropriated for different circumstances.

Thus, for example, Tunisian Malouf music, a blend of various classical Andalusian/North African styles, was in the colonial era considered a 'popular' street music with political implications. After independence, however, it became institutionalized by the Bourguiba government as a 'national' style, which defanged it politically, giving it a very different 'meaning' on the street than it had under French rule. More recently, in Tahrir Square one could listen to the Egyptian 'folklore' group Tanboura lead the crowd in a Nasser-era anti-colonial song, listen to Muhammad Mounir's 'Azay?' on one's phone or iPod, and then meet up with fellow activists at a nearby safe house where the choice of tunes leans more towards Jimi Hendrix and Rage Against the Machine.

The shadow years

Neither heavy metal nor hip-hop are recent arrivals to the Arab world. Indeed, most every genre of Western pop music – rock, funk, folk, disco, punk, even country – began to circulate globally, including in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), within years of their emergence in the US. We can thus find Turkish and Moroccan rock bands in the 1960s, Indonesian and Iranian funk bands in the 1970s, and the progenitors of local metal and hip-hop by the late 1980s, with the scenes producing their first artists and locally significant followings by mid-1990s.

Two things are important here. First, the scenes emerged and grew thanks to old and new school technologies and means of circulation – from stewardesses visiting record shops during layovers in London or New York to buy the latest album of their younger brothers' favourite band, or expats bringing mix tapes with them on their yearly visits home, to teenagers hooked on 'Yo! MTV Raps' And 'Headbangers' Ball' broadcast on their parents' (often 'illegal') satellite dishes. Second, the metal and hip-hop that became

most popular in the region was the more political – or easily politicized – examples of the genres, such as extreme metal and gangsta/hard-core rap, this at a time when their counterparts in the US were becoming defanged and overly commercialized.

Indeed, the more vapid forms of heavy metal, like 1980s hair metal, never had a strong following in the region; instead, the brutal singing, lyrics focusing on war, violence and corruption, and dissonant sound of various subgenres of extreme metal well-captured the struggles of the region's young people living in highly authoritarian societies that have often lived through the extreme violence of war. As Reda Zine, one of the founders of the Moroccan metal scene, put it: 'We play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal.' Britney Spears and Bon Jovi are not going to motivate you to take on some of the world's most repressive states. For their part, rappers have from the start discussed social and political problems in hip-hop songs, often in 'code' by quoting lyrics from American artists (in particular, 2Pac Shakur) whose meaning would be clear to fellow members of the scene but not to authorities.

What is crucial about both scenes is that unlike mainstream Arabic pop, the music was almost entirely uncommodified, and therefore outside the control of either governments or economic elites tied to them, and, as important, were inherently 'do-it-yourself' (DIY).

While authorities may not have understood most extreme metal or rap lyrics, they could see the subversive potential of such music. And so crackdowns against both began by the latter half of the 1990s, resulting in the 'Satanic metal' scares of 1997 through 2003, in which authorities arrested and in some cases prosecuted numerous musicians and fans on accusations of Satan-worship and other 'un-Islamic' behaviour. These crackdowns affected Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Iran, in particular. Rappers were also targeted by governments across the region, although in most cases aside from Iran and Gaza they did not suffer the same oppression as metal-heads unless their music was explicitly political (LeVine 2008).

While most of the scenes suffered some degree of harassment, the reactions differed by country and according to the intensity of the crackdowns. Egypt's metal scene, where over 100 members were arrested in 1997, was forced underground for most of the next decade. On the other hand, Morocco's metal scene responded in force to the country's Satanic metal affair in 2003, in which 14 members were arrested and even prosecuted, by holding concerts outside the court house and using international media attention to put so much pressure on the government that the convictions were ultimately reversed, after which the scene's popularity grew significantly.

Outliers in

Palestine/Israel holds a unique place in the history of modern Arab protest music. It is home to the most important pioneering Arabic language rap group DAM, whose members, though hailing from the town of Lydda inside Israel, consider themselves '1948 Palestinians'. Their song 'Min Irhabi?' ('Who's the Terrorist?'), released in 2001, was the first Arab rap video to have over 1 million YouTube views and remains one of the most overtly and highly charged political rap songs ever written. DAM was soon joined by many other Palestinian rap grounds from across Israel (particularly Saz), the West Bank (Ramallah Underground, Tashweesh) and, perhaps even more importantly, from Gaza (Palestinian Rapperz, more recently Darg Team, Mohammed Antar), all of whose sonic and political impact upon Arab hip-hop more broadly is hard to overstate (cf. LeVine 2008, chapter 3; Salloum 2008).

There is an irony to DAM's rise, however, that points us to an as yet underexplored aspect of the Arab Spring: they would not exist were it not for the hip-hop scene and even mentorship of their colonizer, Israel. DAM's lead rapper, Tamer Nafar, came of age in an almost entirely Jewish Israeli rap scene and was taken under the wing of the country's most famous, and famously Zionist, rapper, Subliminal, with whom Tamer had a public falling out (in good hip-hop tradition) as the latter became more politically conservative and Tamer became more confident in his own abilities and assertively Palestinian.

Similarly and more broadly, while the Arab/Middle Eastern metal scenes were not directly born out of Israel's, one of the most popular and certainly influential metal groups on the Arab/Muslim scenes is the Israeli group Orphaned Land, who are the progenitors of the subgenre of Oriental Death Metal. The group's innovative weaving of Arabic/Islamic scales, instrumentation and even language into their songs (the lead guitarist is of Libyan descent), as well as their focus on breaking down barriers between Jews and Arabs/Muslims, is so appealing to their Arab fans that some have even taken to getting tattoos of the band's logo. I have yet to meet an Arab metal-head who wasn't a big fan, or a band that didn't describe them as an important influence.

The little mentioned role of Israel as an incubator of, and influence on, crucial strands within the Arab Spring revolutionary cannon points both to the broader international milieu in which the movement's ideas, aesthetics and strategies emerged and the willingness of core members of the revolutionary generation (whose political consciousness, it should be remembered, first emerged in response to the al-Aqsa intifada) to reach outside accepted boundaries in their quest to define themselves.

The final location which played an important if indirect (and thus little mentioned) role in the evolution of the pre-protest scenes is undoubtedly Lebanon. The country is, of course, well known as a centre for Arab pop music, but it also has been home to some of the region's seminal hip-hop and rock/metal groups, from rappers such as Rayess Bek, Aks'ser (the crew with whom he often performed) and Clotaire K to rock, metal and alt-groups such as Blend, The Kordz and Soap Kills (cf. LeVine 2008, chapter 4). Many of the members of these groups were politically active before and during the 'Cedar Spring' epitomized by the 14 March Movement that forced the Syrians from Lebanon in the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Harriri.

During both the Cedar Spring of 2006 and the Israeli attack a few months later, Beirut's hip-hop and rock communities, already well known to the numerous international journalists who regularly visited Beirut, became a regular feature of articles about the situation in the city and country, serving as useful narrative devices to humanize their stories. More important for our purposes, the occupation of Martyr's Square by tens of thousands of activists, epitomized by the young, internet-savvy, music-loving activists, created a template for the Iranian pre-democracy protests of 2009 and, more successfully, the Tunisian and Egyptian protests that erupted the next year.

'Like Woodstock, and Hendrix just played'

So declared Shung, lead guitarist for the Egyptian oriental death metal band Beyond East, as he disappeared into an indescribably jubilant crowd in Midan Tahrir late on the evening of 11 February 2011. Only a few hours earlier, we'd stood on the terrace of an activist safe house (apartment really), high above Tahrir, watching the sun go down – the sun behind which, as the Egyptian saying goes (*wara' ash-shams*), so many

Egyptians have disappeared into the Hell of innumerable prisons and torture chambers. Below us hundreds of thousands of people mercilessly chanted for Mubarak and his system to just 'Go!'

'Hopefully this will be Mubarak's last sunset', Shung said, somewhat wistfully (we'd already been burned the night before, when Mubarak declared he was in no way prepared to leave). And then the shouting rose from the Midan like a tidal wave and we knew his wish had come true.

Shung was not an official activist. He wasn't an organizer of the Midan during the 18 days; nor did he write press releases for Facebook distribution. But he was there whenever he could be, as was pretty much every metal-head I knew. And for years before, with his bands, his music (often blaring through the windows of the tiny apartment in a working class area of Dokki to the entire quarter) and his computer with its Orphaned Land screen saver, he was subtly changing the contours of his society in preparation for revolution-to-come.

No music better reflected the harsh and depressing realities of life in the pre-revolutionary era than extreme metal. But metal was never going to be the soundtrack of the actual revolution; at least not on the streets. You can't lead chanting marchers with an undecipherable brutal voice in English, although hours of relentless chanting voices can sound pretty brutal, with marchers often moving in sync with constant drum beats and chants in a manner that was at least as close to head-banging as it was to the motion of a Zar ceremony.

But it's equally true that many of the young activists whom I met half a decade earlier as metal-heads or rappers were suddenly at the forefront of the protests. Their experience building inherently rebellious underground DIY scenes driven by internet organizing and communication and democratic solidarities turned out to be the perfect training for leading underground, democratically organized revolutionary groups using the internet as a primary organizing tool, bringing out crowds when necessary.

Hip-hop played a more ambivalent role in the moment and movement of the revolutions than did metal. The story of Tunisian rap artist El Général – his song 'Rais leBled', which offered one of the greatest sonic disses in the history of popular music, his arrest and the protests that erupted in response to the song's supposed role in launching the Tunisian revolution – has now passed from the realm of history to that of legend. What can be said with some certainty is that El Général was a rising but not dominant member of Tunisia's burgeoning hip-hop scene who'd already written several political rap songs in the previous two years (his music was perhaps more well known in France than in Tunisia, although the Bin Ali government knew him quite well); that his arrest and three days in prison (the short duration of his stay is often cited derisively by activists tired of answering questions about his role in the revolution) did lead to protests among young people, which quickly secured his release but was, according to almost every activist I know, overemphasized by Western media looking for a good story; and that he played little if any role in the revolutionary actions subsequent to his release.

More interesting is the assessment of most rappers I know of El Général as an artist. Most do not consider him a great rapper (his less than stellar post-revolution career trajectory is used as evidence of his lack of true 'skillz'). But several have argued that it was precisely his lack of development as a lyricist that made his song perfect for capturing the feelings of a generation. 'His words have no metaphors or complex flows', one rapper explained. 'And that's probably a good thing that they didn't. Because the simplicity made the message more clear and powerful.'

Whatever one's aesthetic and political judgement of El Général's music, it's undeniable that 'Rais LeBled' became one of the anthems of the Tunisian revolution and the Arab Spring more broadly. But it was not the only rap song to inspire protesters. Rappers such as Binderman and the crews L3ky and Armada Bizerte also wrote songs in the lead-up to and during the revolution that equally challenged the regime. Similarly, in Egypt, rappers such as MC Amin and Arabian Knightz had seen their popularity on the rise before the outbreak of protests in January 2011, although it's worth pointing out that the Egyptian hip-hop scene was not nearly as developed as Palestine's, Morocco's, Lebanon's or Tunisia's, particularly considering its enormous population.

Walk the (front) line: Sub-, counter- and revolutionary cultures

It's clear then, that while the metal and hip-hop scenes never reached the popularity of Arab pop or other locally rooted styles, they served as expressions of the anger and frustration of the first 'neoliberal' generation of the Arab world; that is, of young people who came of age in the region at the moment the authoritarian bargains of the previous one to two generations were fraying and a changing political economy would offer both new constraints and opportunities for young people depending on their position within their societies.

Not only were these scenes 'canaries in a coalmine', indicating the broader level of social and political freedoms, but their DIY nature acted as an important incubator and training ground for the kind of grassroots activism that would be crucial to the formation of the activist cadres that played crucial roles in organizing the protests in Tunisia and Egypt (as well as Morocco). In short, these dynamics were crucial in helping the scenes not merely survive as persecuted (or at least closely monitored) subcultures, but to transform them over time into foundations for activist countercultures. As an Iranian death metal pioneer explained it to me, 'You can't imagine how a music about death can affirm life' (LeVine 2008, chapter 5). Ultimately, members of these activist news counter-cultures played an important role in the revolutions they helped to initiate.

In this sense, the metal, rap and related hard-core music scenes can be seen as among the most critically immanent art forms in Arab cultures, enabling their fans to confront the gross imbalances of power that lay beneath the veneer of 'spurious harmony' and progress of the governing ideologies of their countries in ways that fans of most other genres of music would not do. They fulfilled the role that three-quarters of a century earlier the seminal cultural theorist Theodor Adorno argued was played by modern classical music, whose dissonant and often atonal sound in fact influenced that of extreme metal (and, at least indirectly, the minimalist menace of gangsta rap) (LeVine 2011, 2012).

Revolutionary explosions, changing aesthetics

The duty of the revolutionary artist is to help make the revolution irresistible. What I want to argue here is that there is a fundamental but often overlooked change in the aesthetics of political music before and after the revolutionary 'break' epitomized by the explosions of protest in Tunisia and Egypt. This break resulted from what I argue was the 'return of the aura' to art as a result of the rise of inexpensively created digital music that is circulated freely on the internet, thereby escaping almost entirely the commodification process that for decades has stifled the revolutionary potential of

most art, including music in the age of 'mechanical reproduction' and industrial distribution of cultural products (LeVine 2011).

One of the most interesting dynamics of this music is the powerful form of cultural hybridization, an aesthetic and sonic creolization that is not merely at the heart of cultural globalization in its most positive manifestation but among its most powerful engines, particularly in terms of how it inspires and mobilizes younger fans. I term emerging styles as 'post-hybrid' styles, by which I mean a deeper hybridity, one that moves beyond the surface hybridities of more commercialized cultural and sonic intermixings. In doing so, these post-hybrid styles provide local artists with a unique voice to not only 'speak back' to the Western artists and cultures whose music they are drawing upon, but forward to new forms of cultural identity that are only now manifesting themselves with the phenomenon of protesters across the West, including the Midwestern US, carrying songs explicitly declaring the influence and inspiration of Tahrir Square and Arab revolutions more broadly upon them.

Nothing brought this phenomenon home to me as powerfully as an evening I spent in September 2011 with the Tunisian hip-hop group Armada Bizerta, who are one of the best rap crews not merely in North Africa or even the Arab world, but anywhere. I had worked with Armada Bizerte earlier in the summer as part of a Creative Commons workshop and conference in Tunisia in July 2011, where we collaborated with Egyptian, Palestinian and Moroccan artists to produce and perform several songs together.

Even when their songs deal with police brutality (an all too common problem in Tunis), government repression or harsh restrictions on immigration, the group members had almost perpetual smiles on their faces. The joyful aesthetics of groups such as Amarda Bizerta, Emel Mathlouthi, Ramy Essam and other artists at the heart of youth-inspired revolutions challenges Theodor Adorno's belief that critical music in the age of mass reproduction and consumption has to be, essentially, hard to listen to in order to make the listener think and perhaps even be motivated to take some form of action. It seems that while in the pre-revolutionary period, when cultural expression was still heavily policed, this indeed was the case – thus the power and popularity of genres such as metal and hard-core rap. But with the explosion of political, cultural and artistic energy of the protests, a new aesthetic dynamic was born that, at least as of the time of this writing, remains quite powerful. As important, by drawing people literally closer together, the music brings them nearer its critical and transformational aura, closing a circle that was broken, according to Walter Benjamin, with the mechanical reproduction and commodification of music a century ago.

Yet, it's also clear that while rap and metal played important roles in shaping the soniscape of the Arab uprisings, they were by no means the only genres of music inspiring, motivating and mobilizing people during periods of protest. Folk music, both contemporary, guitar-driven singing such as Ramy Essam, and more traditional artists and groups, have played a powerful role in the protests in countries such as Tunisia, Syria and Egypt. For example, Syrian singer Ibrahim Qashoush, who transformed lyrics from the traditional *'aradah* style into revolutionary chants, was brutally murdered for his activism. In Egypt, the well-known folklore group Tanboura, who have led a national revival of the *simsimiyya* music of the Nile Delta, thankfully fared much better. The group gave one of the most celebrated Tahrir performances, and have continued to support the revolution publicly during the ensuing two years.

A second and related dynamic has to do with the impact not merely of inexpensive but high-quality digital music production, but of the possibility of high-quality, unlimited

and free digital distribution of those products by artists. One of the most important and elegant debates in the history of cultural theory, between Adorno and Benjamin, surrounded the question of how the mechanical reproduction or art, its commodification, and the creation of culture industries would affect its inherent power, or 'aura', and its ability to act as an agent, or at least amplifier, of discourses of social change. Benjamin famously argued that 'mechanical reproduction' (in fact, technological is the better translation of the original German) destroys the aura, and in so doing liberates the work of art from its bourgeois restrictions and enables its power to encourage social change. Adorno was far more circumspect in his view of this development, arguing in his response to his good friend's argument that the aura of the work of art would merely be replaced by an 'aura of style' that would serve an even more powerful ideological tool (cf. LeVine 2011). What neither could consider is what would happen in an age of uncommodified digital production, circulation and consumption where all three can remain outside the control of either governments or corporations. I argue that it is here, particularly under the conditions of 'emurgent' cultural production – that is, cultural production occurring as new social formations are emerging and under conditions of social and political urgency (LeVine and Reynolds 2014) – that art recaptures its aura and can play a powerful role within larger processes of social change.

The grind

Auratic artistic production such as the music of Ramy Essam, El Général and others can play a powerful role mobilizing people during moments of social explosion, whether during uprisings or even revolutions. What is far more difficult, however, is to continue to motivate, inspire and mobilize people after the initial outbursts of revolutionary exuberance have died down. In that regard, the post 'revolutionary' trajectories of artists such as El Général and Essam have been quite different. El Général has not played a significant role in the post-Bin Ali public sphere (many activists are, in fact, dismissive of his role during the revolution). On the other hand, Essam has been a fixture at every subsequent occupation of Tahrir and other public spaces in Cairo. His constant presence, coupled with his well-publicized detention and torture by security forces in March 2011, increased his prestige among hard-core protesters such as the Ultras and working-class and 'street youths' who did not feel represented by the major post-11 February 'revolutionary' movements. While he was alienated by the anti-Morsi protests and coup of summer 2013, he remains actively engaged in protest politics.

In that slow transformation there was a moment, or perhaps moments, in the months after Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions when the joy turned to something else, work perhaps, when it becomes clear that the revolution might bring international acclaim to varying degrees, and even access to money and travel, but is not going to change the basic dynamic of the political system, or people's relationship to it. At this point revolutionary artists entered what I term 'the grind', the period after the revolutionary protests have either lost momentum and died down, been broadly repressed, or been co-opted by counter-revolutionary forces (and, in some cases like Egypt, a combination of all three). The question that I would like to end this chapter with is how do artists continue to produce revolutionary music outside of that liminal and ultimately impermanent time and space?

Needless to say, there is no definitive answer to this question. Each country presents its unique set of circumstances. In Tunisia, where hip-hop was the main revolutionary

popular music form, El General's revolutionary credentials dissipated rather quickly as he began to identify with religious forces. On the other hand, Armada Bizerta and other groups continued making powerful music. Yet, even increasing success is no guarantee of continued inspiration. And so during their first tour of Europe, in 2012 in Italy, two of the four members of Armada Bizerta suddenly left the band and any chance at success to live as clandestine migrant workers. The remaining two band members continue to record and perform, but there is no way to capture the original power of the group with half the members and without the chemistry they created together. Meanwhile, despite making progress towards a new constitution and greater institutionalization of democracy, the Tunisian police and judicial authorities jailed rapper Weld 15 and a colleague for a song that 'insulted' the police. Their predicament has been used by human rights groups as a symbol of the ongoing assault on freedom of speech in Tunisia three years into the Arab Spring.

In Egypt a different scenario has developed. As pioneering anthropologist Ted Swedenburg (2012) rightly points out, 'The protest music at Tahrir was not a soundtrack, not a reflection, not a commentary or a report on events, but something integrally tied to and embedded within the social movement.' That being said, it should not be assumed that the music produced in, around or about Tahrir Square constitutes the sum total of critical or revolutionary artistic production during the last three years. Nevertheless, it does offer a fair representation of the role and trajectory of political/protest music there.

Many of the artists who became associated with the Tahrir revolution – including Massar Egbari, Wust al-Balad, Muhammad Mounir, Amir Eid and Hani Adel, Iskandarella, Haitham Nabil, and the folkloric troupe Tanboura – did not remain actively involved in the revolutionary scene in the way that Ramy Essam or the hip-hop crew Arabian Knightz have done. On the other hand, many acts that emerged after the '#Jan25' protests or were not so directly involved in the 18 days either played an important role in subsequent protests (as exemplified by the group Cairokee) or represented emerging genres, such as the 'techno-sha'bi' style known as 'mahragan', and became increasingly prominent since Mubarak's ousting. At the same time, however, Egypt's metal scene, which was an incubator for many leading organizers of the #Jan25 protests, remained largely removed from the revolutionary protests.

Not surprisingly, most artists spent the period of openness after the #Jan25 protests trying to capitalize on the newfound attention given to Egyptian youth music by arranging tours outside the country or increasing their fan base inside. Their music may have been born and spread outside the commodity chains, but ultimately musicians need to get paid to continue doing music. Cairokee, for example, received a sponsorship from Coca-Cola; their most important appearance of the last two years was at one of the major anti-Morsi protests at the Ittihadiyya Presidential Palace on 1 July 2013, two days before Morsi's ousting. More broadly, with the spread of private television channels and the increasing openness of the media to critical points of view, more political artists suddenly found themselves able to compete, at least on the airwaves, with pop stars such as Mubarak-favourite Tamer Hosny (cf. Detrie 2011).

For their part, Ramy Essam and the rap group Arabian Knightz, perhaps the two most explicitly revolutionary artists, travelled the most telling post-11 February paths. Essam seemed destined for the greater global renown, particularly after he was badly tortured by the military less than two months after Mubarak was ousted, an experience that both increased his revolutionary credentials and ensured he would remain

implacably opposed to the military. In return, the military did everything possible to ensure his international career could never develop by preventing him from leaving Egypt to play foreign concerts for most of the three years since 11 February 2011. With an international career stifled, Essam became essentially the bard of Tahrir, becoming particularly close to members of the Ultras movements who played a major role in the Tahrir-based protests of late 2011 and 2012. Ultimately, however, and at the time of writing (early 2014), Essam's unwillingness to choose sides between the military and the Brotherhood in the summer of 2013 stand-off meant that he was alienated from broader Egyptian politics; even Tahrir no longer felt like home.

For their part, Arabian Knightz engaged in numerous collaborations while writing a series of new songs that chronicles the lies and dashed hopes of the post-Tahrir period, and particularly the Morsi government. So strong was their opposition that they came out much more positively in support of the Tamarrod protests and the military's ousting of Morsi, a position from which they began to retreat when the military's more ruthless and anti-democratic side re-emerged in the autumn and early winter of 2013. While both Essam and Arabian Knightz retained a decent level of international recognition, it remained exceedingly difficult for both either to make a living as artists in Egypt (as opposed to other groups with less aggressively revolutionary sounds and/or messages such as Cairokee, or with a more established fan base such ase Wust al-Balad, Iskandarella or Massar Egbari), or to continue to release music that would have the same revolutionary power outside of the revolutionary spaces in which their powerful sounds emerged.

Ultimately, whether in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Bahrain, Palestine or other Arab countries undergoing large-scale movements for social change, if there is a commonality among the widely divergent experiences and sounds of the artists who have played a role in challenging those in power, it is that the power and prominence of their music – even when that music's reach and popularity were owed to their dissemination over the internet – were ultimately tied quite directly to the occupation or at least claiming of physical space, from Bourguiba Boulevard in Tunis to Change Square in Sanaa. Without moments of intense physical presence, the music, and the movements, would never have achieved whatever successes should be attributed to them.

The most revolutionary of artists share the attitude of Ramy Essam or Morocco's El Haqed, who famously dared the Moroccan government (the Makhzen) to 'give me my rights or kill me'. For most, however, the joy of revolutionary exuberance has dissipated in the daily grind of surviving as an artist while continuing to 'distil the deepest thoughts of the people' into sounds and lyrics that can keep the hope of a revolutionary future alive. Few artists fear that the next phase of the revolution won't come, but fewer still have figured out how to build momentum towards a career that enables them to make a living as an artist while maintaining the core revolutionary aura and values that gave their music such power to begin with. That struggle will probably define the revolutionary music of the Arab world in the years to come.

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28

Al Jazeera and Televised Revolution

The Case of Tunisia

Ezzeddine Abdelmoula

All this trouble comes from this matchbox!

Hosni Mubarak (2001)

Introduction

In March 2007, Fred Halliday visited the Al Jazeera headquarters in Doha and wrote an article entitled 'Al Jazeera: The Matchbox that Roared' (Halliday 2011: 116–121), echoing Hosni Mubarak's famous remark when he, too, visited the station in 2001. Accompanied by Information Minister Safwat el-Sherif, the president remarked: 'All this trouble comes from this matchbox!', pointing to the tiny newsroom he was shown by his host, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Now, after the fall of Mubarak's autocratic regime in the context of what has become known as the Arab Spring, the debate over the democratizing role of Al Jazeera is back. As the four countries where revolutions took place are still going through transition phases, with varying degrees of difficulty, it is hard to determine how long it would take for new democratic systems to be established. What is certain, though, is that the Arab world is undergoing a new era of political change where Tunisia might have just initiated a fourth 'democratic wave', to use Huntington's terminology (Huntington 1993).

It is true that democratization did not figure at the top of the protesters' agenda when they first took to the street in support of a local street vendor in Tunisia's Sidi Bouzid. It is also true that social demands were generally the driving force behind the sweeping demonstrations led by local trade unions and professional syndicates. However, the political aspect of the revolution soon surfaced with clear demands to topple the dictatorial regime of Zin el-Abidine Bin Ali. The main slogan of the Arab Spring ('The people want to topple the regime') was formulated at a very early stage of the Tunisian revolution and quickly spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and then Syria. Tunisians who first raised this slogan in the streets of Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, Kasserine, etc. had to tap into their collective memory and refer to the literature of national resistance against the French colonizer to easily rediscover the famous verse of great poet Aboul-Qacem

el-Chebbi: 'If the people one day *will* to live … Then fate will have to answer their call.' It was this key phrase, 'the will of the people', that mobilized the masses from all around the country and made them take to the streets demanding the fall of Bin Ali's regime while chanting with one voice 'Dégage' (leave).

This voice may have been muted and the pictures of the expanding protest movement could have been distorted if the media were not there and failed to bring the unfolding story into the visual field. Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based news network, was undoubtedly the leading channel that reported the story of the Arab Spring in an unparalleled manner. Journalist and interpreter Mohamed Lemine believes that the presence of Al Jazeera was instrumental, not only in reporting the story, but also and more importantly in keeping it alive:

> The most important thing, regardless of the nature and quality of its coverage, is that Al Jazeera, from the first moments of the Arab revolutions, especially in Tunisia, was able to capture that symbolic moment of Bouazizi setting himself on fire. If that story died, I believe the Arab revolutions would have died consequently.
>
> *(Interview, 17 May 2011)*

Seen by many as a real opportunity for the region to move into a democratic era, the Arab revolutions cannot be separated from the comprehensive yet detailed daily media coverage provided by Al Jazeera in particular.

The Arab Spring: Context and processes

As we shall see in what follows, there is a general agreement among the interviewees that the Arab Spring, as a socio-political process, should be understood in the context of the changing media landscape that has been taking place in the Arab world since Al Jazeera started broadcasting in 1996. Bringing politics and political debates into the visual space was one of the building blocks of an emerging Arab political awareness. Televising public debates about issues and events close to the hearts and minds of Arabs and publicizing them beyond the confines of elitist agendas meant that the influence of elites over public opinion has diminished dramatically. They are no longer capable of monopolizing the public sphere, which itself departed from being the sphere of elites, as in the Habarmasian sense.

It is within the context of the new dynamics which Al Jazeera brought into the media and politics of the Arab setting that this awareness has been shaped. To characterize this new atmosphere, former Director General Wadah Khanfar coined the term 'Al Jazeera spirit'. On the occasion of its tenth anniversary, the network published a volume with the title *The Al Jazeera Spirit* (Abdelmoula 2007).[1] Terms such as these circulated widely among the staff and formed what could be called a new organizational culture. It was 'the Al Jazeera spirit', which appeared in the Arab world in the last 15 years that shaped the cultural and theoretical frameworks within which the current state of public awareness was fostered. Through its quality news and programmes, the channel played a pivotal role in the massive politicization of Arab publics throughout the years, and it would be hard to believe that political change could have happened without the contribution of Al Jazeera.

Chief Editor Ahmed Sheikh thinks that the network's contribution towards raising people's political awareness and empowering them to challenge their autocratic

regimes, and aspire for alternative democratic systems has been significant. He argues that not only did his channel reshape the Arab media landscape, but it has also created a new political awareness and accelerated history in this part of the world:

> Hadn't Al Jazeera been in the scene since 1996, the present upheaval in the Arab world would have been delayed until, say, fifteen years from now. Al Jazeera created a sort of public awareness that all Arab peoples now share. They share the same principles, the same goals and the same understanding.
>
> *(Interview, 11 April 2011)*

Having said that, it would be wrong to assume that the Arab Spring is a by-product of Al Jazeera. However, it would be difficult to explain its processes without reference to the sea changes in the media landscape for the last 15 years. The steady build-up of discontent and frustration created by the media coverage between 1996 and 2010 is certainly at the roots of the Arab revolutions.

Since it came on air, Al Jazeera has offered the Arab public the ability freely express their views on issues such as corruption, poverty, inequality, etc. Through raising awareness about these issues and shaping public opinion, the role of the channel has gone far beyond news reporting. It paved the way for political change that has become a salient demand and jumped high on the agenda of political parties and civil society activists. This new atmosphere is the result of a continuous media coverage that spans over 15 years and includes reporting events of interest to millions of Arab viewers across the region.

The strategic location of Al Jazeera at the heart of the Middle East, a continuously troubled region, enabled the channel to cover most of the hotspots from a relatively close proximity. This has become visible since 1998 with its live coverage of Operation Desert Fox[2] in Iraq. Following Operation Desert Fox, the region witnessed a series of successive events such as the Palestinian *intifada* (2000), the war in Afghanistan (2001), the war in Iraq (2003), the Israel–Hezbollah war (2006) and the Gaza war (2008–2009).

If we are to contextualize George Berkley's principle about visual perception 'to be is to be perceived' (*esse is percipi*) (Berkeley 2008: 28) in the current debate, we would rather say 'to be is to be televised'. In fact, the Palestinians did rise up against the Israeli occupation from December 1987 through 1993 in what was known as the first *intifada*, but in the absence of extensive media coverage, little has been known about it in the outside world. The term *intifada* itself became commonplace thanks to the monotonous usage and its wide circulation in the media.

Having established itself as the main source of news in the Arab world after the Palestinian *intifada*, Al Jazeera continued its ground-breaking coverage of regional events throughout the years to consolidate its position at the global stage. With its wide network of correspondents and field reporters, Al Jazeera was able to televise events taking place almost everywhere in the Arab world as well as in the Middle East.

What characterized Al Jazeera's coverage of this series of events from Operation Desert Fox in 1998 through to Operation Cast Lead in 2008–2009[3] was not only the number of pictures and the extent of information it delivered to viewers, but also its ability to capture the mood of mounting anger in the Arab world during and following each of these events. One must add to this the deteriorating social conditions, widespread corruption and human rights abuses in most of the Arab countries. Combined together, these factors contributed to the increased demands for change and caused

frustration in the Arab street to build up and gradually transform into a political opposition. This is the context in which the Arab Spring materialized.

It came as a culmination of a long process of anger and resentment among Arab masses who are constantly exposed to the media and to Al Jazeera in particular, which turned into an active agent for change. The editorial policy through which clear connections are made between 'foreign occupation' (Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq), recurrent 'aggression' (Israel–Hezbollah war, Gaza war) and internal conditions (dictatorship, injustice, humiliation, etc.) provided a convenient recipe for revolution.

Framing the Arab Spring: The vision and the editorial policy

The media coverage of the Arab spring has been powerful not only because it showed millions of viewers live events as they happened, but more importantly because it helped to create and construct a distinct 'narrative' of the revolution. By linking together separate events that happened in different space and time frames and putting them in one revolutionary context, Al Jazeera presented us with a better understanding of these recent political transformations in modern Arab history. While angry protesters were taking the streets in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, the Al Jazeera narrative was being shaped on its screens. Along with the live transmission of protests, the network provided viewers with the historical background, the political context and the analytical framework to help them understand what was going on. In the absence of such a narrative which has constantly stressed the need for change, it would have been hard to explain the complex processes leading to the Arab Spring. After covering these events over the years and presenting them to viewers under the same theme (change), it is now safe to say that Al Jazeera succeeded in placing this theme at the heart of political debates in the Arab world and making it the most prominent subject for the public to think about. This is what the literature on mass communication and the media effects calls 'agenda setting' (McCombs and Shaw 1972: 176–185). But if we examine Al Jazeera's influence before and during the Arab Spring more closely, we find that it goes far beyond just bringing the issue of change into the public debate. It seems that we need to reconsider Bernard Cohen's classic formulation of agenda-setting: 'the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about' (Cohen 1963: 13). As new research suggests, the media not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it depending on the way it frames the content we receive.

In addition to, or probably instead of, agenda-setting, framing theory seems to provide more explanatory tools to assess the real impact the media coverage has had upon the Arab Spring. It helps us to understand how connecting these events and presenting them in a particular way reorients viewers and makes them think along particular lines. Framing, according to Gamson and Modigliani, stems from 'a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to unfolding strip of events' (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143). For Entman, the framing process consists primarily of selection and salience: 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman 1993: 52).

Selecting frames and presenting events and news in the mass media 'can thus systematically affect how recipients of news come to understand these events' (Scheufele

1999: 107). The narrative of the Arab Spring has been framed gradually as events developed and transformed from ordinary social protests to a sweeping event with clear political demands. The cornerstone of that narrative lies in the way the media framed these events and presented them to the audiences. Director of News Mostefa Souag explains how editorial decisions were made inside the newsroom to frame the changing nature and scope of the protest movement:

> First, we have to evaluate the situation in each country. For many years we have been covering protests all over the Arab world, why didn't we call them revolutions? In Tunisia for example, we first used the term 'protests', then we moved into calling it 'uprising' and then 'revolution'. Each phase has its own characteristics and we have to ensure that we do not impose our own views onto the situation.
>
> *(Interview, 15 April 2011)*

From a professional perspective, this gradual progress in qualifying events as they happen reflects the channel's objectivity in covering the Arab Spring as a news story. Objectivity and related terms such as neutrality in journalism are tricky words and hard to define when it comes to practice. 'Balance' is the term that journalists themselves prefer to use in news reporting. Al Jazeera has always sided with the people against dictatorships and its coverage of the Arab revolutions should be seen in this light. 'Traditional professionalism' and 'formal objectivity' are not always in line with the ethical obligation which Al Jazeera has been advocating fiercely and unequivocally. Siding with the people and presenting the alternative account sometimes entails 'twisting the neck of traditional professionalism to open up new possibilities for a different coverage that is able to grasp the complexities of the reality', says Mohamed Lemine (Interview, 17 May 2011).

To cope with the complexities of the developing story in the streets of the protesting countries, the editorial decision inside the newsroom also needed to be complex, but flexible and responsive to changes. As demonstrations on the ground increased and reached a new turning point to become full-scale revolutions, the channel had also reached a decision to drop its regular scheduling and opted for an open news cycle. There was no room left for 'ordinary news' which has become insignificant compared to the 'big news' of the revolution, says Souag, explaining the degree to which his channel was responsive to the demands of the viewers. To him, the decision to open up the screen for non-stop reporting was justified by the fact that the people in the streets were asking for a radical change and that viewers were no longer interested in regular programming. The demands for a radical change in politics would then be reflected in a radical change on the television screen and in the running order of news.

To grasp this ongoing interplay between news and news coverage, our analysis should also depart from the traditional 'framing theory' and opt for a more dynamic approach. Al Jazeera's experience in the last three years shows the limits of 'framing theory' and demonstrates not only the ability of the media to frame news stories according to a pre-set agenda, but also the ability of news stories themselves to frame and set the agenda of media coverage in an interactive way. It is no longer a one-way exercise; it is rather a dual framing game. The editorial decision to restructure the channel's programming in response to the demands from the audiences and the developing stories on the ground reflects this dynamically generated duality. Based on these theoretic considerations, the following section analyses the main characteristics of Al Jazeera's coverage of the Tunisian revolution.

The Tunisian revolution and the leading role of the media

Similar to the characteristics of Arab societies, over the years, Tunisian socio-political conditions translated into widespread anger among large segments of Tunisian society. It was 'a naked and spontaneous anger, observes Ghassan Salamé, a simple refusal of injustice without attempting to describe or explain it. A simple refusal with a matchstick made fear from tyranny suddenly transform into terror in the tyrants' camp' (Salamé 2012: 139).

But the effect of the matchstick would have been much more limited than it actually was if the media did not publicize it by placing it at the centre of the visual field. The images of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire, inciting demonstrations throughout the country, were first circulated through social media networks, but only captured the attention of the wider public after they were televised and repeatedly shown on Al Jazeera (Naji 2012: 162).

As events erupted unexpectedly and spread quickly from one city to another, new media took the lead in transmitting pictures and videos of demonstrations. With the technical, logistical and political difficulties state television was facing, international news networks were more capable of reporting the events. Although Al Jazeera has not been allowed to report from inside Tunisia, it quickly managed to establish itself as the 'go to' channel, especially after opening its screens for continuous coverage. In doing so, it provided protesters with unequal platform to express their demands and reach out to millions of supporters and sympathizers inside and outside their country. It played the role of 'facilitator', says Nabil Raihani, news producer and field reporter who covered Tunisia. Referring to the Marxist concept of historic determinism, he explains the role of the media in facilitating change:

> History is like a pregnant woman who has to give birth anyhow, but the presence of a midwife helps her. Human beings act like a midwife who facilitates birth through revolutionary means. Similarly, the Arab world had the potential of a radical, profound and revolutionary change. There are always factors which impede change and others which facilitate it. Al Jazeera and the media in general were the factors that facilitated and accelerated change.
>
> *(Interview, 16 May 2011)*

But it was not easy for a news network to cover events on such a scale without having its reporters operating on the ground. For contrary to the rest of the Arab world, Tunisia was the only country where Al Jazeera had been banned from reporting until the fall of Bin Ali's regime. The first Al Jazeera crew entered Tunisia on 15 January 2011, the day after Bin Ali fled the country.

Prior to that, the channel had to rely heavily on social media feeds, showing pictures and videos of demonstrations taking place in remote cities and villages. Through the connections it had established at a very early stage with a wide network of activists and 'citizen journalists', the channel kept the news of the revolution pouring into the newsroom from across the country. To understand this complex operation and how the coverage was handled by editors, Raihani puts us in the newsroom atmosphere:

> At the beginning of the revolution, when we receive materials, we check the time and place and contact the source for verification. We then talk to our trusted sources to make sure of the credibility of the news. When we put them on air, and

> to be on the safe side, we usually mention to our viewers that these materials could not be verified by independent sources. At a later stage, the same news started to come from different sources, which means no more verification was needed.
>
> *(Interview, 16 May 2011)*

Back in Tunisia, where protests were gaining ground and spreading from one city into another, there emerged an unprecedented news-making phenomenon. Activists in different parts of the country got together and organized themselves into groups with well-defined tasks for each member, explains Mohamed Lemine: 'Some were assigned the task of taking pictures and videos with their cell phones, others had to write up and edit the news, while other members contacted news networks to get their stories out' (Interview, 17 May 2011).

It was this non-stop flow of information coming from ordinary activists reporting events from various locations across the country that helped the channel to cover the Tunisian revolution. In the absence of its professional crew, cell phones and personal cameras replaced professional equipment and were capable of conveying the real picture of what was happening. It was an interactive process in which not only did Al Jazeera reach out to these activists to use their materials, but they also succeeded in reaching out to Al Jazeera and made their stories heard. It was a two-way operation where new media met and complemented traditional media in order to present us with coordinated coverage.

But this coordination between traditional and new media did not go unchallenged. In addition to the credibility issue, mentioned by Raihani, regarding news received from 'unknown' and 'unverified' sources, the quality of pictures and video clips captured by personal cameras and cell phones did not meet the professional standards required in television broadcasting. At the beginning of the revolution, the channel tried to limit the use of those materials at a very minimal level; but later on, and in the absence of alternative professional sources, we have seen this policy waning gradually.

Al Jazeera has undoubtedly dominated the media landscape during the revolutions of the Arab Spring, but as has been demonstrated, its coverage of the Tunisian revolution, in particular, could not have been as comprehensive and influential without relying on new media. In addition to the content flowing into the newsroom from almost every corner of the country, networks of grassroots activists continuously supplied the network with updates on what was happening on the ground. The power of new media complemented and extended the power of satellite television rather than competing with it. To understand this increasingly influential role new media has played in the Tunisian revolution, the following section looks at the main characteristics of this phenomenon.

Social media and the revolution

Contrary to the way in which traditional media operate, especially with regard to the unified output and the central control of editorial lines to influence policies and manipulate the masses, new media are an intrinsically pluralistic and individual-oriented phenomenon. They create a suitable environment for democracy and cherish democratic practices. They offer users unlimited amount of materials with open access and unrestricted freedom of choice between different options.

Options at the content level

Users receive news items shared by friends over their preferred social networks; video clips featuring unreported stories ignored by mainstream media captured by personal cameras or cell phones; short messages (SMS) circulated among like-minded people, colleagues or classmates; comments posted on individual Facebook pages, twitter or blogs.

Options of timing

Users of information technology do not have to wait until they return home to join the rest of the family and watch the news bulletin on their TV screen, or wait to buy the next day's paper to read news stories that have already become outdated. They can choose to receive the desired content instantly in their office while carrying out their work, driving home or during business meetings that need vital information to make informed decisions.

Options of delivery platforms

New technologies enable news consumers to choose between different platforms over which they receive content. Different platforms create different modes of news consumption and different ways of interaction with media offerings. Television screens, computer screens and cell phone screens are increasingly used interchangeably to serve changing needs and circumstances. This variety of technological interfaces has not only facilitated access to information, it has also, and more importantly, changed the nature of communication and consequently reshaped the role of the user.

Active versus passive user

Within this interactive new media environment created by continuous technological advancement emerged a new type of user. Broadcasters are no longer able to impose their side of the story on viewers who are increasingly exposed to unlimited numbers of alternative sources. They choose when, where and how to receive their information. They also choose the way in which they interact with the content they receive, and in many cases they turn into producers providing broadcasters with their side of the story. Users of new media are no longer passive consumers; they actively engage with the process of news production and gradually change the functions, structures and key players in the news industry. This new type of user is not only a by-product of this changing media environment; he himself has become an active agent of change.

Such an unprecedented combination of open-access media sources, multi-option delivery platforms and actively engaged users can only be a successful recipe for socio-political change. This can be clearly noticed in the changing relationship between governments and citizens, on the one hand, and among citizens, on the other, towards a more participatory politics. If change in the media landscape with the advent of satellite television in the mid 1990s led to remarkable political changes in the Arab world, as I have argued above, the widespread use of new media and social media networks brought about structural changes both in the political and social fields.

At the political level, the power of governments has diminished considerably as a result of losing control over the process of producing and disseminating information. This meant that governments are no longer in a position to influence public opinion in a specific direction. Control over information has moved away from the hands of the state and its various agencies to an increasing number of decentralized internet users connected to the web from different locations.

With this visible shrinking of state control over information came another change at the societal level. The rupture of the traditional structure of political power paved the way for the emergence of a different sort of power diffused over a multitude of social groups. These groups, which essentially formed around social media networks, are no longer virtual entities. We are talking about growing numbers of active communities constituted of real like-minded people interconnected voluntarily and playing roles of varying degrees of importance. Their structures, functions and interrelationships are fundamentally different from traditional social formations and their political impact is consequently far reaching.

What makes these changes more interesting is the continuous development in communication technologies in addition to the dynamic aspects that characterize the creation and expansion of these social groups. As access to internet services becomes easier, cheaper and available in almost every corner, more people from different age groups, social classes and political affiliations have joined social media networks. The sharply rising figures of Facebook users in Tunisia prior and during the revolution, for instance, demonstrate how dynamic and effective Tunisian internet communities were in influencing the political change that took place in their country.[4] The waves of activists, politicians and intellectuals joining social media and using their services in producing content critical of the government have undoubtedly had a significant contribution to the success of the revolution. When state media were campaigning against the protest movement, describing protesters' actions as 'vandalism', young activists reported their story in their own way and got their message delivered to the outside world via small and handy but practical devices connected to the internet. This was of particular importance, especially before the arrival of international media on the ground to maximize the coverage of demonstrations that so quickly turned into a full-scale revolution sweeping the entire country.

The role of social networks in mobilizing local communities and, in the process, engaging the neighbouring cities and villages to take part in the revolution is undeniable. Indeed, their effect extended well beyond the confines of their national borders. Grassroots activists and citizen journalists succeeded in generating external sympathy and support for the revolution both at the regional and international levels.

What is more significant in this regard is the political aspect of these new social formations. Contrary to the fading role of the fragmented traditional political opposition, a new type of opposition emerged with radically different characteristics. The massive use of new technologies and social media networks by youth activists to connect, communicate and self-organize away from state control was in itself a form of opposition and resistance to the policies of autocratic regimes. Autocracies generally tend to contain opposition groups, isolate activists and deprive them from their social base. Any collective or associative action is seen by autocrats as a threat to their stability and the survival of their regimes. It is easier for them to deal with individuals rather than interconnected groups. Isolated, disconnected and disengaged individuals can easily be influenced and manipulated. It is in this context that new media have

played an instrumental role in the success of the revolution, especially when it comes to connecting grassroots activists, providing them with alternative platforms and, most importantly, liberating them from the tightened control of state media and their propaganda strategies.

Notes

1 The title of the English version was changed to *The Al Jazeera Decade*, Ezzeddine Abdelmoula (2007), Al Waraqoon, Bahrain.
2 Operation Desert Fox is the codename for the four-day series of air strikes on Iraqi targets initiated by the US and UK on 16 December 1998.
3 Operation Cast Lead is the codename for the three-week armed conflict in Gaza during the winter of 2008–2009. The conflict started on 27 December when Israeli forces launched a major air attack on Hamas political and military targets. Al Jazeera was the only international network reporting events on the ground after the Israeli authorities decided to block the besieged strip in front of the foreign media.
4 Tunisian Facebook users reached 2.2 million in January 2011. This means that over one quarter of the population is active on this social media network alone. Tunisia is number 1 in Africa and only four Gulf countries come before it in the Arab world (facebookstatistics/socialbakers).

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Graffiti Arts and the Arab Spring

Charlotte Schriwer

As a unique and indomitable form of individual and institutional expression and communication, art has gone hand in hand with conflict throughout many of history's turbulent social, political and economic times. From the rise of the Roman Empire to the eve of Lenin's Communist era, from the birth of Dada in the wake of World War I to Hitler's Nazi regime and beyond, artistic expressions of sentiment toward political and social reform in which individuals or groups have found a means of communicating experience, emotion, thought – whether covert or blatant – have been deployed as a means of addressing a wider audience in times of deep national psychological crises and manifest social despair. No less visible is this manifestation than in the modes of expression that have risen in the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab uprisings in December 2010 – particularly in the medium of graffiti.

A variety of cultural expressions such as dance, poetry, literature and sculpture has always been used to reach a broader audience in order to circumvent restrictions of authoritarian regimes. These regimes have sought to oppress their people by censoring or eliminating all other mainstream channels of communication, such as TV, newspapers and the internet. As a result, the Arab uprisings that took large parts of North Africa by storm, and the revolts that continue in Syria's current civil war as well as Bahrain's ongoing social revolt, have been – and continue to be – witness to this resilient protest through a flourishing movement of art, in which graffiti has taken centre stage; and after decades of censorship and authoritarian oppression, it has found a loud, clear awakening. What was once considered to be an almost unanimous regional fear of expression has found some liberation through spray cans and paint brushes. This is reflected in the increased literature related to the study of graffiti that has emerged in the last few years, including such works as Don Karl and Pascal Zoghbi's Arabic Graffiti (2011) and Mia Gröndahl's extensive survey of graffiti in *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt* (2012).

This chapter explores the impact of graffiti within the social and political environments of the Arab uprisings, some of its external influences and effects, and the emergence of graffiti as a form of art, rather than as acts of anti-government vandalism, in the light of widespread conflict.

Space, place and protest: Territorial symbolism of graffiti

Unlike other media in fine art and popular culture (oil paintings, sculpture and cartoons) which are constrained by certain dimensional, temporal and material considerations in their successful execution, graffiti is unique in the sense that it can use almost any surface as its blank canvas. This gives the graffiti artist unparalleled freedom and power in expressing his or her thoughts without having to greatly consider the sensitivities of time and money, or the careful deliberation of materials. As a result, in politically and socially volatile situations, this form of art can provide an almost instant platform of communication by any group; while other media tend to be targeted at specific age groups and social classes and often have specific sectarian or political nuances, graffiti is able to reach a broad local, mainstream audience of all age groups and social classes instantly (Kraidy 2013). These artistic expressions of protest have a tendency to be generally associated with large urban centres (e.g. the mass of graffiti art seen in Cairo, particularly around Tahrir Square, which will be discussed later); but, in fact, they show themselves to have substantial presence – sometimes in an even more dominant fashion – in the rural areas or outlying suburbs of large cities.

Graffiti has without question played a vital role in local urban territorial dispute, where anti-government protestors have 'claimed' territory by spraying pro-revolutionary, anti-government graffiti in areas that have clear government presence. As large public spaces were taken over by massive groups of protesters in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, authorities lost control over the crowds, many of whom were armed with spray cans and paints, marking territory through slogans and art, rather than through physical occupation by groups of people. The result was an uninhibited explosion of artistic expression that rapidly turned multiple neighbourhoods into colourful and vibrant areas of silent protest, ranging from crudely sprayed anti-government slogans to large, minutely detailed murals covering entire walls of buildings. The rapid response by the government has, in turn, usually been to wash away or paint over the graffiti, measures the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces were swift to implement in Cairo, in an attempt to reconquer lost territory.

In Bahrain, where 'residents stake territorial claims with graffiti and murals' (Doherty 2011: 191), a similar response is executed, where anti-government graffiti is usually sprayed over with black paint rather than washed off. However, this tends to be less the case in smaller, less visited villages, where the police ignore much of this graffiti (Jarbou 2011: 39). Although much of the graffiti present in Bahrain is confined to the capital city of Manama, around the Shi'a-dominated tourist area of Bab al-Bahrain and the Sunni-dominated suburb of Muharraq Island, attention should not be merely focused on urban centres when it comes to the spatial dimensions of protest, as Jillian Schwedler points out (Schwedler 2013: 232). Barbar, a small, predominantly Shi'a town approximately 15 kilometres to the west of Manama, has seen some of the more violent crackdowns by the Bahraini government since the continuing protest movements began on 14 February 2011, and has a flourishing graffiti movement called 'Ahrar Barbar', or 'Free Barbar', with an active Facebook page dedicated to the 14 February revolts. It is home to some of the most artistically engaging and unique graffiti on the island, with a decidedly anti-government, pro-human rights stance which has grabbed the attention of the international media in particular through its vigorous opposition to the Formula One event that takes place annually in Bahrain (Brown 2013). With the heavy policing of central Manama after the protests in 2011, activism continues through the use of

Figure 29.1 'Stop racing on our blood': anti-Formula One graffiti in Barbar, Bahrain
Source: Mohamed CJ, CC-BY-SA-3.0, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0), via Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABahrain_uprising_graffiti_in_Barbar_(8))

graffiti both in the alleyways of the capital city, as well as the outlying island villages; space has thus been claimed and reclaimed by both parties in Bahrain's civil struggle (see Figure 29.1).

The systematic conquest and loss of ideological territory through the application and removal of graffiti has its own spatial significance, but the link between graffiti and space in an urban environment can be particularly strong in certain public institutions that have symbolic qualities in themselves. Universities have throughout history not only been associated with great learning, but also with mass protest, revolt and revolution when authorities have imposed censored learning modules and heavily propagandized curricula. As a result, they are often the first to be scrutinized for anti-government activism. In response to this, various types of graffiti have been marking the American University in Cairo, some referencing specific events (such as the snipers targeting students in Tahrir Square, which will be discussed later). The American University in Beirut and the University of Tunis also became centres of graffiti activism, with slogans such as 'War makes coffins and castles', or depicting famous heroes such as Che Guevara. At the University in Tunis, reactionary and conservative students frequently play a cat-and-mouse game of writing and whitewashing; one particular recurring target is graffiti of the Lebanese thinker Mahdi Amel, who was assassinated in the 1980s, located at the English Faculty at the University of Tunis, where Amel's slogans are frequently whitewashed and reapplied (see Figure 29.2).[1] In another example, students have written on a wall of the Arts Faculty the slogan 'paint again' in defiance of the university administration who keeps repainting the wall (see Figure 29.3). It can be said that universities located in politically contentious spaces may be used as large-scale urban vehicles for conveying messages by various activist groups, whether pro- or anti-government.

The question of space, and its potential for meaning, is therefore paramount in analysing the dynamics of protest through the medium of any form of art, particularly one as malleable as graffiti. As W. J. T Mitchell correctly notes when he compares the Arab Spring to the Occupy Wall Street movement that happened almost simultaneously, 'the iconic moments, the images that promise to become monuments, of the global revolution of 2011 are not those of face but of space; not figures, but the negative space or ground against which a figure appears … occupation, it should be noted, is

Figure 29.2 Graffiti homage to Lebanese thinker Mahdi Amel, at the English Faculty, Tunis University
Source: Laura Boushnak, from the series *I Read I Write*

Figure 29.3 'Paint again': graffiti on the walls of the Arts Faculty, Tunis University, in defiance of university administration
Source: Laura Boushnak, from the series *I Read I Write*

not only a visual and physical presence in a space but a discursive and rhetorical operation' (Mitchell 2012: 9–10). This is where graffiti, as a notoriously 'illicit' act by tradition, has the power to claim territory without the use of brute force, while still being the frontline for social, political and economic rhetoric in times of revolution. The manipulation of space through art thus becomes an effective and prolific tool of psychological warfare.

As an abstract concept, it could be suggested that space itself is immovable; one may tear down monuments, such as the Pearl Monument in Bahrain, or erect new ones, such as the separation wall between Israel and Palestine, but the space it is in and that around it, as well as the memory, the history and the time associated with it, will always remain. As such, space offers both eternal and ephemeral symbols of freedom and imprisonment. The potential of space, as Mitchell suggests, thus becomes the iconic monument, because one needs only an imagination to create it. In the 21st century, this can be particularly applied to the case of virtual space; for example, while the Egyptian military and the Bahraini government are busy destroying the graffiti around Cairo and Bahrain, they hold no power over the millions of images of this graffiti that have already flooded the ethernet. The graffiti 'Tank versus bicycle', of an Egyptian military tank crushing protesters (created by artist Ganzeer), may have been altered into a pro-army mural by government loyalists almost as soon as he had emptied his spray cans, but the image of it can now be found on the internet, as well as in a wealth of printed media (Gröndahl 2012: 27). Since the start of the graffiti wars in the Arab uprisings, a large number of blogs and websites have been formed that document much of this art, and although it may be banned or heavily censored in the physical and even the online realm, it remains accessible to most of the global population by virtual means. This brings into light various questions of cultural censorship the Middle East and North Africa have been forced to face since the start of the Arab Spring, both in the virtual as well as the actual realm.

Forms of censorship: Non-violent and violent response to graffiti

In the Middle East and North Africa, graffiti has long been associated with political and social struggle, particularly since the post-World War II period. In areas that have seen decades of ongoing conflicts, such as Palestine and Lebanon, graffiti has been an integral part of the urban and suburban landscape since the 1970s (Chaktoura 1978). In the Arab Spring countries, these were banned by authoritarian regimes who held a strict censorship of public opinion; consequently, these writings and images were until recently only found in abandoned back alleys and streets that were rarely visited by the authorities, unless government sanctioned as organized classes or workshops, such as the graffiti festival hosted by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture's Fine Art Sector in 2010.[2]

The involvement of the state in culture has had sensitive implications for most Middle Eastern countries and is currently widely debated (Pahwa and Winegar 2012: 2–3). This sensitivity is not always confined to a specific country, but frequently reaches beyond borders through socio-religious and political connections. In places such as Syria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain it is banned and punishable by the authoritarian legal system. Graffiti is still not considered as an acceptable form of individual or group expression by many authoritarian regimes despite the fact that it found its way into a newly emerging cultural scene. This scene, although in many cases less prohibited than in the pre-revolution period, is trying to find a place in societies

that face a struggle between the secular and the religious, between modernity and traditionalism. In fact, using Egypt as an example of failed reform since the fall of Mubarak, there have been few changes to legislation regarding the arts and culture, with strict censorship guidelines still in place for all media and arts, with deeply rooted domestic fractions regarding cultural policy coming to the fore, instead (Schwartz et al 2013: 3).

Is graffiti vandalism or art?[3] And when is it one and not the other? What are the conditions – political, social, economic – that define graffiti as either a positive artistic individual expression that should be praised, or a negative act of anarchical vandalism designed to do nothing but stir up the masses? In this light, censorship takes on a new sensitive, double-edged and contentious meaning for many of these transitional governments; while the same art forms that were once approved by the opposition to humiliate and denigrate the existing power structures, this is now termed 'illegal', 'illicit' and 'anti-government' by the same opposition that has been elected as the next ruling party. The role of graffiti and its legality, in particular, has thus been questioned, as even most Western 'democratic' societies frown upon the use of graffiti in public space (with some exceptions), and condemn those who promote it either through incarceration or the payment of heavy fines.

The socio-political questions arising out of the artistic explosion of the Arab Spring has brought to light censorships of many forms, both within the revolutionary countries, as well as neighbouring countries that have experienced the marginal effects of toppled dictatorships and rising social movements. In addition to Bahrain, other Gulf countries have anxiously witnessed rising social discontent and increased public denouncements of the ruling families, fearing the fire of the Arab Spring will spread. This has also manifested itself in the censorship of certain works of art that have brought increased attention to the social repression and violence associated with these overthrown authoritarian regimes, considered by many in the Gulf not to be dissimilar to their own governments.

In March 2012, Art Dubai – the largest annual art fair held in the Gulf region – served as a platform for art from the post-Arab uprisings period by emerging and established artists. The theme of the fair was 'The Medium of Media' and intended to discuss the impact of the Arab uprisings on all forms of media – arts, social networks, news and the internet. Alongside a forum for debating various issues related to the Arab uprisings, commercial art galleries from around the globe displayed works of art that reflected the impact of the region's political turmoil on society as a whole. Several artworks were removed by order of the UAE government, apparently due to 'cultural sensitivities' rather than for any particular, and even obvious, anti-government statements or critiques. One of these works recalls an infamous moment during the early Tahrir Square protests; the media collage 'You Were My Only Love', by Moroccan artist Zakaria Ramhani, depicts a young woman wearing an *abbaya* being dragged through Tahrir Square by Egyptian security forces, so brutally treated that she becomes partially unclothed revealing her blue bra. The scene has become one of the most recounted in various forms of art, particularly in graffiti, across the Middle East; however, it was deemed potentially culturally insensitive by the Emirati government due to the fact that it showed a female displaying her underwear, rather than for any relationship between the brutality of the military and the authorities sanctioning this violent response (see Figure 29.4).[4]

The fact that another work of art by Indonesian artist Eko Negruho, entitled 'Nationalism', also showing a partially veiled figure in underwear displaying in large

Figure 29.4 'The blue bra': one of the Egyptian Revolution's most iconic symbols, this graffito along with many similar ones, graces Mohamed Mahmoud Street
Source: Mona Abaza, with permission

letters the word 'NATIONALISM', was initially banned but later allowed to be put back on display suggests that Ramhani's work of art was, in fact, not banned for 'cultural insensitivity', but rather for its overtly revolutionary, political, anti-government and anti-establishmentarian overtones.

However, despite rigorous vetting of arts and cultural programmes, graffiti in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states has been seeing an increase, mostly from an artistic and non-political aspect. In Oman, for example, the government hosted well-known British graffiti artist Mohammed Ali in 2011 to spray paint a series of large cubes situated around various parts of Muscat. The graffiti was a combination of Arabic calligraphy and street art, intended to challenge the 'clash of civilizations' and bring together different faiths.[5] This was acceptable, as it promoted inter-faith understanding without questioning the Omani government's political, religious, social or economic views. Dubai has also seen government-approved graffiti emerging in its streets, even sanctioning graffiti competitions between schools (Gokulan 2012), although more recently, Dubai Municipality launched the anti-graffiti 'Clean Walls, Beautiful City' campaign, demonstrating a passive-aggressive response to potentially politically motivated or anti-government graffiti popping up in Dubai's public spaces.[6]

In contrast to the regional non-violent and more physically detached forms of censorship that are gripping some countries which are not undergoing the same social and political processes of change, the ephemeral protests and the art that accompanies these mass gatherings – which can be found online as much as in the streets of the cities (Figure 29.5) – is often met with brutal reactions by the authorities. In Syria, one of the many horrifying aspects emphasizing the brutality of the ongoing civil war is the stark

Figure 29.5 Poster published 23 March 2011 on social networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook urging Syrians to demonstrate; artwork by graphic artist Michael Thompson
Source: Day of Rage, uploaded by the Egyptian Liberal, CC-BY-2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

contrast between the non-violent means of protests that initially took place across the country and the brutality of the response with which these peaceful acts of protest were met at the hands of the al-Asad regime. This is perhaps more the case now than it ever was before in Syria, where artists are not excluded from this reality, but are, in fact, frequently targeted as they are seen as a threat to the government, able to incite unrest through their anti-regime oriented work (Ferguson 2012). In one of many tragic incidents that received worldwide media attention, the 23-year-old graffiti activist Nour Hatem Zahra, known as 'Spray Man', was shot in the leg by al-Assad security forces and bled to death in an alleyway in April 2013 after he was caught spraying anti-al-Assad slogans such as 'To the trash heap of history' and 'Down with the traitor' in a suburb of Damascus (McEvers 2012) (see Figure 29.5). Other anti-government artist-activists, such as the singer and poet Ibrahim Qashoush, were subject to even more gruesome deaths (Roue 2011). This censorship, a violent response to non-violent actions, has been one of the main influencing factors of the types of messages that appear in the graffiti of the Arab Spring.

The language of graffiti

The graffiti of the Arab Spring (and in those countries that are still in conflict) covers a myriad of different themes; in addition to the anti-government calls for freedom, bread and dignity that covered walls in the early stages of the revolution, various landmark events propagated artistic expressions related to social issues, such as Muslim–Christian unity and gender equality. With regards to the latter, let us first briefly return to the brutal incident of the blue bra, mentioned earlier.

There is no doubt that this violent moment in Egypt's revolution has left an indelible mark on the memory of the Egyptian people and the greater populations of the Middle East, but has had particular effects on women's rights movements and the growing question of gender parity and inequality brought to the forefront. The blue bra moment ignited a wave of reactionary graffiti which can still be seen on Mahmoud Street, near Tahrir Square, and with it accompany not only anti-government, but also anti-patriarchal, anti-violence and pro-gender equality slogans (Abaza 2013). The blue bra appeared on a depiction of Wonder Woman in a famous graffiti portrait executed by the well-known artist El Teneen (Naeem 2013: 3); subsequently, it has attained symbolic meanings in the anti-government graffiti of the streets of Lebanon, where activists created their own anti-regime campaign with the slogan 'the blue bra against the regime' (Naeem 2013: 3). The blue bra became a symbol of revolution that spanned continents, reaching people as far as the US; a symbol of female sexuality and femininity was thus turned into an iconic object universally symbolizing a struggle for freedom against oppression, for men and women alike, as well as reigniting the social discourse on controversial gender-related issues (see Figure 29.6).

The denouncement of the violent treatment of women during the blue bra moment thus found an increased presence in Cairo's graffiti, particularly with the assumption of Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the increase in sexual harassment and rape of female demonstrators and foreign journalists. Images of heroines such as Samira Ibahim, who along with many young women was forced to undergo 'virginity tests' by military personnel, appeared along slogans such as 'No to sexual assault', while more extreme responses to male sexual violence show a female silhouette within the circle-backslash symbol under which is written the phrase 'No touching – castration

Figure 29.6 'Don't judge me': graffiti on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, near Tahrir Square
Source: Mona Abaza, with permission

Figure 29.7 'No!': graffiti stencils of the blue bra surrounded by slogans of freedom and saying no to violence by the military, on a wall erected by SCAF between Mohamed Mahmoud Street and Tahrir Square
Source: Mona Abaza, with permission

awaits you' (Abaza 2013). The systematic frightening of female protesters through tactical harassment continued under the Muslim Brotherhood, when it reached a new level of violence with the establishment of torture chambers. The public reaction to this can be clearly understood through the graffiti that now covers Mohamed Mahmoud Street (Abaza 2013) (see Figure 29.7).

Acts of physical violence, such as the blue bra event, may have a profound impact physically and psychologically for any individual or social group. The same effect can result from the physical damage or removal of monuments that hold or gather symbolic meaning within a particular social group. One such example is the Pearl Monument in Bahrain. When, on 14 February 2011, a large group of peaceful young protesters chose this as their iconic gathering place to call for freedom, few could predict that the Bahraini government would tear it down less than one month later. Already considered a national landmark before its destruction, more than three years later, the Pearl lives on not only in the memories of Bahrainis, but still appears frequently in graffiti on the walls of Bahraini alleyways and buildings, and lives on in the revolutionary slogans. It remains the symbol of the 'Ahrar Barbar' movement, and also became an icon of revolution even outside of Bahrain. Graffiti depictions of the Pearl appear in various parts of Beirut, where the struggle for Bahrain's democracy is often mentioned in conjunction with slogans of solidarity for freedom and democracy in Syria (Naeem 2013: 6–7) (see Figure 29.8).

While Egypt and, to a lesser degree, Bahrain both mobilized what can be described as organized graffiti movements (Naeem 2013: 3), there were other countries of the Middle East that had more random and disorganized graffiti trends. This is certainly

Figure 29.8 'The revolution of February 14': graffiti on a wall in Barbar, Bahrain, showing the iconic Pearl Monument
Source: Mohamed CJ, CC-BY-SA-3.0, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0), via Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABahrain_uprising_graffiti_in_Barbar_(13))

the case for Syria, somewhat ironically, as it was in fact graffiti that sparked the start of the Syrian uprising. When two young boys, led by 13-year-old schoolboy Ahmed Sami Abou Zeid, sprayed anti-Assad slogans saying 'Get out Bashar! We don't love you!' and 'The people demand the fall of the regime!' on their school's walls in Dera'a, a small town in the south of Syria, few people could predict that this event, which subsequently led to the arrest of Ahmed, would be the instigator of one of the bloodiest civil wars in the modern history of the Middle East. Unlike the vividly coloured pictorial graffiti that is rampant in Cairo and Tunisia, for example, Syrian graffiti has until recently remained simplistic and crude in comparison, usually being confined to hastily written anti-government slogans. The main reason for this is the great threat of discovery by pro-Assad regime soldiers, who – as demonstrated earlier – frequently abduct, torture and murder any anti-government activists (Naeem 2013: 4; this will also be discussed briefly later). The graffiti thus has been used mostly as an assault of words, rather than of pictorial messages, the result being that graffiti has, since the start of the war, become one of the most frequently used tools of psychological warfare. However, the scene is gradually changing from verbal to pictorial, with stencilled images of Assad depicted as Adolf Hitler appearing in various parts of Syria (Naeem 2013). As one of history's most notorious authoritarian figures, it is no surprise that comparisons of Adolf Hitler to the dictators of the Arab Spring are frequent, where the addition of a simple small moustache speaks for itself.

Although comparisons to Hitler reflect the serious and tragic reality of the cruelty of authoritarianism, one way in which graffiti activists have dealt with the human indignities and humiliations the people have suffered is through the mockery and ridicule expressed in their art. Caricatures, in particular, are common features of graffiti, where the language is not just restricted to slogans of freedom, human rights and democracy, but the sarcastic and humorous images often reflect the ridiculous reality of the dictators' existence and the undemocratic nature of their rule. One famous example is a mural in Cairo, showing a large portrait of a face, one half of which is that of Mubarak and the other that of Tantawi. The image suggests that a change of leadership from Mubarak to Tantawi after the revolution did not necessarily imply a change of regime. These two leaders are also often depicted in murals together as snakes (Gröndahl 2012: 124). In Libya, Gaddafi is often depicted as a rat, or mocked

Figure 29.9 'Who are you?': graffiti caricatures of Muammar Gaddafi on a wall in Benghazi
Source: Maher27777, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABenghazi_caricatures_of_Gadafi03)

in situations that depict the ridiculous reality of his regime. In one graffito in Benghazi, he is shown clinging to the branch of a tree which is about to snap; below him are two crocodiles waiting with their jaws wide open, next to which is another graffito of Gaddafi trailing an aged prisoner in chains who is holding Gaddafi's famous *Green Book* containing his political philosophies (mandatory reading for all Libyans) (see Figure 29.9).

Freedom, liberty and equality are perhaps the most common themes in graffiti of the Arab uprisings, often drawing on revolutionary slogans of times past and from other parts of the world. In Tunisia, the artist Faten Roussi decided to change her neighbourhood in the suburbs of Tunis by transforming the burned-out cars that had been left as a result of the revolution into objects of art by painting them with different slogans, motifs, and colours. Slogans such as 'Game over' and 'Long live Tunisia', and words like 'Freedom' and 'Revolution', emphasize the paradoxical message of despair and hope reflected in the artwork itself: the damaged cars, a symbol of struggle and defeat, the bright colours suggesting a revival of life, the slogans indicating victory and liberation (Khalil 2012) (see Figure 29.10). '*Liberté, egalité, fraternité*', the famous slogan of the French Revolution which is still the national motto of France, is associated with the 'Ultras' activists in Egypt,[7] while in Tunisia, the motto has been altered to '*Liberté, démocratie, laïcité*' ('Liberty, democracy, secularity'), carefully avoiding any colonial associations while also calling for a secular state.[8]

Along with calls for secularity, the issue of religious tolerance is another common theme of Arab uprising graffiti. These often serve as defiance against the regime leadership, which uses sectarianism as a tool to divide people and thus keep them under

Figure 29.10 Graffiti in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia
Source: Zann Huizhen Huang, with permission

control. In Egypt, the theme tends to be Christian-Muslim Unity, whose symbol is a crescent with a cross in varying formats, but as one unique symbol; the message to be read is that religious unity will prevail despite attempts to destroy it. The slogan that is often written beside the crescent-cross motif is 'Christian or Muslim: we are all Egyptian' (Gröndahl 2012: 151). This is also the case for Tunisia, where slogans often call for Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious unity.[9]

Martyrdom is another major recurring theme of the Arab uprisings graffiti arts. Nour Hatem Zahra, himself now considered a martyr after his murder, is frequently depicted in graffiti stencils not only across Syria, but also in many of the other Arab Spring countries.[10] In Tunisia, images of Mohammed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation many consider to be the primary instigator of the Arab uprisings, are also frequently stencilled around public spaces. Large-scale projects to commemorate those who lost their lives in the revolutions include a wall of martyrs at a downtown Cairo café, and after the infamous Port Said football stadium massacre in 2012, portraits of 'Ultras' martyrs were painted along Mohamed Mahmoud Street (Gröndahl 2012: 158–159). Another incident that prompted a massive graffiti response was the Tahrir Square sniper incident, where a number of people had one eye shot out by snipers. The walls of the American University in Cairo are now home to a large mural showing a series of one-eyed figures, with white patches over the missing eye (Gröndahl 2012: 166–171). Slogans such as 'Inzal al Shaheed' ('Remember the martyrs') abound in towns and cities alike, and it is through this graffiti that those who die or are injured for the cause of revolution will be immortalized in public forever – and there is no authority that can hold power over this collective memory.

'The revolution is graffitied'

Despite a general global view that it is 'institutionally illicit' (Phillips 2013), and often associated with acts of vandalism and crime, graffiti has emerged as a form of art in its own right in the popular culture of the contemporary Middle East.[11] The predominant reason for this flourishing of artistic expression is the social and political manifestation of resistance which has taken place since the start of the Arab Spring in late 2010. The enormous social challenges posed to these societies are clearly reflected in the sheer variety and mass of graffiti that has surfaced in the last two years. It also brings into light a host of difficult questions regarding state cultural censorship and validation in what are traditionally viewed as conservative societies, but are now undergoing indeterminate changes and struggles between secularisation and de-secularization. Graffiti has opened new forms and norms of cultural identity and acceptability, while also representing a new and booming art movement.

The meaning of this graffiti movement, and the seemingly relentless resurgence of slogans and murals, cannot only be found in the aesthetic of the art itself, which is the result of actions from thoughts, beliefs and feelings; it is also implied through their place in space and time, where they become tangible sentiments, physical manifestations of despair and grief, hope and joy, pain and pleasure (Moosa 2011: 171). In the wake of the Arab Spring and the revolutions that continue to be in the making, this aesthetic challenges personal belief as well as public and deeply rooted institutional opinion, and, perhaps most importantly, the nature of state or party control in the new cultural realms of the Middle East. It brings art into another dimension of communication, in which the message received is not simply derived from what is physically seen on a canvas or a wall of concrete, but emanates from the suggested and the subconscious, and is not necessarily one of civil disobedience or anarchistic revolt, but perhaps more frequently one of intellectual curiosity that brings into question the existence of a paradigmal conservatism. Though Arab governments – both those affected by and those largely spared from the uprisings – are attempting to control and silence such art, there is a timeless *raison d'être* in these so ephemeral yet enduring emotive and provocative expressions of protest that have risen in diverse and controversial forms since the start of the uprisings. The graffiti movement born out of the Arab Spring will remain as a new and growing artistic tradition in the Middle East in the aftermath of revolutions; this aptly resonates with the philosophy of Albert Camus, who once said, 'Art and revolt will die only with the last man.'

Notes

This chapter is an extended work based on an article by the author: 'To the Trash Heap of History: Protest Art and the Arab Uprisings', *MEI Insights*, Fall 2012: 7–12.

1 Laura Boushnak, pers comm, 14 October 2013.
2 See http://www.fineart.gov.eg/DefaultE.aspx?PageK=3&id=1174, accessed 10 October 2013.
3 For a recent discussion of this debate, see Mohamed El Hebeishy, 'Arab Graffiti: Vandalism or Art?', *The Guardian*, 9 September 2012, accessed 4 April 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/sep/09/arab-graffiti-vandalism-art-spring.
4 The ban of Ramhani's work caught worldwide media attention; for details, see Najwan Darwish, 'Art Dubai: The Revolution Must Hide Its Underwear', *Al-Akhbar English*, 24 March 2012, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/5587, accessed 31 March 2012; and Tom Gara, 'Authorities Censor Art Dubai', *Financial Times*, 24 March 2012, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1cb7747c-7506-11e1–90d1–00144feab49a.html#axzz2hl2Kohdf, accessed 29 March 2012.

5 See http://www.aerosolarabic.com/mohammed-ali/, accessed 12 February 2012.
6 'Anti-graffiti Campaign Launched in Dubai', *Emirates24/7*, Wednesday, 5 June 2013, accessed 6 October 2013; for an example of anti-establishment graffiti, see http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/nationgeneral/2013/June/nationgeneral_June111.xml&section=nationgeneral, accessed 10 October 2013.
7 See http://suzeeinthecity.wordpress.com/2012/02/08/in-the-midst-of-madness-graffiti-of-the-ultras-on-mohamed-mahmoud-street/, accessed 10 October 2013.
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30

Poetry and the Arab Spring

A Historical Perspective

Atef Alshaer

The light of the intellect

One of the architects of Arab political philosophy in the 19th century was the Syrian educationalist 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī. Al-Kawākibī's most significant work is *Tabāi' al-Istibdād wa-Maṣāri' al-Isti'bād* (*The Nature of Despotism and the Harm of Enslavement*).[1] His time signified an Arab cultural renaissance and nationalist rejuvenation of considerable political weight. During his lifetime, the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled of the Arab world for four centuries, was descending into a steep decline. Its rulers, most notably Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), were the target of rage and condemnation from many Arab thinkers for what they considered to be epidemic corruption and despotism in the Empire. Al-Kawākibī was vocal in this context. His book is no less than revolutionary in its call for the overthrow of despotic regimes and the restoration of governance by the people and for the people.

It is instructive to quote what al-Kawākibī views as the primary cause for revolutions in his anatomical analysis of the traits of despotic rule:

> The masses do not often revolt in rage against the despot except after specific euphoric conditions that spark an immediate reaction, of which are:
> After a bloody painful scene, which the despot inflicts on an oppressed who wants to rebel against his method.
>
> *(Al-Kawākibi 1902 [2006]: 183)*

The Arab revolution, sparked in Tunisia in December 2010, started against precisely such a background. It was the actions of Mohamed Bouazizi (1984–2011), the young Tunisian man who set himself ablaze, that ignited a spiral of protests, ending with the fleeing of the dictator Zeine El-Abidine Bin Ali after more than 20 years in power. One of al-Kawākibī's seminal thoughts is that people can change their governments and rulers, if the latter cease upholding the rights, values and interests of those whom they govern. Among the sources that al-Kawākibī uses to advance his revolutionary attitude against the Ottoman Empire and despotism, in general, were the Arab poets. It is

inbuilt in his argument against despotism that people can change the course of history by tapping into their collective power against unjust rulers. One of the poets al-Kawākibī quotes to demonstrate his thesis is the great tenth-century Arab poet Abū al-'Alā al-Ma'arri (973–1075):

> If a government does not govern us by justice
> Then we are capable of changing it.
>
> *(Al-Kawākibi 1902 [2006]: 180)*

Governance, justice and ability are intertwined and underpin this simple, yet politically charged line. It gives power to people to be masters of their fate. But as al-Kawākibī explains, for people to rebel against their unjust rulers and rid themselves of despotism, there must be a reliable educational basis that facilitates and channels mature consciousness into active citizenship. Al-Kawākibī is not a random revolutionary or chaotically minded thinker calling for a revolution without a sense of where it should go, or how it should be translated into an effective governance. To this end, being the educationalist that he was, he seals his treatise with the following:

> It must be that the sensibility of the *umma* nation should be made aware of despotism. Then it must be encouraged to look at the political foundation appropriate to it; so that this preoccupies the ideas of all its classes. Here it's a priority that this should remain the preoccupation of the minds for years, indeed for decades, until it is exactly mature, until there is a real longing for the attainment of freedom in the high classes and real hope on the part of the lower classes … on this basis, let the like-minded be farsighted, and let the arrogant be touched and humbled by the grace of God, and let it be known that the matter is difficult; but imagining difficulty does not necessitate trepidation and resignation, but provokes the will of the stronger man.
>
> *(Al-Kawākibi 1902 [2006]: 186)*[2]

Al-Kawākibī is mindful that the revolution must take place on a solid intellectual basis if it is to succeed; his sole enemy is ignorance, *al-jahil*, which he writes 'causes every malady' (al-Kawākibi 1902 [2006]: 187). Al-Kawākibī is important in this context because his rich treatise is one of the solid intellectual signposts in the political history of 20th-century Arabs. The issues he raised fall at the heart of the current Arab Spring. Meanwhile, al-Kawākibī's time coincided with many Arab poets, such as Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhī m (1871–1932), Muṭrān Khalīl Muṭrān (1872–1949), Ma'rūf al-Risāfī (1875–1945) and others who condemned the Western colonialism of their countries, while pointing out political and cultural problems in the Arab world. To see the relevance of al-Kawākibī and other Arab thinkers more, it is instructive to look at the initial slogan that the contemporary Arab revolutions raised and retrace it to one of its origins in the landscape of Arab poetry. The slogan 'The people want the fall of the regime' summarizes a history of Arab poetics concerned with change geared towards the betterment of the status quo in accordance with the people's will and aspirations.

People power and change

The young Tunisian poet Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī (1909–1934), whose first two verses from the relatively long poem '*irāadat al-ḥayāh*' ('The Will to Life'), was quoted and

used extensively in the Arab revolutions, whether by the protesters, potential leaders, aspiring poets and writers. His words have been a shrine of inspiration and passion for what the people want for themselves, their societies and their conditions to be, free and just. Poetically, these lines became houses of vision and possibility. Beyond the two famous lines, the entire poem is compelling, as are others of his poems that similarly raised political, social, existential and aesthetic issues. Al-Shābbī's poems reveal deeper concerns in Arab societies, which echo in verse what al-Kawākibī put into prose a few years earlier. It suffices to highlight the emphasis that al-al-Kawākibī lays on people's will to change and live in a society immune of dictatorship and ignorance, ideals which al-Shābbī evokes powerfully in his poem:[3]

> If, one day, a people desires to live, then fate will answer their call.
> And their night will then begin to fade, and their chains break and fall.
> For he who is not embraced by a passion for life will dissipate into thin air,
> At least that is what all creation has told me, and what its hidden spirits declare …[4]

Life, for al-Shābbī, is not just living; it is constituted in a desire, empowered by a will that fights injustice where it looms large. The voice of romanticism, characteristic of that era, is clear in this poem. It is a passion for life that makes life worth its name. For life to be of this sort, dignified, just and worth its name, there has to be justice as well as a struggle against any form of despotism and enslavement. The poem from which these lines are taken is a compact piece of evocation, bringing together life at its musically holistic zenith. People are wed to their essences, which are rooted in the forms and habits of nature, beautified once they are able to be free and live passionately. Indeed, al-Shābbī's poem 'The Will to Life' is an extravaganza of willing passion. Thus, when the poet asks the Earth, 'O mother, do you hate people?', the Earth replies:

> I bless the people of ambition,
> And those who enjoy the mounting of danger,
> And I curse those who rebel against time
> And accept living the life of the stone
> For the universe is alive, it loves life,
> And despises the dead, no matter how old he grows …
> Woe unto that who has not been torn apart
> By the curse of the triumphant void!

The poem singles out the season of spring for beauty, fertility and rejuvenation. The other two seasons, the autumn and the winters which are explicitly mentioned, hide the rich bearings of nature and therefore are portrayed as sad and saddening. It's with spring, whether the spring of age, *rabī' al-'umr* or the spring of nature, that life brims with vitality and openness:

> The bright in life is that which never dulls
> And the heart of the spring, accented with the scented greenery …
> The spring came with its tunes,
> Encrusted with dreams and fresh perfume … .

The poet ties the brilliance and magic of spring, *saḥar*, with ambition and will to life; and ends the poem with a similar line with which he opened it, but with a new twist:

> If souls aspire to life
> Fate will inevitably respond … .

The poem is an affirmation of life in its deepest and most promising sense, as represented in spring. It is revolutionary in its spirit and form: it throws itself in the heart of nature and derives visions from its perfection, embracing life in both its natural and constructed composition. It does not stray into people's problems or human systems in detail, but provokes them to love life, while not prescribing answers for those who suffer materially. It banks on their will to overcome misery. Here the correlation of this poem with revolution as the product of human will might be instructive.

Revolutionaries in the throes of revolutions do not pay attention to details, particularly after they have been mired in an extremely unsatisfying and stultifying status quo. The poem here does not digress in impossibilities, but opens endless possibilities. Al-Shābbī had already written a few poems earlier on than this one, which he wrote on 16 September 1933, a year before he passed away at the age of 25.

By the time al-Shābbī jotted these famous lines, he had already written several poems similarly directed against dictatorship and other socio-political ills. These also pertain to the Arab Spring in a way that will be considered below, particularly in light of the connections they have with al-Kawākibī's ideas as highlighted at the outset of the chapter.

The rulers and the ruled

Al-Shābbī's genius in poetry is matched with awareness of serious cultural and political problems in the Arab world. He directs his heartfelt concern and critique towards two structures: the political establishment as represented by the dictator and the social structure as mired in ignorance. One of the most relevant of these is 'The Dictator', a poem which has been widely used in the Arab Spring, particularly in the Tunisia of al-Shābbī's birthplace, and is worthwhile quoting:

> Oppressive tyrant
> Lover of darkness, enemy of life
> You have ridiculed the sighs of the weak people
> Your palm is soaked with their blood
> You deformed the magic of existence
> and planted the seeds of sorrow in the fields
> Wait. Do not be fooled by the spring
> The clearness of the sky or the light of dawn;
> For on the horizon lies the horror of darkness,
> The rumble of thunder
> And the fierce blowing of wind;
> Beware for below the ash there is fire
> And he who grows thorns eats wounds
> Look there for I have harvested the heads of mankind
> and the flowers of hope

And I watered the heart of the earth with blood
I soaked it with tears until it is drunk
The river of blood will sweep you
And the fiery storm will devour you.[5]

What this poem shares with the earlier one is enthusiasm and passion towards the object of focus. Here, the dictator is stripped of all the truths and pleasures of existence. He is a delusional figure, who cannot see the people's hatred and rage, which will one day be unleashed against him. There is a Sufi-like theme to this poem, with the surface and hidden elements of existence in an operative mode. The dictator sees the manifest, but not the latent, which is the soul of things. This reality became manifestly clear with the Arab revolutions, as the four dictators deposed (namely, Bin Ali of Tunisia, Mubarak of Egypt, Gaddafi of Libya and Ali Abdallah Salih of Yemen) all claimed until the very end that their people loved them and considered them father-like figures. The four leaders often addressed revolutionaries in paternalistic language, referring, as did Mubarak, to 'my sons' (*abnāʾī*), or in the words of Gaddafi, known for flimsiness and outright hilarity, 'my people love me'. The delusion of spring that al-Shābbī evokes in this context is palpable.

Thus, while spring, which for the free and passionate about life in the first poem signifies rejuvenation and beauty, in the second is a deceiver. It tricks the dictator into believing that the brightness and lightness of it is all there is to it. Behind the spring lies darkness, which the dictator himself embodies. Here, the poet plays on the malleability of language to anchor it where it serves his insight, so that spring, depending on its upholder and receiver, can be enveloped within darkness, or it can be as it appears, an emblem of vividness and brightness.[6] Furthermore, there is a strong message of justice in the poem, an important ideal evoked by the Arab revolutionaries. Instead of planting good seeds that will reap sound fruits, the dictator sows and brings up thistles amid flowers that one day will erupt in his face and sweep him away. In short, nature abhors injustice that attempts to sit comfortably in its midst.

In the third poem of al-Shābbī, 'The Outcry', which is also visionary, engaging and passionate, he pinpoints an important problem, which al-Kawākibī, as we highlighted above, referred to as the 'cause of every malady', namely ignorance:

O people, my eyes had been struck with lightning
Ignorance is manifest as the fire of lightning in the sky … .

Here, ignorance is responsible for so many ills. It causes confusion; it strips people of the will to make decisions, to see within the field of sight and understanding as to what is beneficial to them. The poet cries out in anger at his people for neglecting science, and neglecting the progress of ancestors. He uses performative, active verbs to highlight how those ancestors created a civilization: constructed, preserved, lit and weaved glories and accomplished worthy achievements, as opposed to now:

O people you have become followers …
You have worn ignorance as a garment
Adopted it as a slogan …
O people, how come I see you dwelling in ignorance as an abode?

After highlighting how endemic as well as destructive ignorance is, al-Shābbī writes in the last stanza:

> O poetry! You have resounded and made people hear,
> But I see my people drunk …
> … be patient on what you face
> And resound, for it is only time before you are perfected …
> *(Al-Shābbī 1994: 46–47)*[7]

In relaying his message through poetry about ignorance, al-Shābbī echoes the sixth-century Arab poet Amru Bin Mu'di al-Zubaydi (525–642). The latter's line is well known in the proverbial realm of Arab culture:

> You would have made the living hear
> But there is no life in whom you are calling at.

In this poem, al-Shābbī does not deny life to his people, the Arabs in general, but he calls them *sakārā* (drunk) with ignorance. It's poetry that releases the message about ignorance, presses the alarm bells, while the poet occupies the position of the seer. Poetry is the action itself then, whereas the poet is the activating vessel from which issues a variety of philosophical, socio-political and aesthetic values. Poetry accentuates knowledge and materializes its presence. The poet shows commitment to his craft as well as to the afflictions of his society. This theme of commitment, *al-iltizām*, has been prominent in Arabic poetry of the 20th century. Since it pertains particularly to the poetry of revolution and the Arab Spring in general, I turn to it now.

Commitment

The epistemological as well as the spiritual value of poetry is well-established in the Arabic literary tradition. There has always been a diverse body of poets with a variety of orientations, some more inclined to reflect reality, others encased in visions of a transcendental nature and still others who have attempted to maintain a balance between their own vision and aesthetic sensitivities, and the world and its vagaries. The fact of these three major orientations did not prevent a clash and competition of views and preferences. This is particularly true with regard to poetry. One of the insightful voices who took a middle ground steeped in artistic as well as living conditions was the Egyptian writer Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm. His considered view is important in light of the Arab Spring and revolutions, as he wrote the following in 1952:

> We are approaching revolutions tomorrow by the peoples, underpinned by fundamental turnarounds in principles and the developments of ideas, for which it is not easy to predict their consequences or to infer the results. Let events run their course, and let things change and evolve in accordance with the way(s) of existence. And let us change with things and develop for we are only some of these things. All that we wish and hope for is that thinking should not drown one day in the revolution of the waves, so that it disappears from life and its benefit fades with it. Thinking must always exist, and be of service to all groups in their present time,

> upholding the higher values necessary to their development and a guarantor of their future.
>
> *(In Abū Ḥāqqah 1979: 363)*

It's quite a phenomenon that so many Arab writers in the 20th century predicted revolutions in their societies and called for a fundamental change in societal and cultural values. The Arabic tradition, whether literary or historical, is impressively rich and diverse, allowing several writers and people of opinion to form reasonably clear ideas about the potential patterns and trajectories that their societies could take. Ideas about justice, prosperity and freedom in their humanistic sense have always been present in one form or another. The poets, in particular, were agents of such ideas, but they differed as to the meaning and content of revolution. Yet, they maintained consensus against ignorance, authoritarianism and oppression. While Romanticism held the torch of passion at the beginning of the 20th century and before, Socialism held that of commitment, particularly after the 1950s (see Jayyusi 1987: 1–40). Of these poets is the Iraqi poet Abd al-Wahāb al-Bayātī (1926–1998), who wrote in his 1965 appropriately titled *Diwān Sifr al-Faqr wa-Thawra* (*The Book of Poverty and Revolution*):

> O generation of defeat, this revolution
> Will erase your shame and shake the rock
> It will shed your skin
> And plant a rose in your barren lives …
> O my generation, it will cast down the idols under your feet
> The winds of the proletariat will plough them into the abyss of oblivion.
>
> *(In Abū Ḥāqqah 1979: 443–444, my translation)*

The poem opens with the evocation of defeat, a sentiment which the Arabs experienced raw in the 20th century, particularly in 1967, a mere 19 years after Israel was established on the land of Palestine in 1948, dispossessing the Palestinian Arabs of their land. Two defeats at the hands of Israel within such a span of time alarmed many Arab intellectuals and poets, some of whom continued to bask in rhetorical vacuity while others engaged in a serious critique of Arab societies and called for a meaningful change that could engender a system of governance based on a solid structure of stately order (see Frangieh 2008: 11–40). Such a change is revolutionary, and since the focus of this chapter is on revolution and the Arab Spring, it's noteworthy to highlight the kind of change as well as the agents of it.

Revolution is, indeed, the resounding theme in al-Bayātī's poetry. It is a burning desire, that as Abū Ḥāqqa wrote, entailed the hope for:

> … salvation through the road of a revolution that changes ideas, customs, conditions, systems, souls, and the life of the society, and the means of living, and turn bareness into prosperous gardens, and plants in the minds of the young, who are the generation of the future, and the subject of hope and possibility, new ideas that will be like rain whose water washes the face of the earth and the faces of the people, so as to wipe away its dust and its miserable look, and make of the misery which has rooted itself in the souls of the Arabs bridges and lampposts, and flowers and signposts, with what these words symbolize of construction and composition,

> enlightenment, prosperity, and the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors, and the contributions to the human civilisation.
>
> *(In Abū Ḥāqqah 1979: 445)*

What is notable about al-Bayātī's work, observable in other words of that era (and even before) is the elaboration of desired outcomes for the revolutions – namely, the end of poverty and social inequality through distribution of resources and wealth (i.e. socialism). Arab poetry manifestly adopts another international template of reasoning and infuses it with Arab values and habits of expression. The poetry goes beyond highlighting and raging against ignorance and thrusts itself into the realm of ideology by suggesting an economic model that will potentially save the Arabs from their woes. Two iconic Egyptian poets, Ahmad Shauqi (1868–1932) and Hāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872–1932), already highlighted the importance of *al-Ishtirākiyya* (socialism) for the Arab world, seeing in it a means to the achievement of long-suppressed desires of equality in their societies. In al-Bayātī's poetry, *al-Ishtirākiyya* is implied through its bearers of change: the poor and the lower classes, those who will carry the torch of change in the Arab world. In another poem, al-Bayātī, who carried this theme forward from other Iraqi and Arab poets, such as Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926–1964), emphasizes the historical and political agency of the workers:

> O the God of the downtrodden poor,
> We have not been defeated,
> But it's the grand peacocks
> Who have been defeated alone.
>
> *(In Ḥuṭash 1987: 354, my translation)*

People are exempted from defeats here, while their leaders are blamed *tout court* for it. The 'grand peacocks' are the leaders, who led the Arab (*umma*) nation from one defeat to another. And it is the workers, the proletariat, who will one day triumph over them and hold the reign of governance, responsibility and justice; it is this sector of society that the poet stands with and speaks for. Therefore, Arabic poetry from the 1950s onwards abounds with reference to defeats, revolutions and change. It should not, therefore, be treated as coincidental that the Arab revolutions starting from Tunisia and spreading into Egypt were fuelled by the workers (proletariat) and the downtrodden, *al-Kādiḥīn*. In Tunisia, the igniting engine of the revolution, Mohamed Bouazizi (1984–2011), was a fruit seller whose life was strangulated with the undignified practices of the Tunisian authorities, an arm of the dictatorial regime. The seeds of the Egyptian revolution were planted with strikers (factory workers) in al-Maḥala al-Kubrā and other Egyptian cities, such as Alexandria, calling for a pay-rise and better working conditions. Therefore, the above mentioned poetry as well other forms of expressions have constantly played the role of the torch bearer in heightening the consciousness of the people regarding the state of their country and its needs. The vocabularies of this poetry endowed slogans and public speeches with urgent meanings. One of the slogans of the revolution that echoes the spirit of the poem quoted so far in Egypt is 'Life, freedom and human dignity'. All of these aspects are vital to human fulfilment that workers want to be central to their lives, and which have constantly been at the heart of revolutionary poetry in the Arab world.

Islamism: Change and return

Alongside the trend of socialism and secular nationalism that flourished in the Arab world, particularly from the 1950s until the 1980s, was a new philosophy and poetry, one inspired by the relatively new phenomenon of Islamism, championed with considerable gusto by the intellectual godfather of modern Islamism Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) of Egypt. Qutb is known for his Islamist treatises, such as the *Milestones*, in which he doggedly advocates a return to the principles of the original *umma*, Islamic nation, and denounces the materialism of the West and the beholders of its worldview in the Arab world. As he wrote in the introduction to his influential book, 'if Islam is again to play the role of the leader of man-kind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original formation' (Qutb 1993: 6). Qutb's poetry encompasses diverse themes and forms. It struck a chord with the Muslim Brotherhood supporters, not only in Egypt where the Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Imām Ḥassan al-Bannā in 1929, but elsewhere where the movement found cognates, such as in the Palestinian Resistance Movement Hamas founded in 1987. One poem used to mobilize Islamic sentiments gained attention and widely memorized and recited by the Muslim Brotherhood is called '*Akhī* ('My Brother'). The poem is essentially a call to arms, *kifāḥ* for the sake of the restoration of the Islamic *umma*. It calls for as well as predicts a new order:

> My brother, you will annihilate the armies of darkness
> And in the universe a new dawn shall rise
> So let your soul release its first rays
> You will see dawn gazing at us from afar [my translation].[8]

Qutb, who was hastily executed by the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1966 for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government, had his eyes firmly on a new dawn, one in which his ideology of Islamism would reign with God as the ultimate point of reference in all affairs of the Islamic *umma*. In the poem, he advises his 'brother', through the evocative case he adopts to keep his eyes straight on his objective of establishing *al-Ḥaqq* (righteousness), a term that in Islamist parlance suggests closeness and determination on making Islam central to governance. In light of the recent electoral success of the Islamists in various parts of the Arab world, some Islamists reading back into Sayyid Quṭb's strident views see vindication in his assessment and prediction that Islam and a society guided by Islamic principles will eventually have the upper hand. His poem is chanted, memorized with a strong belief of their cause in which Islam has a say in the regulatory powers of the state, particularly after many of them were imprisoned by secular Arab regimes; they recite it with much confidence, assurance and faith.

The anatomy of dictatorship

Besides the poets of ideology, those who implied or propagated a particular system of governance in their poetry, such as socialism or Islamism, there have also been independent poets who saw the corrosive signs and effects of dictatorships and stood on the side of the people. They deployed a variety of literary methods in their poetry to portray the depth of their frustrations; one of the most common is that of sarcasm, sometimes vulgar and biting and at others subtle and theatrical.

The Iraqi poet Ahmad Maṭar (b. 1952) has been one of the main champions of poetry of protest against the rulers and the people for not rebelling against their conditions and their dictators. Most of his poetry offers a damning verdict on the dictator and is a searing lamentation over the state of the Arab world in general. In 'a tear over the corpse of freedom', Maṭar writes:

I do not write poems, but poems write me,
I want silence so that I can live, but what I face compels language out of me,
I do not encounter except sadness, sadness and sadness again,
Can I write as if I am alive in my coffin?
Can I write I am free even when every letter ripples with enslavement?
I have mourned a ravishing woman,
She is called destruction and terror in the Arab land,
And in violation of the divine laws,
By God, I swear.
Her real name is freedom [my translation].[9]

Freedom has been trampled upon in the Arab world, as the poet suggests. It has been replaced by references to the divine, as well as misconceived understanding of a variety of human fundaments, capacities and meanings. In short, the poet, staring deeply at the abyss of the Arab world, sees nothing but sorrow and meaninglessness, which in turn forces poems of rebellion and protest out of him, crying out for the lost human ideal of freedom. The type of freedom that Maṭar evokes is one that has been voiced by many revolutionaries in the Arab world during the Arab Spring, one of whom is the current president of Tunisia, Munṣif al-Marzouqy, who replaced the dictator through a popular vote after a transitional period in the wake of the Tunisian revolution. In his writings, al-Marzouqy laments the years of despotism and calls for what amounts to ethos of freedom and humanity that do not cheapen others and respect human rights, away from the years of squander, rhetorical vacuity, ideological abuse and reductionism that found fertile grounds under dictatorship in the Arab world.[10]

Another poet who has been visionary about dictatorship and despotism in the Arab world is the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008). Though renowned for being the Palestinian National Poet, inscribing with vividness and worldliness the effects of the Israeli occupation on Palestine and the Palestinians, Darwish also contributed to this streak of poetic engagement against authoritarianism and dictatorship. His 1987 poem '*khuṭab al-dictātūr al-mawzūnah*' ('The Rhymed Speeches of the Dictator') ripples with prophecies as well as humorous snapshots as to how the dictator perceives himself and his realm.[11]

Ironically, Darwish was hesitant about incorporating the poem into his poetic oeuvre, whether for artistic or political reasons.[12] The poem is divided into speeches, as they would have been given by a dictator, starting with the speech of taking power, when the dictator starts his reign.

From 'The Speech of Taking Power'

I will choose my people …
I will choose the intelligent people, the lovely and the successful,
I will choose you according to the constitution of my heart:

Whoever of you is without fault, he is the guardian of my dog,
Whoever of you is without a doctor, I will appoint him a politician to my new horse,
Whoever of you is a man of letter, I will appoint him a standard-bearer for the direction of the anthem,
Whoever of you is wise, I will appoint him a councillor for the coinage of money,
Whoever of you is handsome, I will appoint him a chamberlain for scandals
Whoever of you is strong, I will appoint him a deputy for eulogies …
And whoever of you is without gold, or talents, he should go away …

From 'The Speech of Annoyed Boredom'

Who of you could sit for thirty years on one chair,
Without becoming a piece of wood himself … ?
Which chest can afford as many badges of honour as my mine … ?

From 'The Speech of Peace'

… O people, it's time for us to correct our history
So that we can compete with civilizations in word and deed …
What do they want?
All Palestine? Welcome,
Do they want the edges of Sinai? Welcome
Do they want the head of the Sphinx – this trickster of time? – welcome
They want the heights for attack on *Shām* [Syria]? Welcome
They want the rivers of Lebanon? Welcome
They want to amend Uthmān's Quran? Welcome
They want Babylon so that they can take the head of '*Nabū*'[13] as a spoil of war? Welcome … .

From 'The Speech of "The Prince"'

And our oil is your blood
And industry is the production of the orphans our war has generated … .

From 'The Speech of the Grave'

I have reached eighty, but I will live for another eighty and another ninety … .

From 'The Speech of the Idea'

I say to you what the party decides, and the party is our absolute authority …
I will announce a revolution from our land,
The revolution of the poor against the poor … .

From 'The Speech of the Women'

How can I liberate the bodies of our wives from the fingers of (my) others … ?
And each woman has a Scheherazade in her
And each tyrant has a tortured shahrayār in him …

From 'The Speech of the Speech'

> It is in my language that the affairs of the country are run …
> My speech is the reality of this speech
> Because the speech of the system
> Is the system of speech … [my translation].

Insightfully, Darwish relays a variety of dictatorial patterns and scenarios picked up from the Arab scene. But these scenes and scenarios are also universal wherever there is a sense of absolute power, institutionalized corruption and widespread practices of gross inhumanity. They all (dictatorships) share traits of delusion, grandiosity, messy playfulness, recklessness and cruelty. Darwish touches on eight vital elements in which Arab dictators can be represented, ranging from economy to politics to religion.

Throughout the long poem, we see the random choice of people the dictators put in place in the first speech, the wrong person for the wrong job, creating a psychological displacement of human energies; we come across the image of Mubarak, being president for 30 years, having reached 80, and still insisting on continuing. We see the defeatist position of Arab leaders, accepting the unacceptable of alleged peace deals for the façade of stability and patriarchal continuity. We see unworthy rich, being propped up by oil revenues. We see the dictator, clinging at the edge of his life, to rule by iron fist in the speech of the grave. Then we have an image of Gaddafi of Libya in the speech of the idea, flimsily claiming to be the father of revolutions and equality, while in reality creating hierarchies of submission to him and his rule. Then there are the rulers who exploit women, cheapen people's conception of them, investing their desires in grandiose masculinity, cloaked in darkness and oppression. And finally the speech of the speech, when language becomes an object of oppression, suppression and deception in itself, when reality is made not what it is, by discourses of absolute power.

It goes without saying that all these issues and manifestations explicated in Darwish's poem have been exhibited by Arab dictatorships in one form or another. They sum up serious flaws that have been considered by all the poets studied so far. It is another testament to the long tradition of protest against political elites and unjust rulers in the Arab world who have abused their power and downgraded their people's abilities. To this end, what Darwish playfully highlights above are the sorts of practices and realities against the backdrop of which the Arab Spring emerged, which I turn to now.

Poetry of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring is hardly that; it's more of a gigantic pile of frustrations that the times in which we live could no more contain. Its initial phase in Tunisia did not create an overall eruption of unstoppable momentum in the Arab world until the sudden departure of Bin 'Ali who fled to Saudi Arabia with his family. Egypt then carried the flame; and from then onwards, revolution became part of the imagination as well as concrete practices of the people of the region. The Libyan revolution with its violent showdowns gave way to Syria, with its ongoing blood-littered landscape, which seems too dark to have any affinity with the image of spring promised by the Tunisian revolution. Yet, it is Arab Spring by which this phenomenon of revolutions has come to be known. There is no name that bears apt resemblance to its meaning. In this case, the Arab Spring is a category of convenience, holding hope and possibility after decades, if not centuries, of decadent misrule and oppression.

Poets rising to the occasion of the Arab Spring responded with compositions of varied quality, relevance and meaning. The revolutions, however, did not produce a poet of overall qualities that can be singled out for uniqueness and effect. The political scene in this sense corresponds to the literary one, as no political leaders of solid stature stepped up and seized attention in this revolution. With this in mind, the poetry that emerged in the course of these revolutions is worthwhile for its dynamism and interaction with the moment. And as always in Arab lives, poetry here reflects a rich repository of expressive powers congruent with certain aspects of history, culture and political events and values. In what follows, I highlight fragmentary samples from a few Arab poets who responded to the revolutions and made it central to the subject of their poetry.

At the height of the Egyptian revolution, the veteran Egyptian poet Abdel Raḥmān al-Abnūdī wrote and recited the following poem on one of the Egyptian televisions while people were congregated in the Liberation Square in Cairo and other cities of Egypt. The poem is entitled, '*al-maydān*', 'The Square':

> Old men, tough, ravenous, they totally ate our country,
> All alike in greed, cheapness and form,
> But the brilliant young men emerged
> And turned their autumn into a spring
> And they achieved the miracle of waking up the murdered from his murder …
> It's impossible that lying can wear the mask of truth again …
> They have written the first lines in the page of the revolution [my translation].

This is a fragment from the long poem that al-Abnūdī recited. Each line reflects an issue regarding dictatorship. The poet lambasts dictators, echoing similar sentiments to that of al-Shābbī as mentioned at the beginning of the article. Al-Abnūdī also pens down a realistic, wise tone, steeped in the historical knowledge that revolutions often take time to ripen. The people who protested have just written the first line in the empty page of revolution, suggesting a long road ahead. It's only poetry that could say so much through so little.

Also active during his own revolution was Libyan poet Khaled Mattawa, whose poem was first published in English, following the cruel death of the Libyan dictator Gaddafi:

> The dictator, a young man, a shy recluse assumed the helm, bent in piety,
> the dead sun of megalomania hidden in his eyes …
> the radio thundering hatred, retching blood-curdling song –
> Signs that went unread …
> Factories built and filched, houses stolen, newspapers shut down,
> decades of people killed, 42 years …
> Wait 42 years – five years old when my father was killed
> standing in front of a hotel.[14]

This poem, called 'After 42 Years', is grounded in a poignant story. The poet narrates the emergence of the young leader of Libya, Gaddafi, in 1968. Soon after, he started a series of practices that ensured an ultimate and absolute loyalty to him and his regime, constituted in what he called the revolutionary committees. Gaddafi was merciless in suppressing any sign or hint of dissent or opposition. He styled and modelled everything on his flimsy figure, miring a world of potential into one of waste and total

brutality. It is the pain of 42 years of chaos that the poet is exorcising, recounting one incident that must have rattled his life when his father fell victim to the Libyan system of Gaddafi.

Furthermore, it is notably common that the poetry of the Arab Spring has generally focused on the leaders and their corruption, unlike pre-revolution poetry when protest was often directed against the rulers and the ruled, the latter for their silence or collusion or submission to corrupt authorities. In the Arab Spring poetry, the people are praised and hailed for collectively taking the initiative to better their conditions. In this sense, the poetry of the Arab Spring is bound to the moment of protest and focused, as are the revolutionaries themselves, on ridding themselves of their oppressive authorities. It often takes its inspiration from the language of the protesters themselves, as can be seen from the opening word of the Egyptian poet Farūq Shūshah's poem "*Irḥal*" ('Leave'), a word that the protesters used to simply say to the dictator to leave them so that they can choose their leaders and representatives.

Finally, in the ongoing Syrian revolution, the birthplace of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī who once protested against despotism, as was briefly explained at the outset, the killing and mutilation of one singer, namely Ibrāhīm al-Qawūsh, has demonstrated beyond doubt the depth of human depravity which the world of dictatorship breeds. One song that particularly angered the authorities of the dictatorship, sung in colloquial Syrian Arabic, as have many other revolutionary poems, is the following:

> O Bashār [the dictator president of Syria], you are not one of us,
> Take Māher [his brother] and go away from us,
> Your legitimacy had been stripped by us,
> O Bashār, the liar, you torment and give a speech;
> Freedom is at the doorstep,
> O Bashār, damn you and all those who salute you …
> O Bashār, the parasite, your speeches are incomprehensible,
> Your news is that of the owl …[15]
>
> We will remove him [Bashār], and with our strong determination,
> Syria needs Freedom …
> Without Māher and without Bashār, and this savage lot …
> Syria needs freedom … [my translation].

The colloquial bent of the song, chanted amid a large number of people who repeat after him and confirm his sentiments, rang high in the squares of Hama in an atmosphere as electric as it was good natured, if such a word could be used here. A few days later, Ibrāhīm al-Qawūsh was abducted and murdered. His vocal cords were cut off and his mutilated body was thrown in the river, where he was found. His murder and the killing of thousands of others offers in itself the strongest statement on the savagery of dictatorship that al-Qawūsh, with his youthful fervour, sang against, as did so many other Arab poets, singers and writers before.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a longstanding narrative as well as poetry of rebellion and revolution in the Arab world. Since the 19th century, with the Arab world in the

shadow of colonialism, many Arab intellectuals and poets called for, discussed and prophesied revolutions. The poets examined here are all outraged by the corruption of authority and vocal about their desire to see it overthrown. Meanwhile, there have also been a number of poets, writers and intellectuals who went along with authority and offered legitimacy to the cruellest of dictators and authorities. What has been presented above shows one solid strand of the Arab poetic culture that was brought to the fore by the Arab Spring with vitality, passion and promise.

The poetry of the Arab Spring offers an insightful record of the engagement of poets and writers with the rich culture and history of the Arab world. While the revolutionaries tapped into Arabic traditions and employed lines of inspiration from across the centuries, they also found poets in their midst who expressed their long-held frustrations and rendered them with vividness and passion through recitation or singing. The voice of the people took over, as they were hailed for their courage as vociferously as their leaders were condemned for their corruption. In speaking out, the poets of the revolution stepped up their criticism of their leaders, seeing in them the brutal human beings they are, and eviscerating the God-like façade they had unsuccessfully attempted to maintain around themselves.

To this end, there is promise in the poetry of the Arab Spring that it will open up to broader questions of social, political, existential and aesthetic considerations rather than regurgitate existing forms of literary and, by implication, political authority.

One value of the poetry in question is perhaps best expressed in the words of the Egyptian poet Ṣalaḥ Jahīn (1930–1986), who also had great insights about people's power and spirit:

> O the spring has taken a long time to come,
> For the weather to warm up and the flowers to blossom
> The spring has returned rapturously, injected with youth's passion …
> What made me erupt?
> O my word … *'agabī*!
> Tomorrow, our struggle will be an ode
> That describes to us
> The days of a glorious revolution … [my translation][16]

Notes

1 All translations in this chapter as highlighted in the text are mine, unless indicated otherwise.
2 For further delineations and understanding of al-Kawākibī's ideas, see Ryuichi Funatsu (2006: 1–40).
3 As Funatsu (2006: 11) writes of al-Kawākibī's thought, 'without the ability to act on free will, progress is impossible and decline is inevitable'.
4 See a translation of a section of the poem by Elliott Colla: http://arablit.wordpress.com/2011/01/16/two-translations-of-abu-al-qasim-al-shabis-if-the-people-wanted-life-one-day/, last accessed 5 June 2012.
5 Translated by Adel Iskandar. For reference, see http://aasilahmad.net/abu-al-qasim-al-shabi-the-poet-of-the-tunisia-and-egyptian-revolution/, last accessed 5 June 2012.
6 The French philosopher Derrida advances this idea of malleability of language and makes it a centrepiece in his philosophy with regard to literary text (see Edward Said's discussion of Derrida and other philosophers on this, *The World, the Text and The Critic*, 1983: 178–225).
7 See Jayyusi (1977: 410–424) and Ronak Husni (1995: 81–92) for further treatment of al-Shābbī's poetry.

8 See http://www.adab.com/modules.php?name=Sh3er&doWhat=shqas&qid=79125&r=&rc=11 for a sample of Sayyed Qutb's poetry; last accessed 2 July 2012.
9 See a sample of Ahmad Matar's poetry: http://www.adab.com/modules.php?name=Sh3er&doWhat=shqas&qid=1641&r=&rc=6, last accessed 2 June 2012.
10 See al-Marzouqy's articles in Al Jazeera on 30 December 2009, *lā ḥal fī al-Islām huwa al-Ḥal*: http://www.aljazeera.net/pointofview/pages/2d28640e-5988-443e-9ca8–94fcf4a5da1e, last accessed 5 June 2012; and also his article on 10 April 2012: http://www.aljazeera.net/pointofview/pages/4f355c57–2d8a-434a-a56f-556158cca3cc.
11 Nonetheless, in November 2007, Darwish accepted a prize from former Tunisian President Zeine al-Bideen Bin 'Ali, who was the first to be deposed in the Arab Spring.
12 See http://alkarmelj.org/userfiles/pdfs/4.pdf, republished in 2011 by Khadar Hassan in al-Karmel, no 1, last accessed 2 June 2012.
13 *Nabū* is the God of wisdom and writing in the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian worlds.
14 Originally in English, see the link for the poem: http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/25/opinion/la-oe-mattawa-poem-kadafi-20111025, accessed 30 April 2014.
15 The owl is a bird that embodies and carries bad omens in Arab culture.
16 In Zyād Shalyūt's article, 'Nubūā't al-thawrah fī ash-shi'r al-masrī' ('The Prophecies of the Revolution in the Egyptian Poetry'): http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article27246, last accessed 6 June 2012.

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31

Deconstructing Despotic Legacies in the Arab Spring

Akeel Abbas

Introduction

Arab history and culture are rich in anti-despotism sentiment and rhetoric, perhaps to the point of nuanced sophistication, while, simultaneously, poor in democratic practice and understanding. One overarching powerful theme linking all the uprisings of the Arab Spring is a widespread, deep-rooted anger at barren, despotic regimes, which unified radically different socio-political movements and sectors of society to overthrow them. Yet, there is a wide gap between the healthy, strong anti-despotism that unleashed and sustained the Arab Spring uprisings and the uncertain and, indeed, hesitant democratic drive that those uprisings have made possible. In order to realize the commonly celebrated democratic aspirations, Arab Spring countries will need more than democratic political arrangements at the institutional level, but a gradual dismantling of the still strong cultural despotism that has long sustained political despotism.

Constructing a voice

'Leave! Leave! Leave!' This commanding verb of departure courageously uttered in unison by large crowds in many cities across the countries of the Arab Spring was not only an incisive summation of a popular mood, long suppressed and neglected, but also a promising initiation of what could be a defining process to reconstruct national subjectivity that is explicitly pluralistic and in touch with individual aspirations. This process began with the restoration of voice. Long muffled and unsure of its genuineness and representativeness, this voice, emerging through the sudden, overwhelming hurry of the act of uprising itself, remarkably assembled its fast-growing authenticity and cogency as it forcefully enunciated the demands for despotic regimes to depart. Restoring national voice from the echo chambers of regime propaganda and distortions represents a significant structural shift in the exercise of power and the means of legitimizing it.

At face value, this restoration meant an important discursive shift in the political expression of public will. At a psycho-political level, its restoration ushered in the hopeful beginnings of a full, healthy and pluralistic subjectivity, born out of representative

experiences and bearing national scars and aspirations. The slow, painstaking emergence of this subjectivity had to begin with restoring its mouthpiece, its voice, to overcome a divided, cumbersome sense of a unitary subjectivity, officially constructed, enforced and maintained.

Following the demise of Western colonialism in the region, the Arab public discourse, monopolized and manipulated by nationalist autocratic regimes, often manufactured and consolidated a dichotomy where the expressions of public will were falsely aligned with the overarching political themes of the nationalist state. These themes generally shunned local grievances and engagements, focusing instead on foreign and larger 'grievances' that fell well outside the state's ability to change or 'fix' them (i.e. Western imperialism, Israel, the Cold War, and various conspiracies by real or imagined others). The function of this state-controlled public discourse was skewed, operating in a utilitarian and opportunistic fashion because it did not aim to understand local frustrations and sentiments to respond to them effectively, but to re-channel them elsewhere and allow the state to remain unaccounted before its citizens.

This realignment of political sentiments with their rhetorical representations, allowing the latter to faithfully reflect the former, is one achievement of the Arab Spring as its uprisings proved that the primary concerns of people were mainly internal, related to representative governance, political freedoms, and socio-economic empowerment. In all their boldness, hopefulness and confusion, the slogans that the Arab Spring uprisers advanced have accurately captured the political hopes and sentiments that have moved people into action. In this regard, the Tunisian political activist Khaled al-Tarawali, discussing the Tunisian uprising, was right in pointing out that 'slogan is a symbol or picture that sums up the scene, living its developments. Sometimes, it accompanies the scene; other times, it precedes it. It expresses the dynamism of the street, representing its demands and challenges' (al-Tarawili 2011).

This realignment was neither automatic nor straightforward. Rather, it was a sort of coming to terms with oneself by accepting the radical goals of uprising and moving from reform to revolution, from repairing ailing ruling systems to replacing them. This is why it is important to view the very activity of protesting as a fast unfolding process of a radical coming-of-age where ordinary people finally find their voice and take hold of political reality to shape it for the first time since the independence-era popular movements. This process made possible the kind of psychological and epistemological empowerment that enabled millions of ordinary protesters to transit, almost with lighting speed, from the long-held demands to fix the system to simply overthrow it.[1]

In his famous criticism of the lack of a befittingly radical German revolution in the 19th century, Karl Marx links, in virtuous circularity, the development of radical awareness to the engagement in radical action to make such a revolution possible:

> The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter.
>
> *(Marx 1970: 5)*

Situated in a different context, Marx's material radicalism, of course, is different from the Arab protesters' political radicalism. Still, his words bear resemblance to the Arab

Spring in that the latter quickly developed the appropriate radicalism regarding the hopelessly failed autocratic systems while engaged in the very act of protesting against them. It is protesting itself catching up with the people that caused them to conceive the idea of overthrowing these systems, articulating it as the defining slogan of the protest and striving to realize it.

The uprisings as the voices of anti-despotism

It is useful here to discuss the Tunisian uprising to shed light on how action itself quickly helps people to find their voice and develop the appropriate persistence to turn it into reality. The founding event of the Arab Spring on 17 December 2010 in a Tunisian town was intensely personal, seemingly insulated, devoid of political intentions or ambitions, although deeply rooted in socio-economic deprivations. Mohamed Bouazzizi, the 26-year-old vegetable seller who set himself ablaze, apparently to protest a personal injury to his dignity, was probably, before the fateful event around noon, dreaming of saving enough money to buy a pick-up truck, certainly not to start a revolution (Abouzeid 2011). Sparking off angry protests in Bouazzizi's hometown of Bouzzied, which spread gradually to neighbouring towns and provinces, the incident and its aftermath served as a practical forum to clarify and elaborate protesters' thoughts, demands and, above all, the nature of the action they were involved in. The initial demands were local and revolved around socio-economic improvement ('Employment is a right, you gang of thieves!'), with some demonstrators waving loaves of bread. But engaging in the act of protesting itself caused the old entrenched wall of fear to crumble down and soon the demand became rightly comprehensive and explicitly political: 'O, revolution go on, Bin Ali out!' (al-Badeel 2011).

The Arab Spring represents a larger revolutionary process in this regard, one where the individual discoveries and achievements of one part affects the other parts, maturing the process as a whole. Eleven days after the success of the Tunisian uprising, the Egyptian one was off to a radical start with the end of the regime advanced early on. In its inspirational and enthusiastic rendering of the unfolding events of the uprising, one widely watched YouTube video, developed by some Egyptian activists and posted on the internet before Mubarak stepped down, sheds light on the kind of radical revolutionary awareness, acknowledging Tunisian influences in this regard. Made up of carefully selected and highly expressive footage of the regime's oppressive practices before and during the uprising and the uprising's main events, the video has emotively a powerful appeal. Because it presents a complete and common narrative of the uprising, the text of the nearly nine-minute video deserves quoting in its entirety. The sentences in it are separated by footage explaining and leading up to the idea of each sentence:

> Oppression, dictatorship, injustice, poverty, humility, autocracy. They all said Egyptians will never revolt. 'Our assessment is that the Egyptian Government is stable', Hillary Clinton. They even wrote books about it (Ala Al-Asawani's book *Why the Egyptians Do Not Revolt!*). Welcome To the New Egypt. 25 Jan 2011. Freedom Justice Equality Bread. But it comes with a price. Christians protecting Muslims from the police while they pray. I want the place to be clean while we protest. And how did the police respond. Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. 28 Jan 2011. In just 6 hours

> police stations were burned around the country. The protesters burned all National Democratic Party buildings across the country. All the Police ran away. And this police was backed up by USA with a budget of 50 billion dollars over 30 years. The Army interfered. As an act of Revenge, Policemen Let out criminals and thugs to scare people. Letting out Criminals in Buses! The Result. People protected the streets. 1 Feb 2011. Mubarak said he will not run for President. Appointed a new government. Froze the accounts of corrupt business men and put them on trial. Vowed to change the Corrupt Constitution. Appointed a Vice President. The USA lost its biggest ally in the region. But the most important thing is that now People have a Voice! Have Belief in the Power of People. This will *in shaa Allah* change the whole region. No more tyranny. Thank you Allah. Thank you Tunis. Her Children Died. So she (Egypt) can Live. And they disappeared for their people to stay.
>
> *(Poet Ahmad Shawqy cited in Nassar 2011)*

Characteristic of most promotional representations in support of the uprising, the video celebrates a new conceptualization of *the people* as a homogenous whole, intrinsically good and brutally oppressed, transformed by the exceptionality of an emancipatory event, 'the revolution', that has unified them versus the regime, presented as a small oppressing and vicious minority, frozen in the permanence of its autocratic evil agency. The visual narrative and the written text throughout the video make this link very clear and emotionally compelling. Unlike the Tunisian uprising, which perceptually remained a set of fragmented events to a disinterested outside audience mainly because of the little media coverage it received as it unfolded and the lack of an ongoing central episodic and defining scene such as Cairo's Tahrir Square, the Egyptian uprising offers us a neatly romanticized whole to identify with and support. This romanticization presupposes a simple classification based on a binary opposition between the good and the bad, the norm and the aberration, and the oppressed and the oppressor. Although this romanticization is essentially reductive and Manichean in nature because it ignores that despotism as crystalized in state behaviour is rooted in cultural practices and thinking patterns to which even protesters subscribe, it captures one significant truth in Arab life and successfully capitalizes on it.[2] This truth is anti-despotism.

The difficult promise of Arab anti-despotism

Anti-despotism sentiment and the drive towards justice are rich in Arab culture and history. One sees them often invoked in the founding texts of the Arab-Islamic culture: in the Holy Quran and the prophetic traditions, in history books, in proverbs and the cautionary tales that abound in popular folk stories, among many other cultural media. In the modern Arab culture, anti-despotism found its clearest expression in the equation of colonialism with despotism, consequently manifested in the absence of justice for the colonized. The resistance to European colonialism throughout the first half the 20th century was one form of fighting nation-based despotism. Following the demise of colonialism, this fight carried on against presumably new mutations of this despotism represented by Western, particularly American, imperialism and the establishment of Israel with the resulting, ongoing Palestinian tragedy as a constant reminder of the national absence of justice. Failing to construct just and accountable political systems, official Arab states spared no effort to divert popular anger from the many injustices

their systems engendered and/or sustained to these external despotic sources, blaming them as much as possible for their internal failures. This strategy of 'outsourcing' Arab popular anger, effectively employed for decades, received a fatal blow at the hands of the Arab Spring protesters. Resuming its 'normal' course at long last, Arab anti-despotism drive rightly targeted Arab despotic regimes.

This anti-despotism, finding its voice and forcefully actuated through the Arab Spring, has all kinds of empowering signification for the Arab world. One is that it has had a useful clarifying, debunking effect in regards to the (de)legitmization of power throughout this world. Historically speaking, Arab republican regimes, through their mass mobilization mechanisms, have enjoyed 'automatic' street majorities where disinterested citizens were routinely 'called upon' to demonstrate in support of the regime and its policies. These automatic street majorities made political representation unitary and public opinion monolithic, something that resulted in the stagnation of politics and the disengagement of people from it. This people apathy was a far cry from the actively engaged and politically aware publics of the liberation, and early independence, eras. The Arab Spring came as an overwhelming, flash electric shock, shaking indifferent publics out of their paralyzing apathy, catapulting them into meaningful engaged action, and restoring their political agency by way of empowering them to have their rightful say in the affairs of their countries.

The Arab Spring mounted a serious and successful challenge to the credibility of automatic majorities, unveiling the controlled and ideological nature of the practice. One educational moment in this debunking effort had to do with the Syrian uprising. Tenuously starting in February 2011, the uprising was sporadic in intensity and reach, primarily featuring reforming demands. As protesting became regular throughout March, revolving mostly around Fridays, the government countered by organizing massive nationwide, pro-government demonstrations in which millions participated on 29 March 2011, a day before the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was scheduled to deliver a speech to the People's Assembly, the Syrian parliament, addressing the anti-government protests for the first time. Leading up to the speech, the large, numerous demonstrations were meant to overwrite the legitimacy of the sporadic less numerous protests, presenting them as isolated acts by a small, determined minority. It was another use by the state of 'the masses' in their faceless heavy numerical weight. These 'masses' were meant to set up a celebratory background for the president's confident speech the following day. The speech was widely awaited and was carried alive by most regional and major Western TV stations.

In the nearly 50-minute speech, President al-Assad gave his interpretation to the protests in Syria and other Arab countries, almost mocking the Arab Spring, invoking the outside regional and international conspirators and their inside 'agents' as the evil 'them':

> There is a new fad today. It is revolutions to them, but we don't call them so! Rather, they are, in the main, situations felt by the people. But to them, if something is happening, there is already a cover for it: In Syria there is a revolution! There is revolution, there is reform, there is freedom, the slogans, the same means! Consequently, if there are those who call for reform, and we all call for reform, we will go with them without really knowing what is going on! … We are in favour of reform. This is the duty of the state, but we cannot be in favour of *fitna* [sedition].
>
> *(Al-Assad 2011)*

Resorting to conspiratorial attribution to explain the 'real' reasons behind the protests in Syria, al-Assad bestowed a pathological inevitability on the actions of political opposition, where the oppressive political system he heads turns into a noble victim, recipient of foreign illnesses:

> I don't think that Syria passed through a stage in which it was not a target of different conspiracies, before or after its independence, for multiple reasons. Some of these reasons have to do with the important geopolitical position of Syria and others have to do with its political stands that adhere to the nation's principles and interests. Conspiracies are like germs: They procreate at every moment everywhere; they cannot be annihilated, but the immunity of the body can be strengthened against them.
>
> *(Al-Assad 2011)*

Fitna as a trope of modern despotism

Throughout the speech, al-Assad remained faithful to the basic ideological line of Syrian Baathism: the binary opposition of a devilishly determined, conspiring 'outside' bent on hurting a heroically defending and essentially good 'inside' in an unequal confrontation between the two irreconcilable primordial foes. Yet, the speech, again consistent with Baathist dualism, makes the sparing, if not grudging, mention of supposedly minor dissent in this 'inside'. This dissent loses its political meaning, or moral justification, acquiring 'othering' essence when the president places it in the dismissive context of the '*fitna*'. Literally meaning sedition, the word has a curious history that is worth dwelling upon. '*Fitna*' emerges from the religious vocabulary of early Islam to designate semantically the realm of an extremely trying and difficult experience, rooted in the etymological history of the word. In the literal sense, '*fitna*' refers to the process by which the true identity of gold is established by exposing it to the highest possible heat (if the metal dissolves, then it is not gold but some false material presented as such; if it remains intact, it is true gold). In the religious vocabulary, '*fitna*', at an individual level, represents the believer's lifelong tribulation as he/she is severely tested by the trying choices and unrelenting seductions of this 'impure' worldly existence (Arabic Language Academy 1991: 461–462). At the collective level, '*fitna*' acquires criminal significance in its meaning of breaking the unity of the Muslim community in order to undermine its very existence. In theological terms, '*fitina*', seen as a deliberate sowing of disunion in the Muslim community, is considered a cardinal sin that warrants a horrible death for its perpetuators. The Holy Quran specifically warns against this sowing of disunion in the nascent and precarious Muslim community of the sixth century by declaring that '*fitna* is worse than murder' (Holy Quran 1977: 30). Taken out of its religious and historical context, this religious prohibition against dissent came to consolidate the despotic grip over power by unjust rulers. Throughout the Arab-Islamic history from the founding years of Islam until the demise of the Ottoman empire following World War I, *fitna* was the primary delegitimizing tool that rulers used to face down opponents and popular revolts.

Al-Assad's invocation of *fitna* to frame the protests does not only represent a departure from the secular tradition of Syrian Baathism, but also the impossibility of reforming a governing system deeply enmeshed in Manichean dualistic thinking to legitimize its despotic monopoly over power. Following this hard-line speech, the

protesters' demands moved from reforming to overthrowing the regime. With the exception of Egypt, all Arab regimes that faced popular protests in the context of the Arab Spring resorted to the traditionally religious use of *fitna* in their propaganda effort against the protesters, even for secular regimes such as Gaddafi's Libya and Bin Ali's Tunisia. This particular use of *fitna*, which straddles theocratic and secular spaces in the Arab body politic, points to the pervasive reach of despotic thought in the mainstream political culture in the Arab Spring countries. It shows this culture's capacity to build and maintain its tenacity, consolidating its sources of legitimacy, regardless of ideological consistency.

Political Islamism and democratic challenges

It is against this autocratic background that the democratic promise of the Arab Spring acquires its exceptional importance and moral legitimacy. This promise lies in this spring's ability to loosen the autocratic grip over power by the sheer strength of the street, opening, in the process, a new space to reconfigure power based on consensual, rather than coercive, arrangements. One probably cannot sufficiently appreciate the full extent of this achievement without having to bear in mind that since the emergence of the modern Arab state following World War I, power was always an elitist matter, one to be settled, exercised, fought over or taken away by an elite. Throughout the 20th century, every transfer of power in the Arab world was either hereditary, through both monarchial and republican inheritance systems, violent, through sudden military coups, or partisan, through 'revolutionary' legitimacy or cronyism, hence confining power politics to an isolated and powerful elite that only needed to appease, buy or subjugate a massive public. This system was the face and the body of Arab political despotism whose blind inflexibility, unsparing exclusions and persistent stagnation unlocked stores of long-suppressed, overwhelming public anger which brilliantly expressed itself not as immediate, short-term, local demands, but as a strategic long-view drive to restructure power, informed by profound anti-despotism. It is the strategic anti-despotic nature of the Arab Spring that gained it international sympathy and Western support. Indeed, anti-despotism as the driving force behind the Arab Spring constitutes its universal appeal.

The success in confronting entrenched political despotism raises the question about its prospects to build enduring democratic alternatives on the debris of autocratic regimes. Amir Taheri aptly asks this question: 'Last winter, when the revolts started, some of us dubbed it The Arab Spring and hailed it as a pan-Arab effort to join the global democratization wave that began when the Berlin Wall was pulled down. Now that we are entering winter, one might wonder where The Arab Spring is heading' (Tahiri 2011: 274). The rise of Islamist movements to power as an expression of legitimate public will through elections is only one worrying sign that ending despotic rule is not a prelude to genuine democracy with liberal values that enshrine basic freedoms within solid institutional protections. Neither the political education of these movements, their guiding documents or their socio-political behaviour have explicitly or implicitly endorsed or promoted democratic principles, or democracy as a concept. Moreover, these movements look at the West, as the historical source of these principles and the successful living example of their application, with suspicion at best and hostility at worst. In addition, their approach to personal freedoms, even as an Arab demand by the youth and large sections of society made up of urban educated and

unreligious people, is so bracketed and conditional in the name of cultural particularism that meaningful individualism, so important to genuine liberal democratic experience, becomes impossible. What consolidates the lack of a genuine democratic content in the rising Islamist movements into a more serious and structural problem is that current 'democratic' arrangements in the Arab Spring countries that succeeded in overthrowing their authoritarian regimes have exclusively focused on the creation of legal mechanisms, purely designed to faithfully and accurately determine popular consent in selecting the ruling elite, regardless of how this consent is constructed and 'won'. The explicit use of religious themes and edicts for political and electoral gains, the foreign pouring of political money in support of local Islamists, the deliberate disinformation campaigns against secular and liberal forces, the general lack of a proper democratic education, and the sentimental appeal to the raw feelings of a generally uninformed, inexperienced voting public all contributed to partially turning the newly liberated, enthusiastic voters into the old unreflective 'masses' of the overthrown authoritarian regimes. The end result would be a variant of the democracy of forms, devoid of substance where democratic means can easily lead to undemocratic ends.[3] Without embracing, accepting or, at least, promoting the individualistic values that make democratic experience based on responsible, participatory citizenship meaningful, the Arab Spring will continue to be, at best, an unfinished business. Its greatest failure would be to leave the cultural roots of despotism intact while only undoing the authoritarian institutions of political despotism.[4]

In his open letter addressed to the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, urging him to institute serious democratic reforms, the well-known Syrian poet and critic Adonis sums up the enormity of cultural Arab–Muslim challenges about democracy and the prospect of overcoming them:

> Mr President, it goes without saying that, politically speaking, democracy was not known by the Arabs during their modern history; neither did they know it throughout their ancient history. Culturally speaking, democracy falls outside the Arab cultural heritage. But this should never mean the impossibility of starting to work to establish it. This work was begun with the beginnings of [Syrian] independence. The work was courageous and constructive, but it means that this work requires basic conditions. Without fulfilling these conditions, the work will be fruitless … The first of these conditions is to move society from 'the collective and divine time of heavens' to 'the human and individual time of the earth'. In the civic political language, this means the complete separation between what is religious, on the one hand, and what is political, social and cultural, on the other hand. From the early centuries of establishing the Arab–Muslim state until now, many Arab thinkers and poets strove to achieve this separation. They did not only fail, but they were also viewed as insane, were considered heretic and were killed, each in accordance with their particular situation and their historical period. Organized religion did dominate and it still dominates. And mixing religion and politics is still the basis of thinking and actions in Arab–Muslim life. We have witnessed the deep-rootedness and destructive effects of this mixing, every day, and in different fields … How can democracy grow in a climate that gives no weight to the freedom of the individual and the human experience, and refuses the different other …
>
> *(Adonis 2012)*

Adonis's observation, unpopular among anti-al-Assad Syrian protesters, understandably eager for a quick change of power in Damascus, reminds us of the still unfinished business part of the Arab Spring. It is the more difficult, long-term part that requires a probing look into the cultural structure of despotism in the Arab past to dismantle it and be able to overcome it.[5]

The political 'superstructure' and the cultural 'infrastructure'

If I am to borrow Marxist terms designating the interaction of spaces and structures, as I am tempted to, I should say that the Arab Spring has achieved its super-structural task of removing authoritarian elites, while leaving aside the infrastructural task of dismantling the culture of despotism that has sustained for so long the rule of these elites. There is no doubt that this latter task is much more daunting, long-term and gradual than the former. What is of concern here is that the direction that the 'super-structural' political events are taking is not one leading up to 'revising' the cultural infrastructure. Still, Adonis's persecuted poets and thinkers across the frustrated history of Arab secularism are not lonely souls in these days, primarily because of what the Arab Spring revealed and made possible. The Facebook generation of young, energetic, forward-looking Arabs are, in one important way, the cultural successors of the fallen pioneers of the unrealized age of secular enlightenment that Adonis, and others, wrote about. Morten Valbjørn correctly points out to a revitalized interest and expanded space for politics that has a positive renewing effect. 'We are witnessing what may be labeled as *a re-politicization of the Arab world*, which stands in marked contrast to the increasing de-politicization and apathy of recent years.' This re-politicization 'has been reflected in the (re-)emergence of new, old and transformed collective actors from all kinds of strands, engaging in politics at various levels and in different ways. This re-politicization can be identified among secular, liberal and socialist, as well as Islamist actors' (Valbjørn 2012: 30, original italics). In tracing the effects of this re-politicization, Valbjørn sees in them the nascence of a democratic experience that is still in the making:

> This re-politicization finds various expressions. Most obviously in [sic] the revitalization of the formal political scene, where the emergence of a whole range of new political parties and the high voter turnout indicate that elections and parliaments are not any longer dismissed as a completely futile democratic theatre orchestrated by the regimes. Another expression of this re-politicization can be found in the rise of various forms of contentious politics, where 'politics' is taken outside the confined spaces of political parties and institutions. This has been reflected in the countless examples during the last year of demonstrations, sit-ins, campaigns, strikes and other forms of non-institutionalized street politics.
>
> *(Valbjørn 2012: 30–31)*

The importance of these expressions lies not only in how they put a *de facto* end to the monopoly of political elitism over power, but also in how they make consent more challenging to construct, while helping to enforce a sense of pluralism on the practice of politics and the necessity of finding institutional and cultural means to accommodate this pluralism. The spread of grassroots politics can be one democratizing element if the rules of the game ensured a level playing field where the influence of foreign

political money, normally going to fund the humanitarian work of Islamist movements, is neutralized. The plethora of political expressions representing legitimately competing interests is likely to function as a meaningful check on the likelihood of the return of institutional authoritarianism.

Still, the new politics as performance can hardly serve as a guarantee against possible reincarnations of political despotism under reformed guises, without seriously examining and dismantling the cultural 'infrastructure' of despotism that has sustained the discursive production of undemocratic subjectivity both personally and collectively. A good deal of the problem, I think, is methodological, hence requiring a methodological engagement, something that has rarely happened in the Arab intellectual register. Writing in a different historical context about Mesopotamian cultural life, the Egyptian thinker Abdul-Ghafar Makkawi makes a note of the methodological lack of tools to engage in this kind of 'infrastructural' dismantling:

> The real wisdom that we should glean from all of this is that we have not brought under control the problem of the despot and the tragedy of despotism in our ancient, modern and contemporary history. Neither could we yet 'capture it' in thought, so to speak; nor did we shed on it, in all its dimensions, the lights of serious scientific research. This is despite the huge amount of writings, analyses, and explanations that presented the modern and the contemporary in particular. Despite the fact that the concept of despotism is connected to other concepts that belong to its ill-omened family such as autocracy, hegemony, dictatorship, totalitarianism, etc., and despite the fact that it is not confined to a particular ruler or regime in that the depressing shadows of its curse extend to various aspects of our life, thinking, behavior, education and will, etc., yielding its poisonous fruits in the various forms of prejudice and extremism, and the pretensions to owning the absolute truth which we suffer from today … [despite this all] the basic problem remains as it is: Despotism has not been paid sufficient attention by researchers in the human sciences in particular.
>
> *(Makkawi 1994: 8)*

The democratic promise that the Arab Spring legitimately gave rise to has still to translate itself into something more solid than un-despotic political arrangements – something deeper that goes beyond the celebration of freedom to establish pluralistic, cognitive ways of understanding the self and world.

Conclusion

Sustaining the democratic momentum of the Arab Spring and realizing its potential may turn out to be more challenging than many expect. On the one hand, Arab Spring countries need to do their serious 'homework' to deconstruct the cultural foundations of the outgoing political despotism. Non-cultural factors may also play a positive role in the democratization process. This may include a genuine Western involvement in the Arab democratization process. Another is the fortunate inability of the state in the Arab Spring countries, with the exception of Libya, to sustain its dominance over economic activities, and still be able to deliver on its promises to a large, disenfranchised voting public. The emergence of a strong, viable private sector that can underwrite independent political activities representing a wide variety of socio-economic interests is vital to sustaining the Arab democratic experience.

Notes

1 In general, for decades the demands of the opposition as well as ordinary people in the Arab Spring countries were mainly confined to improving the ruling systems, not to change or overthrow them. Acknowledging the difficulty of ascertaining people's true opinions about this, given the heavily policed lives that people led under brutal, intolerant regimes, it is worth noting that overthrowing a ruling regime was loosely raised by the relatively small radical and Salafist Islamic opposition in Egypt and Libya and more timidly by the exiled Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. Yet, these isolated calls, which did not, at least publically, enjoy the sanction of ordinary people were grounded in some sort of doctrinal puritanical anti-secular approaches by radical Islamist groups, not in a popular experiential understanding about the deeply failed nature of the ruling systems themselves and the impossibility of reforming them.

2 This approach started to lose much of its iron-clad Manichean dualism after the Muslim Brotherhood assumed parliamentary and presidential powers following a series of elections in 2012. The widespread angry reaction against the monopolistic and ineffective rule by the Brotherhood, culminating in the July 2013 military-supported popular uprising that ended the Brotherhood's hold over power, ushers an increasingly sophisticated understanding of despotism away from the old simplifying regime versus people dichotomy. Although the situation in Egypt, and to some extent in Tunisia where the Islamist rule of Al-Nahdha Movement is increasingly called into question, is still fluid and open to a variety of scenarios, it is clear that in order to win and maintain popular support, Islamists in both countries need to prove inclusive, democratic and governing abilities, not merely past anti-despotic credentials.

3 One common theme in Arab media following the Arab Spring is the intolerant attitude of rising Islamist movements concerning freedom of expression, particularly in the area of arts, all in the name of public morality and respect for religious values. For instance, in Egypt there is frequent litigation by Islamists against artists and writers thought to violate religious creed in their works. In Tunisia, Salafist demand changing secular school curricula and laws.

4 Of course, it is wrong to lump uncritically all Arab Spring countries in the same undifferentiated category in terms of their prospects to develop liberal democratic system of government. Tunisia, for instance, seems to have better prospects in this regard than, say, Egypt or Yemen. Civil society is stronger there than other Arab Spring countries. Also, secularism is a familiar and accepted experience in many aspects of Tunisia's public life since independence in 1956. Libya seems to have sanctioned a secular government whose rhetoric borrows traditional and religious themes. Tribalism, rather than Islamism, in Libya and Yemen, which also does not have a strong Islamist movement, is likely to turn out to be the primary challenge to democratization, much more than Islamism.

5 The Syrian uprising's militarization beginning in the summer of 2011 and its gradual descent into a brutal civil war presents a unique challenge in the context of Arab Spring experience. If anti-despotism has been a pre-democratic, unifying force to overthrow despotic regime, inter-ethnic, inter-sectarian acceptance is actually one true test of democratic capacity. Unlike the rest of the Arab Spring countries where the trying questions of accepting difference and peaceful negotiation of conflicts occurred within post-regime, largely formal democratic arrangements, the Syrian uprisers and rebels have to deal with these questions in the heat of the battle to overthrow the regime, with no similar supporting arrangements to help them resolve political and identity-based differences and conflicts. The increasingly religious nature of the conflict and the heavy foreign intervention in it run the risk of turning the uprising from a Syrian struggle against despotism into a regional proxy war not very different from Iraq's 2006–2008 civil war.

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32

Youth and Technology in a Bottom-Up Struggle for Empowerment

María Blanco Palencia

Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has experienced a surge of new media and technologies during the last decade which has mainly attracted the attention of youth dissatisfied with the content offered by traditional media. Knowledge networks created through social media 'have eliminated obstacles of time and place and have become essential tools for the increased use and expansion of the various spheres of knowledge and their deployment' (UNDP 2009: 6). Already in 2005 Hofheinz highlighted the importance of the internet in the region, stating that it 'is one factor that in tandem with others is creating a dynamic of change of traditional authority structures in family, society, culture/religion, and also the state, and this creating pressure for reform' (Hofheinz 2005: 96). As Sey and Castells explain, 'Internet is seen as the ultimate technology of freedom, its diffusion among citizens has been hailed as a potential saviour for the political ills of representation and participation' (Sey and Castells 2007: 225). This aspect is especially relevant in authoritarian contexts where the lack of freedom of expression drives citizens with political concerns to look for alternative means of communication. 'In authoritarian countries in which the traditional media are state-controlled, the Internet offers a unique space for discussion and information-sharing, and has become an ever more important engine for protest and mobilization' (Reporters Without Borders 2010: 2).

Despite the fact that the region's young population constitutes around one third of the total population, 'the outlook for freedom of thought and of expression remains gloomy' (Reporters Without Borders 2010: 22) for even if the internet has 'created a revolutionary enlargement of our mental capabilities' (Reporters Without Borders 2010: 51), its effects depend on governmental management of technologies. 'If governments and other interested parties fail to generate and distribute knowledge content closely linked to social and economic conditions, cultural structures, and the expectations of citizens, then it is likely that most of these effects will have negative ramifications' (Reporters Without Borders 2010: 175). In response to the importance of new

technologies among youth, regimes have developed different techniques to manage and ease public access to the internet and new information technologies, at the same time as they try to control the political content produced by youth and opposition that could potentially threaten the system:

> What has emerged in the Arab world is a hybrid approach to the management of the Internet and new media communications technologies that is characteristic of authoritarian upgrading. Regimes have become more open to and accepting of these technologies. They acknowledge their social, political, and economic benefits. Yet they also assimilate these technologies into authoritarian strategies of governance, using them to enhance and upgrade their own capacity to keep tabs on their citizens, and to surround them with a 'multi-layered' architecture of control.
>
> *(Heydemann 2007: 23)*

The role of youth and technology in the Arab Spring

The explosion of the use of new technologies at the change of the century is the newest threat to state authority, and the anxiety for political expression and participation, which youth and dissidents are unable to pacifically manifest in their countries, is being satisfied by new forms of non-conventionally based activism in the Arab world. The protest movements and uprisings of the Arab spring 'reveal the genesis of a new generation sparked by the desire for civil liberties, advocacy for human rights, and participatory democracy' (Khalaf and Saad Khalaf 2011: 9). The young population that characterizes the region, also called 'youthful demographic bulge', faces situations in which cultural codes of different social agents are often inconsistent with their ideas.

Youth are viewed by the states as the hope for the future at the same time as they are stigmatized and feared as disruptive, parasitic forces (Khalaf and Saad Khalaf 2011: 9). As many Arab states survey the conventional political arena, youth and dissent are being driven to cyberspace to find their significance, expression and citizenship in 'virtual reality', where they can express their disconformities with regimes (Sadiki 2009). Cyberspace activism has made authoritarianism defensive in the Arab world. Although the most trusted sources for political news are still the television channels (67 per cent), the internet is starting to compete with radio (8 per cent) and daily newspapers in electronic and paper copies (5 per cent). The Arab Indicator shows that the internet scores less than 10 per cent in all cases except for Tunisia (10 per cent) and Sudan (11 per cent) and the average result for trust of the internet as a source of political news is 6 per cent (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies 2012: 15).

The large youth demographic of the Arab region possesses a 'great transformative and democratizing promise' (Bayat 2011: 48) in systems governed by regimes that do not satisfy youth's needs. It largely drives the consumption of media on the internet, especially social networks, and social networking among this sector or the population is cited among the favourite activities online (Dubai Press Club 2010). The media provides an arena for youth to form and express collective identities (Bayat 2011, 48). Among the most popular networking sites is Facebook, which has experienced a rapid increase of users; there were an estimated 21.3 million Arab users in December 2010, a 78 per cent increase from 11.9 million users in 2009. Youth make up 75 per cent of Facebook users in the Arab region (Dubai School of Government 2011). However, only a minority of Arab youth can access the full potential of today's new media.

Roughly 29 per cent of people in MENA use the internet, amounting to 65 million internet users, expected to reach 80 million by 2012 (News Group 2011).

Arab youth are creating new concepts of the 'public sphere' where views are expressed, ideas are debated, identities are explored, and the established power structures are challenged (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs 2011). An interesting regional initiative on the internet directed to Arab youth is *Mideast Youth*, which states on their website that their mission is 'to amplify diverse and progressive voices advocating for change throughout the Middle East and North Africa using digital media' (Middle East Youth). This initiative has been working since 2006 and is intended to empower dissidence and youth in Arab countries, to 'amplify diverse voices of dissent with a specific focus on access to information, free speech and minority rights'. It is a powerful tool for youth in the MENA region to project the voices of citizens who pursue social change and it does so by providing platforms to make their voices heard. Their main projects are *CrowdVoice*, *Mideast Tunes* and *Ahwaa*, designed to publish documents individually generated in the region.

The use of new technologies has varied among youth in each country during the Arab Spring. We have chosen our regional case studies based on data provided by the *Arab Media Influence Report – AMIR 2011*, which states that Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and Jordan are the countries with the key public demands for social media regarding political issues (News Group, 2011). The communicative context and legal framework, as well as the governments' management of new technologies, vary in each case, affecting online youth activism in different ways.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, one of the internet's *enemies* (Reporters Without Borders 2010), networking and its mobilizing potential were considered a threat to the country's stability and image. This drove the regime to install censorship, exercising control over political and social content, and affecting the political opposition, independent media and sites on human rights. Social networks were attacked only when the regime considered that its users were acting with too much security. An example was the blocking of Facebook in August 2008, which started strong social protests, forcing Bin Ali to order its reactivation. Despite the sanctions, the strict control and the governmental pressure on the Tunisian blogosphere, the authors of this report insist on the fact that it was becoming an energetic blogosphere capable of mobilizing for certain causes. This was especially so for the ample Tunisian youth under 30 years old, who constitute 52.2 per cent of the population (National Institute of Statistics Tunisia).

With the start of the Arab Spring, the Tunisian regime decided not to block internet access during the protests despite the fact that, as Delany explains, 'as the country risked descending into chaos, digital tools also helped people organize themselves' (Delany 2011). To understand the reason behind this decision, we must remember the events of August 2008, when the regime's decision of blocking access to Facebook further inflamed social protests. This is why this decision was probably consciously taken in order not to let the same happen. Despite the government's decision, 'they did try to hack into the Facebook accounts of organizers and others' (Delany 2011). The Tunisian government tried to slow the organization through Facebook groups and blogs, hacking and deleting accounts, and detaining bloggers and journalists (Anderson 2011).

According to the report *Internet World Stats* (Internet World Stats 2011), Tunisia had 3.6 million internet users in June 2010, which is 34 per cent of the population, and 1,671,840 Facebook users on 31 August 2010, a penetration index of 15.8 per cent. Compared to the rest of the Maghreb countries, Tunisia had the highest uptake of new technologies and information systems, with a greater percentage of social network users. These percentages increased during the first year of the Arab Spring. In December 2011, Tunisia had 3,856,984 internet users, 36.3 per cent uptake, and 2,799,260 Facebook accounts, 26.3 per cent uptake. However, if we compare this data to other regions, the percentage of internet and social network users was still low. According to the Arab Indicator 2011, in Tunisia as in the rest of the region, the television (58 per cent) is still the most trusted source used by respondents for political news; however, the internet had become the second most trusted source of information with a result of 10 per cent (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies 2012).

The two most popular social networks among the Tunisian youth were Facebook and Twitter, and we can find numerous examples of pages with political content. The Facebook pages created by Tunisians with political content encourage debate among users on political conscience (L'Association Conscience Politique), drafting of the new constitution (Pensons Notre Constitution), political reform (Tout sur la Commission de Réforme Politique), liberty and equality (Liberté & Equité), youth movements (Mouvement des Jeunes de Tunisie and LLJ), workers' associations (UGTT), and the political future of the country (Afkar Mostakella, Nchoof.org, Le PaCTE Tunisien, Peuple Tunisie, machhad.com, Carthage hier, Tunisie aujourd'hui). Twitter has been the second most used social network for political activism during the Arab Spring. Among the most active political activists on Twitter we find @slim404, @ifikra, @tounsiahourra, @ByLasKo and @guellaty. One of the Tunisian blogs which is followed by many is Nawaat.org, which promotes debate on issues related to politics, rights, networks, media and culture. Another interesting example of how the internet has been used in Tunisia after the revolts is *Dataviz*, a website which has extensively covered the events on the Tunisian elections, offering information on electoral participation, electoral results, political parties and coalitions, as well as national data on emigration, unemployment or foreign investment.

Egypt

The situation of Egypt, described in the same report, was quite different than the Tunisian one, and was characterized by the struggle for power between government and bloggers, what Ghannam has defined as the 'battle of the blogosphere' (Ghannam 2011: 4). Internet in Egypt had stopped being a mere communication tool and had become a mobilization and dissidence platform. The blocking of sites was limited and authorities were trying to control bloggers who were organizing quickly. Since the beginning of 2007, the regime reinforced webpage surveillance in its political programme of 'fight against terrorism' started by the Egyptian Ministry of Interior. In this case, unlike the situation in Tunisia, platforms such as Facebook were not blocked but watched in order to detain activists. The internet was a strong and effective protest tool, and demands for social change were frequent on social networks, especially on Facebook. An example of these mobilizations was the 6 April strike in Mahala, which was followed by the detention of users who had diffused information on the strike through social networks. A year later, this day was declared the 'Day of Rage' and many

young people who had remained apolitical until then denounced abuses exercised by the government. The 6 April strike had become a symbolic date for mobilizations across social networks and mobile telephones.

At the beginning of 2011, with the start of popular protests, the Egyptian government's reaction was to block internet access, 'shut down mobile texting and Twitter, cut off Al Jazeera Arabic TV, and temporarily stop all mobile telephone service' (Peterson 2011). For Khamis and Vaughn, the fact that the regime saw the need to impede or close internet services despite the economic damage reveals the power of social networks as a social mobilization tool during the protests. Moreover, they consider that this decision, as well as costly, was counterproductive because it significantly increased the Egyptian population's rage. 'While the Egyptian activists combined their strong public will and determination for change with effective utilization of new media to achieve political reform and democratization, the Egyptian government combined its incompetent political strategy with an equally ineffective communication strategy that not only failed to halt political activism, but even fuelled it further' (Khamis and Vaughn 2011: 16). Peterson explains that, with this decision, the government wanted to stop political agitation while making difficult the organization of protests, and insists that 'if so, the government clearly misunderstood the popular nature of the movement' (Peterson 2011).

According to *Internet World Stats*, Egypt had 17,060,000 internet users in February 2010, 21.2 per cent of the total population, and 4,595,160 Facebook users on 31 December 2010, which gives an uptake index of 7 per cent. These data show that despite the increase of internet and social networks in Egypt during the last years, the level of uptake is still low in comparison with other regions. 'It is important not to overemphasize the importance of the Internet, whose penetration in Egypt was only 20 percent. This mistake was made by the regime when it began shutting down the Internet in Egypt on January 27 … approximately 91 percent of Egypt's networks were effectively suppressed by January 29' (Peterson 2011). During the first year of the Arab Spring, these percentages increased, and in December 2011 Egypt had 21,691,776 internet users, 26.4 per cent uptake, and 9,391,580 Facebook users, 11.4 per cent uptake. According to the Arab Indicator 2011, in Egypt the television (81 per cent) is still the most trusted source used by respondents for political news, and the internet only achieves a percentage of trust of 3 per cent (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies 2012).

The *Arab Media Influence Report 2011* lists the top sites used in Egypt for political dissent, Facebook, Twitter, Masrawy, Youm7, Eqla3 and Ikhwanbook, and highlights a shift from socio-economic to political terms between the years 2010 and 2011: discussions around socio-economic terms changed from 57 per cent in 2010 to 37 per cent in 2011, and those involving political issues increased from 35 per cent in 2010 to 88 per cent in 2011 (News Group 2011). Among the most important political pages on Facebook are As-safha ar-rasmiya li-hukuma add-dill al-mumathila li-shabab ath-thawra; Al-Hiwar al-mutamadan; Tahrir Academy, Egy2020; 6th of April Youth Movement; Tahrir Channel; We Are All Khaled Said; Souty.org; and I'm Egyptian. Among the most active political activists on Twitter are @Ghonim; @MessamMoawad; @MonaEltahawy; @alaa; @3arabany; @mosaaberizing; @mar3e; @TamimBarghouti; @tarekshalaby; @gamaleid; or @maikelnabil. Related to the diffusion of images and videos of the revolution, as an alternative informative source for national and international awareness of the events, two sites have been especially used by Egyptian youth: I am January 25 and Egypt Remembers.

Syria

Syria, another 'enemy' of the internet (Reporters Without Borders 2010), has reinforced its censorship on troublesome topics, and social networks have been particularly targeted due to the authorities' distrust on technological improvements. Over 16 per cent of the population uses the internet, with relatively easy access conditions as there is no need to provide personal data, and satellite connections are prohibited without authorities' permission. According to *Internet World Stats*, there were 4,469,000 internet users in Syria at the start of the revolution, in March 2011, a 19.8 per cent uptake. There is no available data on the number of Facebook users. According to Reporters Without Borders, there are over 200 targeted websites which mainly deal with political criticism, religious matters, 'obscene' websites, Kurd minority and Israeli-based websites. As for targeted social networks, the government has blocked access to Blogspot, Maktoob, YouTube (since August 2007), Wikipedia Arabic (May 2008 – February 2009), Amazon and Skype. Youth and activists who use social networks for political dissent connect to Lebanese or Saudi Arabia servers and create proxy servers to avoid governmental censoring. The crackdowns on protests during the Arab Spring have situated Syria in an even lower ranking on the World Press Freedom Index 2011–2012 (Reporters Without Borders 2012).

Despite this situation of strict control by the Syrian government, we can find examples of active pages in the two main social networks used by Arab youth. The Facebook pages on political issues and related to the Arab Spring in Syria include some prominent individual activists such as Salameh Kaileh and Ghayath Naisse, as well as important groups such as We Are All Syria; Syria – Revolution Until Freedom; The Syrian Revolution 2011; The Syrian Day of Rage; We Are All Hamza Al-Shaheed; and Hackers of Syria for the Syrian Revolution. There are also examples of political activism on Twitter, such as @RevolutionSyrie; @SyrianApp; @SyriaCampaigns; Nuff Silence [@NuffSilence]; @M_G_S_R; @MoveItSY; @tweets4peace; @SyrianFront; @NewsSyRev; @syr_spring; @DamascusSYR; @SyTweets; @alRifai1; @HamaEcho; and @SyriaCampaigns.

Libya

In the case of Libya, the situation of the media under the Gaddafi regime was physically expansive but tightly controlled (Internews 2011). State-run television and state-run press agency JANA was an uncritical press where free speech was hampered. However, alternative sources such as recent satellite TV stations and, to a less extent, the spread of internet connectivity in the late 1990s gave Libyans access to a wider spectrum of uncensored news. During 2011, the arrest of lawyer and human rights activist Fathi Terbel in February brought calls for a 'Day of Rage' through online social media. Although communications to the East were cut, including internet, landline and mobile phones, the report considers that media activities played a high-profile role in all stages of protest as online forums got around state-controlled media's censorship and restrictions. In the case of Libya, media by and for youth is very prominent, especially in Benghazi, which had around 60 registered newspapers and magazines, largely run by young people, and where other efforts were carried out, such as online production or graffiti.

The data on the use of internet in Libya provided by *Internet World Stats* shows that internet uptake and the use of Facebook in this case are very low. By December 2011,

there were 391,880 internet users in Libya, which meant an uptake of only 5.9 per cent. As for the number of Facebook users, the figure comprised 391,880 users, 5.9 per cent uptake. Despite this low number, the Libyan blogosphere also has examples of online activism in the two main social networks used by Arab youth. In Facebook some examples of the most followed pages are RNN Libya; 17th February Uprising; Media Union Misurata; Libya Free; Libya Freedom Fighters; Libya Revolution Feb 17 2011; National Front for the Salvation of Libya; and Libyan Youth Movement. On the social network Twitter, the hashtag @EnoughGaddafi was created from the 'recognition of the overwhelming need for change in Libya' (EnoughGaddafi). There is another example of political activism on Twitter, @LibyaAlHurraTV, the 'first broadcaster in free Libya', sited in Benghazi.

Yemen

Yemen was considered an *enemy* of the internet for its tight control of news through the Information Ministry, which added to the monitoring of the internet and the banning of several mobile phone news services (Reporters Without Borders 2009). Social networks such as Maktoobblog, YouTube, Facebook, Orkut and Twitter, which served to connect the Yemeni youth, were accessible. They created a fluid network of collaboration which enabled youth to implement at least the base of a solid democratic process (Root 2011). During the last years, some new websites were accused of posting articles dealing with social unrest and challenging the political system and the government blocked access to them. Political opposition was also targeted by the governmental control policies on new technologies, among them *al-Shoura*, forums of the Yemenite Council and Yemen-Sound. As well as blocking websites with potentially threatening political or social content, the government blocked access to software designed by users to get around censorship or 'proxies'. The Yemeni government used the US filtering software Websense to select news about the country (Reporters Without Borders 2009).

According to the data available at *Internet World Stats*, internet as well as Facebook uptake in Yemen was low at the end of 2011. There was a total of 2,609,698 internet users, 10.8 per cent uptake, and only 318,420 Facebook users, 1.3 per cent uptake. As controlled as media and news agencies were in Yemen, according to the Arab Indicator 2011, the television (72 per cent) is still the most trusted source used by respondents for political news, and the internet only achieves a percentage of trust of 5 per cent (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies 2012). This low level of trust has been reflected in a not so active blogosphere and fewer examples of political activism on Facebook and Twitter. Some Facebook groups that have worked in this respect are Youth of Yemen, Free Yemen, Yemen Free and Free South Yemen. As for Yemeni youth political activism on Twitter, we find @TawakkolKarwan; @youth_yemen; @Ghanem_M; @Revolutioncoffe; @yemenwatch; @yemen_updates; @YemenExposed; @Yemen4Change; @YusraAlA; or @rasdyemen.

Jordan

The media environment in Jordan has continued to evolve over the past decade and the government has made efforts to find a balance between its commitment to democratization and freedom of the press, and the controls concerned with internal stability. The internet in Jordan is controlled through a Cyber Crime Law which was approved at the

beginning of August 2010, addressing the legal vacuum in new technologies of the Jordanian Criminal Law. This law has been widely criticized by users and international observers as propositions increased government's powers to limit the space for debate. As the Report *Introduction to News Media Law and Policy in Jordan* states, 'Jordan is struggling with many competing and complex interests as changing geopolitical realities and new technologies transform the production and distribution of information' (USAID 2011: 85).

The governmental discourse on social media and networking in Jordan has, however, avoided considering them a threat to the regime. As Nasser Judeh, Jordanian minister of foreign affairs, explains: 'social media has enabled the youth of our part of the world to experience and be exposed in first hand to participatory politics, meritocracy, opportunity and dignity in other countries around the world' and 'has presented itself as a potent tool, an effective and efficient means of political social mobilization'. However, he also states that as Jordan has been open to forms of ideas and ideologies, 'the information technologies boom has been positive rather than a threat' (Judeh 2012).

According to *Internet World Stats*, Jordan had 1,987,400 internet users, 30.5 per cent uptake, and the same number of Facebook users in December 2011. According to the Arab Indicator 2011, in Jordan the television (75 per cent) is still the most trusted source used by respondents for political news, and the internet achieves a percentage of trust of 7 per cent (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies 2012). However, according to the opinion poll *The Role of Media in the Arab Spring* carried out by the Center for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan, 75 per cent of Jordanians use the internet. As for the following of Arab revolts, 59 per cent of youth aged 18 to 34 followed the events on revolutions and protest movements in the Arab world. The most reliable source of information for them was the television (97 per cent) and internet (43 per cent). There is a difference between age groups in the reliability of the internet as a source of information and this percentage decreases in the other surveyed age groups: 35–44 years (28 per cent), 45–54 years (18 per cent) and 55+ years (10 per cent). The data related to the use of social networks among youth when following revolutions shows the most used platform is Facebook (58 per cent), followed by YouTube (48 per cent) and Twitter (14 per cent) (Centre for Strategic Studies 2011).

In Jordan, the creation of indigenous social media platforms by and for Jordanian youth has made Amman the epicentre of Arab regional social media innovation. As Ghannam explains: 'indigenous social networking and media platforms are serving as a bridge to build communities in both the virtual and physical worlds' (Ghannam 2011: 14). Examples of these platforms are the Jordanian micro-blogging site Watwet, Aramram, 7iber, Ammannet and AmmonNews, which mainly offer a variety of socially driven news and online video stories. Among the most notable examples of political discussion on the net in Jordan we find the movement #ReformJo, which includes 'young Jordanians from different ethnicities and backgrounds calling for political, economic and social reform' (Dahmash 2011b). Another youth initiative in Jordan is Under My Olive Tree (Dahmash 2011a), which has focused on empowering local community in Jordan. An active Jordanian blogger, Naseem Tarawnah also opens debates on different issues, including political issues, in his blog *Black Iris*, where he covers issues ranging from military expenses of the Jordanian state to news on protests. Finally, *Le Café Politique Amman* encourages political debates on reform in Jordan as well as on the events in Syria.

As well as these platforms, we can also find political activism by youth in Jordan on Facebook and Twitter. In Facebook, two main individual activists in Jordan are Mothanna Garaibeh and Laith Shubeilat, and there has been a proliferation of youth movements of different ideologies, such as the Al-Mqatta al-thqafya, the Islamic Youth Movement, and of different regions. It is interesting to see the reflection of divisions between youth movements in Jordan on Facebook, where there are substantial numbers of groups with few followers. On Twitter, different individuals and platforms have been active in the political debate in Jordan, such as @mab3oos; @Lina18; @omarmoh60; @HashtagDebates; @Lattouf; @Hsoudani; or @AhedAladwan.

Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this chapter, new youth-driven technologies have created new networks and connections among citizens since their appearance. Despite different governmental management strategies, ranging from usage and access promotion when prioritizing economic interests to strict control and access denial when political stability was first proposed, Arab youth have found in them an alternative to traditional media and traditional authority with which they are sometimes dissatisfied. The great youth population that characterizes the region and constitutes over half of the population in some cases will have an important role in the political future of these countries. For social groups, established and formed according to shared interests and grievances, especially in contexts where freedom of communication and expression are limited in the public sphere, new technologies fill this deficit.

The Arab Spring has influenced the situation of press freedom in the region in different ways. According to the latest annual report on world press freedom (Reporters Without Borders 2012), the transitions that have begun are not necessarily leading towards more pluralism, and the changes in the rankings in some cases highlight a worsening situation in media freedom. This report ranks Tunisia in position 134, after an increase from position 164 in 2010, and explains that the reasons for this are the emergence of real pluralism of opinion in the print media and the end of massive and systematic internet filtering. In the case of Libya, with the explosion of media after the uprising, especially in the east of the country, the ranking moved from position 160 to position 154. Among the countries where the report considers there is an ongoing repression and changes are just cosmetic are Egypt (position 127 to 166), Bahrain (position 144 to 173), Yemen (position 170 to 171), Syria (position 173 to 176) and Saudi Arabia (157 to 158). The last two categories established by the report are those of countries that relapsed, which includes Iraq (position 130 to 152) and Palestinian Territories (150 to 153), and countries that fell again, which includes the United Arab Emirates (87 to 112), Jordan (120 to 128), Morocco (135 to 138) and Algeria (133 to 122), the only one which rose because of the decrease in number of trials on journalists.

Despite this, the development and use of new technologies in the region will continue to increase, and youth, who share ideas and political debates online, could develop a political consciousness that will potentially be able to challenge the political status quo if their demands are not met through reforms:

> Social networking has changed expectations of freedom of expression and association to the degree that individual and collective capacities to communicate,

> mobilize, and gain technical knowledge are expected to lead to even greater voice, political influence, and participation over the next 10 to 20 years.
>
> *(Ghannam 2011: 23)*

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Part VII

The Arab Spring

The Wider Middle East

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Evolution not Revolution?

Morocco and the Arab Spring

Michael J. Willis

Introduction

Analysis of what has come to be called the Arab Spring has increasingly focused not just on those countries that have been most affected by the popular uprisings that began in early 2011 but also on those that have been less impacted. Observers and analysts have begun to ask why the regimes in some Arab states were able to survive relatively unscathed while others imploded. In many cases, it has been the presence of substantial oil and gas wealth that has primarily helped regimes avoid – at least in the short to medium term – the worst of the upheavals through massive targeted public spending to placate restive sections of the population. Yet, there has been no clear correlation between oil wealth and relative political tranquillity: the example of Muammar Gaddafi's Libya is the exception in the case of an oil-rich state which witnessed a major uprising. The best converse example – of a state lacking hydrocarbon wealth and not experiencing serious upheaval – is Morocco. Not only did Morocco lack such natural resources; it also had levels of poverty and inequality at least equal to and often exceeding most other states in the Arab world. If the Arab Spring was primarily about economic issues, as some have argued, then Morocco looked a prime candidate for revolution. So how was Morocco able to avoid a popular uprising on the scale of that witnessed in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria and what was its seemingly magic formula in effectively neutralizing the impact of the Arab Spring? Is it a case, as the kingdom's official spokesmen are wont to claim, of Moroccan exceptionalism?

The conventional narrative of reform

There is a standard narrative for explaining what appears to be Moroccan exceptionalism with regard to the Arab Spring. Morocco, it is argued, had traditionally been a typically authoritarian Arab state under its long-running monarch, King Hassan II, who had ruled the kingdom from the early 1960s with an iron hand. Hassan's death and the accession of his son, Mohammed, to the throne in 1999 brought, however, a fresh reforming wind to Morocco, liberalizing political life. The young king opened up

politics to other groups and forces, including women and Berbers, and dramatically expanded freedoms of speech and in the media. Thus, it was argued, by the beginning of 2011 Morocco had already introduced most of the demands for reform that were to be made so forcefully and vociferously by the crowds who were to spill on to the streets of most other Arab states in the opening months of that year. All that Morocco needed to do, therefore, to avoid similar upheaval was simply slightly increase the pace of the reform programme it had been introducing over the preceding decade. This is exactly what it did, it is argued, as it brought forward changes to the kingdom's constitution in July and then held legislative elections in November, a year earlier than planned. This is the conventional narrative. Although it contains fundamental truths about what has happened in Morocco over the last decade, this narrative is not the full story and there are a number of additional dimensions that need to be highlighted in order to understand in a fuller and more nuanced way what happened in the kingdom during 2011 and what the implications are for Morocco's future political evolution.

Reform in Morocco

It is certainly true that on the eve of the Arab Spring, Morocco was one of the most politically liberal states in the Arab world. Yet, Morocco's liberalizing path had begun somewhat earlier than is commonly assumed. The first concrete moves towards a more politically liberal order had, in fact, begun during the closing years of King Hassan's reign in the 1990s. Institutionally, two, admittedly modest, constitutional reforms had been enacted in 1992 and again in 1996 to strengthen the role of the elected legislature.[1] More broadly, official pressure on and exclusion of dissident and critical voices was significantly reduced. Large numbers of political prisoners from the crackdown against the political left in the 1970s and 1980s were released. Islamists were allowed to participate in formal politics and develop their own political party for the first time. The print media became much freer as a progressively wider range of often hitherto sensitive and even taboo issues were permitted to be discussed. Most symbolically important of all was the appointment by King Hassan in 1998 of a staunch critic of the lack of democracy in the kingdom and a veteran champion of political reform, Abderrahman El Youssoufi, to the post of prime minister. El Youssoufi had once been condemned to death in absentia for allegedly plotting to overthrow King Hassan, and his appointment at the head of a coalition of leftist and nationalist parties that had long argued for reform seemed to be a decisive turning point. This sense of change seemed to be underlined by the fact that the government led by El Youssoufi became known as the *alternance* – or rotation of power-government. The death of King Hassan and the accession to the throne of King Mohammed VI a little over a year after the creation of the alternance government appeared to give further impetus to the reforms initiated by Hassan. The new king's dismissal, shortly after coming to the throne, of his father's right-hand man and chief political fixer and enforcer, Driss Basri, provided further evidence, if any was needed, of the new king's commitment to continuing the pace of reform. As interior minister, Basri had largely run the formal political scene, rigging elections and rewarding cooperative and punishing dissident individuals and political parties. Furthermore, in the months that followed the accession of King Mohammed to the throne, there was the return from abroad of a number of high-profile political exiles and the release of other dissident figures from house arrest.

Reform under Mohammed VI

The reformist credentials of the new king were further bolstered by a number of high-profile reforms he pushed through. Most prominently, there was reform of the Moroccan Family Code, or *Moudawana*, in 2003 which granted an impressive set of new rights to Morocco's women in the fields of marriage, divorce and child custody, replacing older statutes that had long been criticized for their social conservatism. Secondly, there was official recognition of the identity, customs and rights of the kingdom's Berber-speaking population through both the establishment in 2001 of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) that promoted Berber language and culture and the introduction of the teaching of the Berber language in a swathe of schools across the country. Thirdly, there was recognition of past human rights abuses by the state through the establishment of the Instance for Equity and Reconciliation (IER), which held hearings and recorded testimonies from victims. Lastly, there was the launching of an initiative to address poverty, particularly among the rural population, through the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in 2005.

All of these initiatives received significant coverage and praise from the outside world – particularly Europe and North America – which came to see Morocco as an impressive example of progress, reform and liberalism in a region characterized by persistent and chronic stasis and authoritarianism.

The absence of political reform

A closer look at the admittedly impressive raft of reforms introduced under King Mohammed VI reveals, however, a slightly different story, notably a particular absence. For while progress had been made in a wide range of fields from human and women's rights, to the rights of minorities and the condition of the poor, there was no major reform initiative in the explicit field of politics. There had been no further attempt to amend the constitution and strengthen the role of elected institutions and no appreciable movement of powers away from their concentration in the hands of the king and his advisers. It was argued that reform of the rights and status of women, Berbers and the poor was deeply political in its effect by liberating these groups to contribute more fully and openly in society. Yet, these reforms had no obvious impact upon the distribution and concentration of political power in the kingdom, which remained very firmly within the walls of the royal palace. It was noticeable that even the most 'political' of the major reforms of the new king, the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), had little obvious political effect. This was because, first, it only examined abuses that had occurred up until 1999, the year that Mohammed VI had come to the throne, and, second, the recommendations put forward by the IER in its final report that touched on overtly political issues – such as increasing political accountability and reforming the police and security services – were pointedly not implemented (Amnesty International 2010).

The absence of political reform came to be increasingly noted by the more critical elements of the press and civil society, some of whom began to even allege that the reforms in other areas were an intended distraction from political reform. Moreover, it was even argued that the reform actually served to strengthen and reassert the political power of the monarchy through selective co-optation and recruitment as political allies of hitherto critical groups such as women's rights organizations, Berberists, former leftist political prisoners and human rights campaigners. Beyond Morocco, the high-profile reforms had also helped to bolster Morocco's image as a liberal and reforming state in

the eyes of the US and the European Union, prompting greater links and support from these powerful international actors and trading partners. In 2004 the United States had signed a Free Trade Agreement with Morocco in explicit support of 'the significant economic and political reforms that are underway in Morocco' (Office of the United States Trade Representative undated). In 2008, Morocco was awarded 'Advanced Status' in its relations with the European Union, substantially in recognition of what the French government's spokesman said were the 'lots of efforts, mainly in terms of economic, human rights and governance reforms', made by the country (*Morocco Business News* 2008). It was the first country in the region to achieve this status. Such support was seen as vital not just in economic terms but also politically: especially for Morocco's long-running claim on the territory of the Western Sahara, the success of which was seen as crucial to the domestic legitimacy of the monarchy (Willis 2012: 272).

By the mid 2000s, critical observers also came to believe that the absence of new political reforms had actually slowly begun to turn into a gradual roll-back of existing ones. Morocco's liberalized and often highly critical media began to witness pressures being put on it, with journalists being arrested and individual newspapers periodically heavily fined and shut down (Reporters sans Frontières 2009). In the formal institutional sphere, *alternance* proved to be very limited as the efforts of Prime Minister El Youssoufi and his colleagues were hamstrung, particularly by the presence of powerful ministers directly appointed by the palace at key ministries, such as the Interior and Foreign Affairs.[2] In 2002 the king dispensed with El Youssoufi as prime minster and instead appointed an apolitical technocrat businessman to head the government. Public confidence in the political parties and parliament slumped and was demonstrated by falling turnout at legislative elections with barely 30 per cent of registered voters casting valid votes in the election of September 2007.

The official line on these developments was that they were essentially unimportant: the fading of the *alternance* experience and the collapse in support for the parliament and political parties did not reveal a worrying disillusionment among the Moroccan public, but rather reflected an ever-expanding confidence in the initiatives of the king and the palace to improve everyday life. The ineptness and irrelevance of elected politicians and political parties were contrasted with the dynamism and effectiveness of the king. Those individuals and organizations who complained about the stalling of the progress of political reform and its alleged rollback were dismissed by official spokesmen and media as marginal and unrepresentative. More significantly, the official discourse promoted the idea that political reform and politics more generally were not only secondary but actually a distraction from the centrally important tasks in Morocco of achieving economic growth and development. Politics was in this sense portrayed as distinctly *passé* given the challenges Morocco faced in other areas. It was a discourse that was strikingly similar to the one which had long been articulated by one of Morocco's Maghrebi neighbours: Tunisia. Indeed, there had begun to be speculation that the Tunisian model of political economy – with its self-proclaimed emphasis on business, development and economic growth within a severely restricted and tightly controlled public political arena – might be one that other states in the region would follow.

The Arab revolutions

The startlingly swift fall of the regime of Zine al-Abdine Bin Ali in Tunisia in the space of a few short weeks over the turn of the year 2010–2011 sent shockwaves through the

Arab world. What had been widely perceived to be one of the most politically stable and tranquil states in the Arab world had dramatically demonstrated itself to be neither of those things.

In the wake of the revolt, commentators and official spokesmen from other Arab states were swift to emphasize the uniqueness of the Tunisian case and the improbability of a similar revolt occurring elsewhere in the region. These predictions were rapidly shown to be misjudged as unrest spread from state to state across the Arab world. Morocco's official spokesmen and friends were, nevertheless, quick to stress how Morocco was different, pointing to the kingdom's liberal reputation and restating the long-established official line that the king was loved by the vast majority of the population, thus making Morocco immune from the effects of the gathering Arab Spring (Gabriel 2011). Yet, despite these arguments, the kingdom saw its own large-scale demonstrations for reform begin in February and coalesce into what became known as the 20 February Movement – the date of the first major protest.

The protests were initiated by young leftist activists, largely on line, who had been already opening up virtual discussion groups regarding reform, such as the 'Moroccans speak with the King' forum on Facebook. Several of them met face-to-face for the first time at protests in early January outside the Tunisian Embassy in Rabat out of which they formed, firstly, the Coalition for the Defence of the Tunisian People and soon after that a similar organization for Egypt (interview with Abouammar Tafnoaut, 18 April 2012). It was out of these groups that the 20 February Movement developed, holding its first formal meeting during the first weekend of February. As it developed, the movement began to draw in a wider cross section of society from its original leftist core. Veteran figures of the campaign for the democratization of Morocco joined the protests, buoyed by the new activism of the youth whom many of them had given up on ever mobilizing. The more youthful and radical parts of Morocco's Berberist (Amazigh) movement participated in the belief that thoroughgoing political reform and liberalization were a natural extension and guarantor of their own demand for expanded cultural and linguistic rights and pluralism. This was despite the reforms introduced by the king in recent years to promote Berber culture and language which these activists regarded as insufficient and superficial (Willis 2014). Most controversial of all was the presence at the demonstrations of members of Morocco's largest Islamist movement, *Al-Adl wal Ihsan* (Justice and Spirituality). A long-established major critic and opponent of the monarchy in Morocco, the movement had benefitted from the broader liberalization of the 1990s and 2000s to grow and organize; but was periodically harassed by the authorities when it was perceived to become too challenging. Members of Al-Adl wal Ihsan began to have an increasingly visible and heavy presence at the marches and demonstrations organized by 20 February in the early spring of 2011 (interview with Fathallah Arslane, 20 April 2012).[3]

The heterogeneous nature of the coalition that the movement, which rapidly became known as M20, brought together meant that its platform had to be carefully negotiated. In an effort to maintain and expand the breadth of support for the movement and also possibly acknowledge the relative liberalism of the Moroccan regime, it was decided that M20 would endorse calls for reform rather than revolution. Thus, at the events organized by the movement, crowds chanted for the fall of 'corruption' and 'tyranny' rather than of the regime, as had become the case in demonstrations in other Arab states. Despite this difference, there was acute awareness in Morocco that many of the protest movements in other states had started with lesser demands before swiftly

shifting to call for the departure of the country's ruler. For this reason, concern spread through the Moroccan establishment which began to use the standard countering techniques against the protests, such as black, white and grey propaganda, as well as more tangible methods, such as heavy-handed police surveillance and intimidation of leading members and the deployment of thuggish plain-clothed counter-demonstrations of '*baltajia*'.

Crucially, the regime did not mount an all-out repression of the protests, the police largely standing off at the main demonstrations and avoiding the catastrophic mistake made by other regimes of firing on or killing protesters, which had served to enrage and swell protests. Moreover, the royal palace also developed a surprisingly swift political response to the gathering protest movement and one that did not simply take the form seen in other Arab countries of belatedly sacking a few ministers and announcing minor reforms. Instead, King Mohammed made a major speech on 9 March in which he announced his intention to launch a 'comprehensive constitutional reform'. The breadth and specific nature of the reforms the king promised – amounting to a substantial transfer of powers away from the royal palace and to elected institutions – took most people by surprise, it having been widely expected that the king would announce only limited and vague changes.[4] In specific terms, he promised to enhance the powers of the parliament and of the prime minister, allowing the latter to be always drawn from the largest party in parliament, rather than being a simple appointment of the king. The prime minister would also become 'head of an effective legislative branch … fully responsible for government, civil service and the implementation of the government's agenda'. He also said that the Instance for Equity and Reconciliation's recommendations would be inscribed in the constitution. In more general terms, King Mohammed promised to extend regional government through the establishment of 'directly elected regional councils', constitutionally recognize the 'Amazigh component' of Moroccan identity and 'expand the scope of collective and individual freedoms and guarantee their practice' in the constitution (*Agence Maghreb Arabe Presse* 2011).

Although a number of senior figures of the 20 February Movement were privately impressed with the scope of the proposed reforms, the formal reaction to the king's speech from the movement was to state that its demands had still not been met and to continue its efforts, holding its largest demonstrations to date across most of Morocco's major cities on 20 March (interview with Abouammar Tafnoaut, 18 April 2012). Yet, this show of strength proved to be the high water mark of the movement's ability to mobilize people. From that point onwards the royal palace appeared to progressively win back the political initiative from the protesters through portraying the king as the standard bearer of reform. Beginning with the speech of 9 March, the palace developed substantial momentum by appointing a committee headed by a noted constitutional lawyer to draw up a new constitution and by inviting the political parties and civil society, including M20, to submit their ideas and proposals. This momentum was sustained by setting dates in the early summer for both the unveiling of the new document and its approval by referendum, which attracted criticism from some quarters at the undue haste of the process but appeared to convince most Moroccans of the seriousness of the intent of the king.

The new constitutional document was announced by the king on 17 June following a process that involved representations and recommendations from political parties and civil society but little formal debate. Overall, the document appeared to deliver partially on the apparent commitments of the king's speech of 9 March while ensuring that the monarchy retained control over the key levers of power. In this way, the new

constitution contained a commitment to appoint a prime minister from the largest party in the legislature, moderately expanded the potential powers and prerogatives of the government and parliament, and, to the surprise of many, elevated the Amazigh language to an official language of the Moroccan state. It affirmed, however, the king's exclusive control over the spheres of religion, security and senior appointments (notably ambassadors and the military) and that the king could not be criticized or questioned through the presence of an article (No 46) stating that the integrity of the person of the king should not be violated (Royaume du Maroc 2011).

The new constitutional text received a largely negative response from the leadership of the M20. 'The project, as it is proposed by the King, does not respond to our demands for a true separation of powers' was the view of one figure from the movement's Rabat section. More specifically, one of the leading figures in the Casablanca section argued that 'the religious status of the King has been strengthened. This is very worrying. … the King retains his essential powers as a political actor. This is not what was expected. This is disappointing' (*Le Monde* 2011). The movement called for another demonstration the following Sunday to express its dissatisfaction and continue its push for further reforms.

There was little time to formally and publically debate the new constitutional document because a referendum to accept or reject it was scheduled for just two weeks after its unveiling by the king. The M20 cried foul, arguing that the palace was trying to railroad the changes through without any meaningful debate. This impression was reinforced when the full weight of state power swung behind not only the referendum but also behind a drive to achieve a heavy vote in favour of the changes. Literature and messages calling for a 'yes' vote flooded the public sphere, appearing in banks, schools, unsolicited mobile phone text messages and even mosques. The close association of the king with the new constitution and thus a 'yes' vote was strongly reinforced in these images and messages, leading one M20 leader to opine that the referendum 'was not a referendum for a new constitution but for the King', with voters being encouraged to think that they were voting to approve the king and his endorsement of reform rather than the specifics of a reformed constitution (interview with Abouammar Tafnoaut, 18 April 2012). In adopting such an approach, the palace hoped to ensure the approval of the new text and consolidate the impression that King Mohammed had taken full control of both the reform agenda as well as the political initiative away from the M20. The palace felt confident that associating the king with the referendum would not backfire through people using the vote to express antipathy to the monarch. For while the official line that asserted the near universal love of the Moroccan people for the king was to be treated with healthy scepticism, it was far less removed from the truth than similar claims made by the leaders of most other Arab states. Traditional respect for the long entrenched monarchical tradition in Morocco was supplemented by a general, if largely latent, appreciation of the visible efforts made by King Mohammed VI to address some of the kingdom's social and economic, if not political, problems. Perhaps more crucially, there was an almost complete absence of the seething antipathy felt towards the head of state that characterized the views of huge proportions of the populations of most other Arab states and which had been the undoing of Bin Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi. As one leading member of the 20 February Movement remarked ruefully to the author in the early days of the protests: 'If we had a Bin Ali ruling us in Morocco, our movement would be way ahead of where we are now' (interview with Abdallah Aballagh, 1 April 2011).

The 20 February Movement decided to advocate the boycott of the referendum and at marches held on 19 June protesters carried placards reading: 'No to a constitution of dictatorship!' and 'No to a constitution made for slaves!' (Byrne 2011). The presence of significant numbers of well-coordinated counter-demonstrators in both Rabat and Casablanca carrying pictures of the king and leading to scuffles and confrontations indicated that the authorities were willing to put pressure on the M20 now that it was coming out in open dissent to a proposal by the king (Lazare 2011). Outside the big cities, groups campaigning for a boycott of the referendum also came under attack. In the town of Midelt in the Middle Atlas Mountains, individuals who campaigned against the new constitution were beaten up in the street (Hoffman 2012). All the main political parties, nevertheless, campaigned for the approval of the constitution, leaving only the Al-Adl wal Ihsan movement and several very small leftist parties to support M20's call for a boycott.

With no major grouping campaigning for a 'no' vote, there was little surprise when the results from the referendum held on 1 July recorded a crushing vote in favour of the new constitution of 98.5 per cent of the ballots cast. More interest was shown in the figures for the turnout of voters since the opponents of the new constitution had advocated boycott. The official figures recorded a turnout of 72.6 per cent, nearly double that for the previous national legislative elections of September 2007. Critics argued that the figure had been inflated through use of a smaller body of registered electors, arguing that 21 million Moroccans were of voting age while less than 10 million had been registered. If all eligible voters had been registered, then turnout at the referendum would have been only 44 per cent (Jaabrouk 2011b). The leadership of Al-Adl wal Ihsan claimed that the real turnout was only 20 per cent (author's interview with Fathallah Arslane, 20 April 2012).

Protests about the hasty and partial way in which the new constitution had been drawn up and approved were largely side-lined by the momentum that the official process of reform was able to maintain through the commitment to hold early fresh elections to the national legislature under the new constitutional arrangements. Thus, once the referendum had been concluded, public political attention in Morocco shifted to the plans and prospects for the elections and the results they might produce under the new political dispensation. Those groups and voices calling for more comprehensive and even revolutionary reform were weakened further by the turn of events in the broader region, which saw the relatively bloodless overthrow of the presidents Bin Ali and Mubarak in the opening weeks of the year give way to much more blood-soaked civil conflicts in Libya and Syria by the middle of the year. This shift significantly dampened the appetite for radical change inside Morocco. Activists from the February 20 Movement encountered members of the public telling them 'we don't want to end up like the Libyans' when handing out leaflets for their demonstrations during the summer of 2011 (interview with Abouammar Tafnoaut, 18 April 2012). Attendances at 20 February Movement demonstrations steadily shrank from their peak in March to a hard core of supporters.

By the autumn of 2011 the political status quo in Morocco seemed to have survived the Arab Spring unscathed and some were predicting a return to business as usual with little having changed in 12 months aside from some limited constitutional reforms. However, the renewed impetus the Arab Spring received in October with, first, the final fall of the Gaddafi regime and the grisly demise of the Brother Leader and, much more significantly, the successful holding of the first free elections in Tunisia put renewed

pressure for change on other Arab states, including Morocco. The election of the Constituent Assembly in Tunisia on 23 October was of most significance because it symbolized not only the definitive end of authoritarian rule in Tunisia and the likely move towards something resembling a functioning democracy, but for Morocco it represented the loss of its status as the most liberal and reform-minded state in both North Africa and the Arab world. Morocco had traded heavily on this image and was aware that compared to the emerging post-Bin Ali Tunisia, it suddenly looked decidedly more illiberal and authoritarian.

Morocco's election

The vibrancy of Tunisia's party political life. unleashed by its revolution and manifested in the election of its National Constituent Assembly, contrasted badly with the rather tired array of largely clientalist political parties that were on offer in Morocco's election scheduled for 25 November. In comparison to the dynamism of Tunisia's election, Morocco's appeared to promise yet another inconclusive result based on a low turnout which would produce yet another incoherent hotchpotch coalition government dominated by old clientalist political parties. The one party that appeared to promise anything approaching change was the Party of Justice and Development (PJD); but it was widely expected that its Islamist orientation, mild though it was, would ensure that it would only be allowed a peripheral role at most in any post-election government. The crystallization of eight other political parties into a formal alliance in the run-up to the elections confirmed suspicions that the palace was seeking to create an electoral bulwark against any advances the PJD might make. Indeed, the party at the core of this new alliance, the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), had been established in the wake of the last elections in 2007 around one of the king's closest advisers and with the more or less explicit purpose of opposing the PJD.

As the election approached, the only political risks apparent in the election for the palace appeared to be a potentially good performance by the PJD and a low turnout of voters, the latter indicating the continued popular disillusionment with formal political processes. The temptation of the authorities to return to the interfering practices of the past to ensure that the official results did not show a substantial increase in support for the PJD and did show a large rise in voter turnout must have been significant.

It was therefore something of a surprise when the eventual results of the vote showed not only a modest increase in the voter turnout from the low level of 2007 but, more importantly, a clear victory for the PJD, which emerged as easily the largest party with over one quarter of the seats in the parliament – twice the usual share secured by the leading party. The general credibility of the results which gave most votes to the one party that promised some degree of change provided renewed impetus to the feeling of political change and movement in the kingdom. This was reinforced by the king's honouring of the new constitution's stipulation that the prime minister should come from the largest party in the parliament, with the appointment of the leader of the PJD, Abdelilah Benkirane, as prime minister in the wake of the election. More surprising still was the appointment of members of the PJD to other senior positions in the government in addition to the premiership, including the key Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice: the latter now headed by the acknowledged leader of the party's 'radical' wing and ferocious critic of the many failings of the Moroccan justice system,

the Casablanca lawyer Mustapha Ramid. It was widely reported that Ramid had been appointed despite the reservations of the palace (Afailal 2011).

The Party of Justice and Development

The appointment of members of the PJD to senior ministries in the Moroccan government did not, of course, signify a full assumption of political power by the Islamist party. In spite of parallels with Tunisia, where the Islamist Al-Nahdha party had similarly dominated elections and secured the headship of most major ministries, the PJD was not able to wield anywhere near the same amount of power as Al-Nahdha. Like Al-Nahdha, the PJD had to share government, with ministers from other political parties having secured a plurality rather than a majority in the new legislature. Unlike the Tunisian party, the parties the PJD were obliged to sit with in the new coalition government were veterans of previous governments and thus stalwarts of the existing political order, including Morocco's oldest royalist party.[5] More crucially, the new PJD ministers were also obliged to accommodate a cohort of new deputy ministers, nearly all of whom were close and trusted political allies of the royal palace. This together with the substantial powers the king had succeeded in retaining in the new constitution led many to suggest that the new government would bring little change to the country. Parallels with the alternance government of the late 1990s were unavoidable: a popular opposition force being brought into power but then sapped of energy and credibility by its inability to apply a distinctive programme because of the restrictions imposed upon it by the palace. It was a tactic that had long been used by the palace to emasculate opposition: co-option being viewed as a much more effective tool than confrontation and repression, especially in a system and society as traditional as Morocco where patronage and accommodation were deeply ingrained. It had been used to good effect to co-opt potential critics from the women's, Berberist and leftist movements through the reform processes of the previous two decades, not just through selectively satisfying elements of these groups' agendas but also through the provision of jobs and positions in the state apparatus for activists from these movements. It also likely explained the most radical reform introduced in the new constitution: the awarding of official status to the Berber language of *Tamazight*. It was a move clearly aimed at securing the defection of the Berberist groups from the 20 February Movement through the granting of what had long been the movement's principal demand. Indeed, the deployment of more traditional forms of dealing with dissent has been credited with at least partially explaining the relative success the Arab monarchies had in dealing with the challenges of 2011 when compared to their republican counterparts whose doctrinal foundations and more modernist structures of rule precluded the use of such tools.[6]

For some in the Moroccan regime the co-option of the PJD into government represented the conclusion of the successful containment of the effects of the Arab Spring which had loomed so threateningly in the early weeks of 2011. King Mohammed's speech of 9 March had effectively turned the tide of the gathering protest movement in Morocco by presenting the monarch as the standard bearer of reform, thus seizing the political initiative and momentum away from the 20 February Movement. Initial promises of reform had been progressively watered down through the drafting and introduction of the new constitution to ensure the retention of established power structures. The main opposition party had been co-opted into government to give the public impression of change, but with political control still fully in the hands of the monarchy.

There was also the added benefit of being able to shift the responsibility of government – but not its power – onto the PJD, which would be forced to be the public face of official attempts to deal with Morocco's significant social and economic problems.

A more sober and less self-congratulatory view was taken by others in the Moroccan regime who realized that, despite the impressively deft way in which the challenges of 2011 had been dealt with, the solutions deployed were likely to be effective only in the short to medium term. Sooner, rather than later, Morocco's problems would be returning to impinge on attempts to maintain the status quo. This was especially true in social and economic terms. Morocco still faced huge challenges in these areas with substantial unemployment, especially among politically significant graduates, and stubbornly high levels of poverty, Morocco ranking 130th out of the 187 counties on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) Human Development Index and having slipped 16 places between 2010 and 2011 (UNDP 2011). Saddling the PJD with the responsibility for dealing with these problems, but without the power to introduce their own policy measures to address them, might appear a clever political move but it ignored the fact that even a fully competent government would struggle to manage the scale of the task. After initial disinterest in economic issues at the beginning of his reign, King Mohammed VI had put significant weight behind efforts to produce growth in the Moroccan economy and reduce poverty in the kingdom through initiatives such as the INDH and the greater direction of government policy through the ministries, but had still struggled to make noticeable headway. The global economic crisis that had begun in 2008 had initially had a limited effect on Morocco because of low levels of consumer debt and a relatively small banking sector. This had begun to change as the downturn disproportionately hit Morocco's majority trading partner, the European Union, reducing levels of trade and investment alongside tourism and remittances from the several million Moroccans living in the continent. As these effects combined with rises in prices of food and fuel, the adverse impact upon Morocco, particularly its numerous poor, threatened to be huge. Popular resentment and unrest, which had historically been more readily provoked by economic distress than political causes in Morocco, was a clear possibility. In fact, popular protests and campaigns on these issues had already been growing before 2011 and the political changes introduced through that year demonstrably failed to reduce them. Indeed, their frequency increased massively, a likely effect of both worsening conditions and, significantly, a new found willingness on the part of ordinary people to take their grievances to the street, undoubtedly prompted by the example of the popular protests across the wider region. If the PJD ministers were seen to demonstrably fail to respond to these problems and lose support and credibility, this would undermine any putative challenge they could make to the dominance of the monarchy and the existing system. It would also, however, deprive the regime of the political cover the PJD had provided it with, obliging it to search for another party or force to be the public face of the regime in order to avoid the monarchy becoming publically responsible for the failings of the economy and public policy. The lack of an obvious alternative to the PJD led several opposition figures, from the 20 February Movement and Al-Adl wal Ihsan, to describe the appointment of the PJD ministers as the 'last card' of the palace, played to deflect popular anger from itself (interviews with Abdallah Aballagh and Fathallah Arslane, 20 April 2012).[7]

That the PJD would fail economically and politically in government was taken as a given by most observers who confidently predicted that the party would suffer the same

fate as that suffered by the lead party – the USFP – in the alternance government appointed in 1998, which saw its credibility destroyed and popularity slump as a result of its experience. It was certainly true that the PJD, like the USFP, had come into government after a long period in opposition and only after a robust internal debate about the advantages and drawbacks of such a move. Yet, the PJD had a number of advantages over the USFP. First, it had a much stronger popular mandate, having attracted nearly twice the level of electoral support, giving it twice as many seats in parliament and a higher proportion of the government ministries than the USFP had in 1998. Moreover, it had a larger popular base and a reputation for discipline lacked by its predecessor. The party also had a reputation for probity and honesty in a political system riddled with corruption and this had played a significant part in its success in the elections. The PJD made corruption a major campaigning theme and many voters stated that they voted for the party not out of ideological conviction but because they believed it to be the only one that would not steal from the public purse once in office. The PJD's leading figures who took up government ministries proved to be more effective communicators, their direct and populist style appealing to many ordinary Moroccans, not least the new prime minister himself, Abdelilah Benkirane, who regularly chose to use Moroccan dialect, or *darija*, in public statements rather than the more usual and formal modern standard Arabic or French. These shifts were due in part to the more modest social origins of many of the leading figures from the PJD. Their entry into the ministries thus marked something of a change in the social composition of the visible Moroccan elite, a change mirrored elsewhere in the region with the electoral advances of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia bringing in sizeable representation of the lower middle class into government for the first time. This social shift in politics is often overlooked in analyses of the entry of Islamists into government as a consequence of the events of the Arab Spring. Conflicts between the Islamists and their rivals are usually understood in purely ideological terms when the dimension of social class might help to explain the intensity of these clashes. Established elites across the region became resentful at being replaced by elements from outside these elite circles of power, and the social and economic consequences of this for them. This is borne out by the often very dismissive and class-based snobbery of much of the criticism of Islamist ministers who were characterized as uncouth and under educated, with attention being drawn to their supposedly scruffy appearance (the prevalence of beards and scarcity of neckties) and the lack of sophistication in their spoken French.

The PJD was very aware of the parallels with the experience of the USFP, but took a much longer and arguably rather different view of their exercise of political power compared to Islamists elsewhere in North Africa. The party had been allowed into the formal political arena in Morocco only in the late 1990s and only after over a decade of efforts to persuade the regime to let it in by foreswearing violence and, most crucially, enthusiastically and explicitly supporting the monarchy and endorsing its leading religious role. Once allowed into the system to contest elections, some in the party had argued for the need to push for liberalizing and democratic reform of the political system to enhance the party's role and influence as its vote increased at successive elections. Others argued, by contrast, for emphasis on full accommodation with the monarchy to facilitate the party's acceptance and entry into government, which in their view would increase the possibility of the introduction of their agenda. Pushing for a lessening of the grip of the monarchy on the political system would, in this group's view, yield few results while drawing closer to the monarchy, as the real locus of power,

would be more effective not least because the explicitly religious foundations of the monarchy provided the Islamists with the ideological cover for the introduction of their agenda. As one leading figure once remarked: 'Our problem in Morocco is not in establishing an Islamic state. Theoretically and constitutionally, this state already exists. We, on the contrary, support this legitimacy and consider it an asset that should not be given up or disputed' (Shahin 1997: 190–191). It was significant that it was the leading advocate of this latter path of drawing close to the palace, Abdelilah Benkirane, who led the PJD into government as prime minister in January 2012.

Benkirane's appointment as the PJD's first prime minister and Morocco's first Islamist prime minister was clearly a triumph for the approach he had long advocated. It was an approach that had, however, been badly wrong-footed by the events of the first few months of 2011. Benkirane's declaration that the PJD would not participate or support the 20 February Movement angered many in the party who disputed this view. Three senior members of the party resigned from the executive of the PJD to participate in the marches and demonstrations. A more enduring split in the party was averted by the king's initiative on constitutional reform, which allowed the PJD to unite behind it. Members of the PJD continued to participate in 20 February Movement rallies; but some senior figures in the protest movement suspected the partisan motives of these figures' involvement, linking it to the increasing presence of banners and placards at events attacking leading figures in the PAM, the main party political enemy and rival to the PJD (interview with Abdallah Aballagh, 20 April 2012).

Conclusion

The experience of Morocco during the tumultuous year of 2011 bore many similarities with most other states in the Arab world: most notably, the emergence of a significant protest movement calling for political reform and the subsequently strengthened political presence of Islamist organizations. Yet, Morocco's experience was clearly different in many ways. The exceptionalism of Morocco lay not just in its experience until 2011, which certainly bequeathed a much shallower well of political grievances for protesters to draw from, but also, more importantly, in the deftness with which the political elite in the country dealt with the challenge of the popular calls for reform. No other Arab state had dealt so effectively with this challenge by using almost exclusively *political* tools. The oil-rich states of the Gulf had used their substantial financial resources to dampen dissent, while other states had relied on simple repression and violence to counter, much less successfully, the rising popular protests. Unable to dispense large-scale state largesse and unwilling to launch a brutal crackdown, the Moroccan monarchy once again demonstrated a political acumen that had helped it to survive in a region that had seen most other traditional monarchies fall to *coups d'états* and revolutions.

It was not clear whether 2011 represented a strategic or merely a tactical victory for the monarchy in its attempts to survive as the dominant actor in Moroccan politics. Its handling of the challenges of 2011 had certainly parried any immediate threat to its position; but it seemed that it had merely delayed rather than dealt with issues that were likely to return. Chief among these were the problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality that were left fundamentally unresolved by the constitutional reforms of 2011. This was amply demonstrated by the remarkably short honeymoon period that the new PJD-led government experienced. Strikes, protests and sit-ins over social and

economic issues became commonplace across the country and intensified after 2011. In places, protests turned substantial and violent usually in more provincial and more marginalized parts of the country. These incidents of unrest seemed to be indicative of a change in atmosphere in Morocco that was evident in the country, which took the form of a new reluctance on the part of ordinary people to put up with the incompetence, indifference, corruption and periodic brutality of the authorities. Previously, many people would not have tried to take action to change things out of a sense of fatalism and also a fear of the consequences. That fatalism and fear seemed to have been significantly reduced, most notably among the young who, while shunning more traditional forms of participation like the established political parties, became involved in new forms of social and political activism often online and making use of new technologies. This was a phenomenon which seemed to be occurring across the Arab world most notably in Tunisia and Egypt, where focus on formal high politics largely masked these less obvious but potentially far more profound and significant changes. It is a development that may come to be the most enduring legacy of the Arab Spring over and above any more obvious institutional change or regime overthrow. In Morocco, the Makhzen may have outplayed the 20 February Movement in successfully seizing the political initiative from the protest movement; but despite the latter's decline, its youthful leadership are quietly confident that time is ultimately on the side of the campaign for change given the failure to address Morocco's fundamental problems. As one leading figure characterized the health of the movement in April 2012, 'The 20th February Movement is like a patient in the hospital: sick but very much alive' (interview with Abdallah Aballagh, 20 April 2012).

Factors and developments beyond Morocco's borders are also likely to push Morocco to return to the subject of reform in the medium term. The rapid pace of change occurring within many of Morocco's North African neighbours since 2011 contrasts with the continuity experienced in Morocco. When this change involves violence, instability and uncertainty, Morocco's constancy is viewed in a positive light by both domestic and foreign audiences. However, when this change elsewhere produces positive reform, greater political freedom and even democracy, Morocco's lack of change is likely to be viewed much less favourably as undemocratic stasis. Morocco thus runs the risk of losing the privileged status it has in the eyes of many Western governments as the most liberal and open Arab state in the region. Domestically, opposition movements like the 20 February Movement could see their fortunes grow on the back of popular disillusionment, especially as ordinary populations look at the increasing freedoms and say in major political decisions that fellow Arabs elsewhere are enjoying. This serves to underline the ongoing nature and process of fundamental change in the Arab world that merely began rather than ended or even had its zenith in 2011.

Notes

1 In 1992 the constitution had been reformed to make the government answerable to the national legislature as well as just the king, and in 1996 to permit a fully directed elected chamber in the national legislature.
2 The key Ministries of Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Religious Affairs remained so-called 'Ministries of Sovereignty'. Their ministers had no party political affiliation and were appointed directly by the king.
3 According to senior figures in the movement, individual members of Al-Adl wal Ihsan were present in the early leadership of 20 February and once the broader movement was assured that

the 20 February Movement would not resort to violence, the youth wing of the movement as a whole was allowed to participate.

4 There are some suggestions that the swiftness of the king's response was partly due to his ability to draw on a proposal for constitutional reform that he and his advisers had drawn up when he was crown prince but had shelved in the early years of his reign.

5 The Mouvement Populaire was legalized in 1959 and became a staunch ally of the Palace. The party's leader, Mohand Laensar, became interior minister in the new government.

6 I owe this point to a conversation with Ahmad Jamil Azem Hamad.

7 Aballagh believes that the 20th February Movement 'forced the Makhzen to play the PJD card', suggesting that bringing the party into government was an option that the regime had held in reserve for a time, such as early 2011, when it came under popular pressure for reform.

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Abouammar Tafnoaut, leading 20 February Movement activist, Casablanca, 18 April 2012.

34

Algeria

The Limits of Revolution and Democratization

Youcef Bouandel

Introduction

The desperate action of Mohammed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian man, signalled the beginning of the 'Arab Spring' as demonstrations against the authoritarian regime of Bin Ali began. The wall of fear seemed to have crumbled as demonstrations soon spread throughout several countries in the region. Out of the 22 member countries of the Arab League, only a few have not seen any demonstrations against the regime. Initially, these demonstrations called for more dignity and an end to corruption; but as time went by, they became more sophisticated, calling for the opening up of the political space and the instauration of a democratic and more accountable form of government. At the time of writing, the Arab Spring has claimed the jobs of four heads of state, who between them had been in power for almost 130 years.[1]

At the beginning of the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt, several observers of North African affairs predicted that Algeria would also see demonstrations of this kind. This is particularly true after the riots of January 2011, known as the oil and sugar events (Roberts 2011), and the different calls by several sections of civil society to hold peaceful demonstrations against the regime. Nonetheless, these predictions have thus far proved unfounded.

Larbi Sadiki (2012) correctly observes that 'Algeria's modern political history is defined by two colossal events: a stunning revolution, unique in the Third World and the Arab Middle East, which ousted the French colonials in 1962; and a military coup that ousted democracy in 1992'. The Algerian revolution against the French, while achieving formal independence in 1962, failed to establish the aims and objectives contained in the proclamation of 1 November 1954, which marked the beginning of the armed struggle. It is the second event, the military coup that ousted democracy in 1992 and the developments that have taken place since, that will be the subject of this chapter. Therefore, in this chapter, I argue that Algeria experienced its own 'spring' back in the late 1980s, which paved the way for the democratization process. Indeed, some observers went as far as stating that 'Algeria to date is the only Arab or Muslim country that has significantly democratized its political system and the only country

within an oil-based economy that has abandoned its authoritarianism' (Dillman 1992: 31). This transition to democracy was short lived and the military intervened in January 1992 to abort what seemed to be the first democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Hence, these reforms were introduced to give the semblance of a more open political system; but in reality these reforms have been a measure to defuse the already volatile situation and seek another source of the system's legitimacy. The military's intervention in January 1992 led to an unprecedented level of violence that claimed the lives of almost 200,000 people. Therefore, this chapter highlights the Algerian reforms and points to the pitfalls that accompanied them, it also highlights the lessons that Arab countries can learn from the Algerian experience in order to ensure a smoother and more peaceful transition to democracy. However, having said that, it does not automatically follow that the Arab Spring did not have any impact upon the Algerian political scene. On the contrary, the Algerian authorities embarked on a series of reforms since February 2011 which would, at least in theory, strengthen democratic principles. In reality, however, these reforms, as will be argued in this chapter, were only superficial and served only to strengthen façade democracy.

Algeria's 'Spring'

Given the events in neighbouring countries, as well as Algeria's long history of demonstrations against the regime and especially the events of January 2011, many observers felt that Algeria would be next. However, these predictions proved to be inaccurate and Algeria (Bouandel 2011), on the whole, remained stable and has been in a position to initiate top-down reforms. This is due, I argue, to two main important and equally related factors.

The first is that Algerians argue that they experienced their own 'spring' over two decades ago, and they have little or nothing to learn from the experiences of their neighbours. On the contrary, it is these countries that are following Algeria's example and should learn from the pitfalls that the country has experienced ever since with its arduous transition to democracy.

Seasoned observers of Algerian affairs concur that the events that have been taking place in a number of MENA countries had already taken place in Algeria in October 1988, and led to a series of reforms that opened up the political space for previously excluded groups (Boukhobza 1991). These events, which paved the way for a process of liberalization, did not get the attention they deserved at the time for two reasons. The first is the absence of television channels such as *Al Jazeera* and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which have played an important role in what has been happening recently in the MENA countries. The second is that the events in Algeria coincided with important developments in Eastern and Central Europe. The fall of communism and the transition that was taking place in that part of the world was the main focus of politicians, policy-makers, journalists and academics. Hence, the events in Algeria, by comparison, were pushed to the background.

In October 1988, demonstrators took to the streets of Algiers and other major cities to demand an end to corruption and improvement of living conditions. Unlike the response of Tunisian and Egyptian militaries, the Algerian military intervened on the direct orders of the then president Chadli Bendjedid and about 500 rioters lost their lives in the space of three days. With the riots brought under control, President Bendjedid addressed the nation and promised a series of reforms. The more conservative elements

of the ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), such as Messaadia, were removed and a constitution that brought an end to one-party rule was adopted in February 1989. This constitution, in theory, paved the way for a pluralistic political system in Algeria. As a result, Algeria witnessed the mushrooming of political parties. These parties represented the wide range of political tendencies: from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a conservative party, to the more radical and secular Ettahadi party, the former Communist party (PAGS). This period also saw the emergence of privately owned newspapers. Plural elections were held in June 1990 for the local and regional assemblies and the FIS proved to be a formidable political force, winning 55 per cent of the vote (Iratni and Tahi 1992). With the prospect of a legislative election looming, the authorities in Algiers, known locally as *le pouvoir*, discarded the electoral system, under which the June 1990 election was held, and replaced it with the two-ballot system, similar to that used in France. This change in the electoral system was accompanied by the redrawing of constituency boundaries to ensure that the FIS would not repeat the same success at the national level (Bouandel 2005). Hence, on 26 December 1991, the first round of the legislative elections was held. The results showed that out of the 430 seats of the National Assembly, 232 seats were won in the first round, of which the FIS won 198 seats. The results suggest that the FIS only needed 28 seats to win an overall majority. The second round, which was scheduled on 16 January 1992, in which the remaining 198 seats were to be contested, would have seen the FIS winning a comfortable majority in the National Assembly. This is evidenced by the fact that the FIS had no less than 186 candidates contesting the second round and having a lead in almost all of the constituencies (Bouandel 1993/1994).

The prospect of an Islamic government in Algeria prompted the military to nullify the results and bring the electoral process to an end. A state of emergency was introduced in February and a month later, in March 1992, the FIS was banned. These events marked the beginning of a long and bloody conflict in which the protagonists, the military and the Islamists committed unspeakable atrocities in a conflict in which the civilian population was held hostage (Zoubir and Bouandel 1998). The results have seen over 200,000 people killed, about 20,000 disappeared, over half a million fled the country and an estimated cost of about US$30 billion (Joffe 2005).

While the violence was still going on, the Algerian authorities embarked on a series of political reforms to put the country back on track. Following the appointment of retired General Liamine Zeroual as head of state in January 1994, a number of steps were taken. First, in order to break away from the military, which brought him to power, Zeroual sought popular legitimacy by calling for presidential elections in which he stood as candidate. Hence, in November 1995, the first ever presidential elections were held which Zeroual, as expected, won in the first round (Bouandel 1997). In November of the following year, a new constitution was approved by a referendum. This constitution and the laws that were subsequently introduced, in theory, laid the foundations for a return to the democratic process and the entrenchment of a democratic culture; in reality, they were introduced for more stability and the continuation of the status quo. This argument is based on the following three points.

The first is that, unlike previous parliaments, this constitution, in Article 98, called for the creation of a bicameral parliament. In addition to the directly elected lower house, the National Popular Assembly, an upper house, the Council for the Nation, would be created. Two-thirds of its membership would be indirectly elected: elected by and from the elected members of the local and regional assemblies. The remaining one

third is directly appointed by the president. In a process of democratization, the creation of non-elected institutions is anathema to democracy. Given the president's free role in appointing one third of the membership, it is very difficult to justify not only its democratic nature, but also its representative character. This move was a step towards strengthening the president's grip on the political affairs of the country by reducing the role of the elected institution: the National Assembly. This democratic deficit is evidenced by the fact that Article 120 of this constitution stipulates that bills are debated in both houses and for a bill to become law, it has to be ratified by at least three-quarters (75 per cent) of the membership of the Council for the Nation. This state of affairs suggests that even if a political party wins a majority, it will be unable to introduce and/or modify legislation without the tacit support of the president, represented by his appointees in the Council for the Nation.

Secondly, in order to avoid the problems associated with the previous legislative elections, which would have seen the FIS winning a comfortable majority, a new electoral system was introduced (JORA 1997). The two-ballot system, under which the first ever legislative elections were held in December 1991, was replaced by a form of proportional representation: the closed party list. According to this particular electoral system, parties produce the final list and the ranking of candidates and the electorate votes of the party of his/her choice, not the candidates. It is also customary for these systems to introduce a threshold that parties had to surpass to gain representation. When this version of proportion representation was adopted in Algeria, a 5 per cent threshold at the constituency level was introduced to ensure the removal of superfluous parties. While proportional representation as a system of election is the one that is most favoured by countries that have experienced transition to democracy, the version adopted by the Algerian authorities has had negative effects; after the May 2012 legislative elections, the transition to democracy in Algeria remained painful. The closed party list, over the years, I argue, has diluted the electoral process from its real significance. A candidate who is ranked by his/her party's leadership, either at the top or as near as possible to the top of a party's list, stands more chance of being elected than someone who is somewhere in the bottom half of that list. Hence, given the important role that party leadership plays in determining the order in which candidates appear on the ballot box, they would be much more inclined to offer the top positions on their lists to those candidates deemed to be acceptable. This situation fosters a submissive culture with the emergence of *beni oui oui* – yes men – encouraging corruption and clientelism, and suppressing personal initiative and creativity. Furthermore, given the nature of Algeria's political parties – weak, fragmented and subject to the *pouvoir*'s meddling in their internal affairs, especially when they are deemed not to keep in line – suggests that elections and party competition are nothing more than, to borrow the words of the late Algerian thinker Malek Benabi, '*boulitique*' (the vocation of those who dupe the masses). Indeed, during the first half of the 1990s, the former single party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), under the leadership of the late Abdelhamid Mehri, was a source of embarrassment to the regime. After the aborted legislative elections of December 1991, the FLN was an opposition party and Mehri himself was a fierce critic of the different choices of the regime. Hence, in January 1996, members of the FLN's Central Committee, who were acting under direct instructions from the security services, orchestrated Mehri's downfall. (Author interview with Brahimi 1998). He was replaced by Boualem Benhamouda and the FLN returned to playing in the hands of the regime. Similarly, Ali Benflis was removed from the leadership of the FLN is 2003, after he declared his

intention to enter the presidential race against incumbent president Bouteflika (Bouandel 2004). Furthermore, when the Islamist Abdellah Djaballah refused to be co-opted by the *pouvoir*, he was removed twice from the leadership of the parties he led: *Ennahda* and *Il Islah* (author interview with Djaballah, 2012). Hence, it could be argued that parties' candidates are the *pouvoir*'s candidates, and elections are reduced to a referendum and the role of the Algerian electorate is simply to rubber stamp decisions made elsewhere. The composition of the National Assembly, in terms of the members, not the parties, is not necessarily a product of the electorate as much as it is a product of these parties' leaderships. Furthermore, the electoral law introduced a 5 per cent threshold, at the constituency level, that parties had to surpass if they are to gain representation. While the introduction of a threshold is a necessary condition to filter and remove extremist and superfluous parties, it has led, as the 10 May 2012 election suggests, to an abnormal situation where so many votes have been wasted and the winning margin of some parties has been magnified by this threshold.

Why has Algeria been immune from the 'Arab Spring'?

It should be pointed out that demonstrations have been a common feature of the Algerian political landscape over the two decades. Throughout the 1990s, Algerians have had to deal with a near civil war and were concerned with security more than anything else. The situation changed after president Bouteflika came to power in 1999. He was successful in bringing the violence to an end through the adoption of first the Civil Harmony Law in 1999 and the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation in 2005 (Bouandel 2010). Nonetheless, despite the return of stability and the relatively high revenues, as well as unprecedented reserves of foreign currency, the country still suffers from acute economic and social problems. High levels of unemployment, shortage of housing, a deteriorating health service, an unhealthy educational system and, most importantly, very high levels of corruption are some of the characteristics of the Algerian system. Consequently, expressions of the popular discontent, which manifest themselves in demonstrations against the regime and its symbols, have been an almost daily occurrence over the last decade. Open any Algerian newspaper any day of the week and you are almost certain to read about a demonstration in one part of the country to denounce the practices of *le pouvoir* and its representative. These demonstrations are not necessarily monopolized by a certain segment of society, as every sector, apart from the security services, had voiced its discontent. Since the turn of the 21st century, the most important demonstrations were in the Berber region, east of Algiers, in 2003 and those in January 2011, just after the demonstrations in Tunisia (Layachi 2011).

Until very recently, demonstrations in Algeria have not necessarily called for regime change or for specific political reforms. They were much more concerned with the improvement of socio-economic conditions such as housing, employment, salaries and working conditions as well as an end to corruption. Furthermore, Algerians have also demonstrated against what they call *El Hogra*. *El Hogra* (the lack of *Karama* or dignity) refers to the contemptuous treatment that Algerians are subjected to by a wide range of office holders, including the security forces. People who are in a position of power, either appointed or elected, are, in theory, there to serve the people; instead, many abuse their position. Such a state of affairs leads to the absence of rights, the adulterating of the concept of citizen and the creation of a chasm between *them* (the

office holders) and *us* (the average Algerian). In this sense, it is the experience of *El Hogra* that led Bouazizi to set himself on fire in Tunisia and compelled people in Algeria, and throughout the Arab world, to rise up against their tyrannical governments.

At first glance, everything in Algeria suggests that an uprising and/or a general explosion is imminent. To be sure, the potential for such a scenario does exist and when events in Tunisia and Egypt started, Algeria, given its problems, seemed to be the most natural theatre for a 'revolution' to take place. However, to date, Algeria seems to have been immune to what has happened in the region. This exemption is based on the following.

First of all, as stated above, Algeria had already experienced its 'spring' in the late 1980s. This has resulted in two important and equally related outcomes that had serious consequences on Algeria's political landscape and made an uprising *à la* Tunisia or Egypt almost impossible at least in the short term. The first is that the Algerian 'spring' resulted in the opening up of the political space, with the emergence of political parties, organizations of civil society, independently owned newspapers and the holding of elections at regular intervals. The shortcoming of the resulting system notwithstanding, the Algerian authorities claim that the system is democratic and that based on the free will of the Algerian people it has, to a large extent, been well received. During the author's research visits to Algeria over the last two years, many Algerians from different walks of life argued that their system is much more democratic than any other country in the Arab world; as a result, there was no need for Algeria to follow in the footsteps of Tunisia and Egypt (focus group, Algiers, 9 January 2011).

Second, the near civil war that Algeria experienced in the 1990s left the country and its people traumatized. Algerians remember too well what happened during that decade and are not inclined to repeat that again. During my two research trips to Algeria in January and February 2011, my interviewees confirmed that they were not willing to embark on another 'adventure' which could result in bloodshed. It was apparent from the several discussions that despite the people's obvious discontent with *le pouvoir* and its practices, there was a general fatigue and fear that an 'Arab Spring' or October 1988-style uprising would only result in bloodshed. Their fears were strengthened when the uprisings in Libya and Syria and Yemen turned very violent. It is, indeed, these scenarios that Algerians are eager to avoid (focus group, Algiers, 9 January and 12 February 2011).

Third, unlike what happened in both Tunisia and Egypt, not only does the Algerian military have a history of violently dealing with protests, as evidenced by the October 1988 uprising, the military has been at the forefront of Algeria's politics since independence. Indeed, the Algerian military, represented in the Armée de Liberation National (ALN), from which l'Armée Populaire Nationale emerged, preceded the establishment of an independent state. Even before independence and especially since 1962, the major political decisions have been taken by the military. Indeed, it is the military that intervened in January 1992 to cancel the results of the first round of the legislative elections and bring to an abrupt halt the electoral/democratic process. Every single head of state of independent Algeria has been either drawn from the military or brought into office by it. Hence, the military will continue to play an important role in the politics of the country and any uprising against the current regime – in which the military plays a central role – will be perceived as a threat against the establishment itself.

Fourth, Algerian political parties are too weak, fragmented and/or play in the hands of the regime to mount a serious challenge to the regime. An atmosphere of suspicion

and mistrust dominates the Algerian political scene. I have previously remarked elsewhere that the 'heated exchange of mutual accusation between Louisa Hannoune, leader of the Workers' Party, and Noureddine Ait Hamouda, a member of the National Assembly for the Rally for Culture and Democracy, is an example par excellence of the role of the Algerian opposition' (Bouandel 2011: 12).

Fifth, in Algeria, unlike the situations in Tunisia and Egypt where the political systems were clearly identified with the presidents and their respective parties, the Algerian political system is neither identified with president Bouteflika nor with any specific political party. While corruption has reached unparalleled levels in the country's history, it is not only identified with the president and his family/immediate entourage. In Algeria, there is, what I call, horizontal and vertical corruption. The first refers to the monopoly of economic activity by a select group of influential people who use their positions to further their economic activities. Some of the high-ranking officers in the Algerian military or individuals backed by the military are clearly identified with a sector of the economic activity. In Algeria, it is customary to hear about 'the Sugar General', 'the Milk General' and so on and so forth. Such was the extent of these people's involvement in the economic activity of the country that a bridge which links the Port of Algiers to one of the main highways to facilitate the movement of lorries carrying imported goods intended for the local market is sarcastically referred to in Algeria as *le Pont des Generaux*, the Generals' Bridge. The second vertical or the progressive corruption refers to its spread throughout the different levels of administration and government. The lower one is on the administrative echelon, the lower the commission is. It has become so widespread that even when withdrawing money – especially when there is shortage of liquidity – from a post office or getting a birth certificate from a town hall, Algerians are compelled to pay bribes to corrupt employees for their 'rights'. Hence, the Algerian political system which has until the late 1980s consisted of the former ruling party, then FLN, the bureaucracy and the military has, since then included, *les nouveaux riches* – money men – referred to, to borrow the words of the assassinated Head of State Mohammed Boudiaf (January–June 1992) as '*la mafia politico-financiere*'. This mafia has the monopoly over several sectors of the economic activity, as outlined above, and exert immense pressure on politicians. In this system, Bouteflika, as head of state, is reduced to nothing more than a mere figurehead with whom the Algerian political system formally identifies. His departure would not alter the type of political system in the country.

Finally, unlike the situations in Egypt and Tunisia, Algeria is one of the richest countries in the MENA, and boosts over US$200 billion in foreign reserves. Given this fact, the Algerian authorities have indeed used financial incentives to buy social peace. Hence, several increases in salaries, in most cases backdated, have been approved, as well as generous loans for the unemployed to start their own businesses. These steps were taken for political reasons to appease the volatile economic and social situations, without any consideration for economic implications, such as inflation.

The impact of the Arab Spring on Algeria

Despite the fact that Algeria has, so far, been immune from the 'Arab Spring', the events in neighbouring countries have had an impact upon Algeria's internal political situation. Unlike the spontaneous and leaderless 'revolutions' in both Tunisia and Egypt, in Algeria, a number of political parties, such as the Rally for Culture and Democracy

(RCD) as well as organizations of civil society, such as Families of the Missing persons, tried to provide the organizational framework for these demonstration. Hence, the National Coordination for Change and Democracy (NCCD) was created in January 2011. The most recognized figures in this coordination were Dr Said Saadi, former leader of the RCD, and Ali Yahia Abdennour, former president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights. The coordination called for the state of emergency, in place since February 1992, to be lifted, the introduction of genuine reforms with the opening up of the mass media, the release of political prisoners and social justice (Layachi 2011). The coordination planned to hold marches against the *pouvoir* every Saturday, beginning on 12 February, until its demands were met. The first march was, by all accounts, a failure. The authorities ensured that access to the main square and streets was blocked and traffic coming into Algiers was closely monitored. The second march of 19 February was attended by a few hundred only and the idea of holding marches every Saturday was abandoned. On their part, the Algerian authorities aware of the developments taking place in Tunisia and Egypt and the domestic situation responded by lifting the state of emergency on 24 February 2011. This move was not only very well received throughout Algeria, but also signalled the authorities' desire to relax the rules. Indeed, as soon as the president announced the lifting of the state of emergency, the organized opposition to the regime started to lose momentum. To many Algerians, Said Saadi became a hated figure who was bound to bring chaos to the country. He was ridiculed by Algerians when they nicknamed him Said *Samedi* ('Saturday' in French – a reference to his calls for marches against the regime). Furthermore, Algerians have also exchanged SMS's that stated *Saadi rouh El darek, Bouteflika mahouche Mubarak* ('Saadi go home', 'Bouteflika is not Mubarak').[2]

Indeed, while Bouteflika's position as head of state was never under threat from his people, the humiliating manner by which Benali and Mubarak left office and the events in Syria, Libya and Yemen, as well as the volatile situation at home, compelled the Algerian *pouvoir* to revisit its position on several issues. The move to lift the state of emergency was perceived as a basis upon which further political reforms can be built. This sentiment was further enhanced by President Bouteflika's speech on 15 April, in which he outlined a series of reforms to be undertaken (Canal Algerie, 15 April 2011). With these steps, the Algerian leadership was able to absorb popular discontent and to pre-empt any moves by some political parties, as well as organizations of civil society to gather support against the regime.

Hence, in order to elaborate upon the proposed reforms outlined by the president in his televised speech, a commission headed by Abdelkader Bensalah, president of the Council for the Nation, embarked on a series of consultation with political figures, parties and civil society. The commission presented its findings/recommendations to the Council of Ministers before the reforms were voted in parliament. There were some proposed changes to the constitution, but the nature of these changes was left unspecified. It was left to the new parliament, after the May 2012 election, to introduce them. The laws that regulate political activity – parties and associations – were introduced. As a result, over 20 political parties, some of which have been active in Algeria's political scene albeit without formal recognition, took part in the legislative election. The reforms also introduced a quota for women in order to increase their representation in the different elected assemblies. The law on the mass media was passed and led to the emergence of privately owned TV stations. Consequently, several privately owned TV stations, such as Ennahar TV and Echourouk TV, started broadcasting. However,

despite being in its infancy, critics of the law on the media charged that will be more repressive than its predecessor (*Al Watan*, Algiers, 25 April 2011).

Nonetheless, despite the introduction of these steps, the reforms did not go far enough in resolving the Algerian stalemate and introducing genuine reforms. The *pouvoir* continues to play to the international audience by projecting an image of a democratic government. The reforms did not address one of the most significant components of the Algerian political system: the military. Furthermore, another question pertaining to the nature of the political system (presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary) and the proposed reforms to the constitution, especially the limits on the presidential mandates, was left unanswered and will be dealt with by the new parliament. Hence, the legislative election of May 2012 was held, according to the Algerian authorities, at a turning point in Algeria's modern history.

The May 2012 legislative and April 2014 presidential elections

The Algerian authorities, fearing the lowest turnout in Algeria's history, given the indifference of the electorate, played up the importance of the elections. Statements comparing it to the July 1962 referendum, which confirmed Algeria's independence, was uttered by the prime minister, Ahmed Ouyahia (*El Khabar*, Algiers, 20 April 2012). About 46 political parties and several independent lists took part in the election. The results raised a few eyebrows. (Canal Algerie, 12 May 2012) First, the FLN, against all expectations and despite the internal fighting, came in first, almost winning the majority of the seats. Second, unlike MENA countries where elections were held following the 'Arab Spring', the Algerian Islamists were dealt heavy blows and failed to make an impression. Third, because of the female quota, almost one third of the membership of the Algerian National Assembly is female, the highest percentage in the world and something that the Algerian authorities were quick to point out.

Nonetheless, the results of the elections produced a very weak parliament and its representative character is questionable. Despite accusations of fraud, the results are closer to reality than not. Firstly, on 8 May, two days before polling day, Bouteflika, who is honorary president of the FLN, stated in a speech in the eastern city of Setif that his political affiliation was known to everyone. This was perceived as an implicit support for the FLN (Canal Algerie, 8 May 2012). Secondly, no less than 21 political parties that participated in the election were legalized less than three months before and did not have time to develop their programmes and membership. They simply tried to capitalize on the newly found freedom by trying to gain representation. Thirdly, the 5 per cent threshold that parties needed to secure to gain representation played into the hands of the bigger parties. Hence, it is conceivable that a party can win all the seats available in a given constituency on less than 6 per cent of the vote, if none of the competing parties manages to secure more than 4.99 per cent. This situation questions the representative character as well as the legitimacy of the elected institutions. This is particularly true when the institution's main task was to amend the constitution upon which the new rules of the game would be defined. More than two years after it was elected, the new constitution has yet to see the light. It was postponed until the new presidential elections were held. Given the uncertainty surrounding the incumbent president's health, and with it the future of governance in Algeria, Bouteflika reshuffled the cabinet and appointed key positions to his close allies. Hence, the Ministries of the Interior and Justice and the chairmanship of the Constitutional Council, with key roles

to play in any elections, went to his cronies. With these appointments and despite not addressing his people for over a year, disabled President Bouteflika, who suffered a stroke, won his fourth term in office with over 81 per cent of the turnout, a result that is reminiscent of pre-Arab Spring elections in the Arab Middle East (*El Khabar*, Algiers, 19 April, 2014). Thus, the legislative and presidential elections as well as the different reforms that preceded them suggest that in Algeria, *plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose*. While in theory laws are introduced, consultations and debate are taking place, political campaigns are organized, elections are held and members of parliament take up their seats, the reality is that little if anything changes. This '*boulitique*' serves only to give the semblance of democracy and to legitimize a regime that lost its credibility.

Conclusion

The Algerian experience with democracy has been very arduous and at times very frustrating. However, its experience can provide important lessons for countries in the Arab world that are undergoing political transformations. It could be argued that Algeria has experienced two waves of democratization. The first lasted almost three years, from February 1989 with the adoption of the new constitution until January 1992, when the electoral, and with it the democratic, process was brought to an end. Several lessons can be learned from this failed transition to democracy. The first is that the very relaxed laws for the creation of political parties should be avoided. In Algeria in late 1980, just 15 people were enough to form a political party. Furthermore, despite the fact that the law stipulates that no political party can be based either on religion or ethnicity, the Algerian political landscape had seen the emergence of these very same political parties. The second lesson is the importance of the electoral system in the transition to democracy. During this period, Algeria experienced two electoral systems, in addition to the redrawing of boundaries. These constitutional changes were implemented mainly as a response to the FIS threat and to ensure that the necessary measures are in place to prevent its success. The second transition started in 1994, when Liamine Zeroual was brought to office in January. The authorities in Algiers seemed to have learned from their own past mistakes. The law on the creation of political parties were tightened; the electoral system, the two-ballot system, that produced what I call a magnified majority for the FIS (Bouandel 2005), was replaced by another version of proportional representation and an upper chamber, in which the president can choose one third of the membership; this strengthened the executive even further at the expense of parliament. These changes were introduced not necessarily as steps towards further democratization, but to ensure stability. They simply helped to give the illusion of democracy while the status quo remained. Furthermore, despite continuous criticism of the type of political system in the country and promises to change the constitution by President Bouteflika himself, he has not addressed the peculiarities of his country's political system. It was only in November 2008, when his second, and constitutionally last, term in office was fast approaching that he emulated his then Tunisian counterpart, Bin Ali, when he amended the article in the constitution which limits the president's mandate to two five year terms, practically introducing a president for life.

Nonetheless, with the winds of the Arab Spring blowing over North Africa, the authorities in Algiers, in an attempt to pre-empt the flames of the Arab Spring from igniting Algeria, embarked on a number of reforms. These reforms, however, have amounted to nothing more than window dressing. As long as the system is perceived to

be democratic by Western governments, and to shower praise on the country's rulers, the latter will use these statements as a means to legitimize their tenure of power.

Since independence from France in 1962, Algerians have been living in a pressure cooker, albeit comfortable in economic and social terms, until the mid 1980s. The different reforms that were introduced since the late 1980s have served only one purpose: increase the size of the hole in the pressure cooker to let off steam so that the pressure cooker does not explode. The size of the hole mirrored and, indeed, was measured by the extent of popular discontent towards the regime. The authorities in Algiers have thus far been able to control the flow of steam and have managed to keep the pressure cooker from exploding. This is partly due the healthy balance of payments and Algeria's estimated foreign reserves, estimated at over US$200 billion. With the 10 May legislative elections, the authorities were presented with, yet again, another opportunity to manage a smoother transition to a more democratic form of government and to prevent a Libyan/Syrian/Yemeni style uprising. This is particularly important in light of the proposed reforms of the constitution that the current parliament has to undertake. This need for a smoother and a proper transition is particularly important given the fact that the so-called November generation – that participation in the War of Independence 1954–1962 – is fast becoming an extinct species and the revolutionary legitimacy is a devoid concept. Should the *pouvoir* miss this chance, the pressure cooker is bound to explode.

Notes

I wish to dedicate this chapter to the joy of my life, my son Aymen Mahmoud and my daughters Aya and Ayres.

1 Bin Ali in Tunisia 1987–2011; Mubarak in Egypt 1981–2011; Gaddafi of Libya 1969–2011; and Saleh of Yemen 1978–2011.
2 I am grateful to Dr Karima Bennoune for bringing this to my attention during a conference entitled *The Quest for Democracy in the Middle East and North Africa*, York University, Toronto, Canada, 1–3 June 2012.

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Canal Algerie (Algeria) *Speech of President Bouteflika*, 15 April 2011.
Canal Algerie (Algeria) *Speech of President Bouteflika*, 8 May 2012.
Canal Algerie (Algeria) *Results of the Legislative Elections*, 12 May 2012.

35

The Arab Spring and Democratization

An Iraqi Perspective

Hamid J. A. Alkifaey

'Spring' always follows 'winter'!

There are legitimate causes for the recent wave of popular revolutions that is widely referred to as the 'Arab Spring', which erupted in December 2010. First and foremost among these is the prevalence of dictatorship in most countries of the Middle East. Prior to the advent of the Arab Spring, there was no single Arab democracy in the region with the exception, perhaps, of Lebanon and Iraq, although there are countries where there are forms of representation such as Morocco, Algeria, Kuwait, Jordan and even Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen to a certain extent, with varying relative levels of freedom. Arab regimes were either military dictatorships, using frequent but fraudulent elections to bestow legitimacy on their rule, or traditional hereditary regimes with limited or no public legitimacy except that of being in charge of their respective countries for a long time. They rely entirely on sheer military force, strong intelligence services, use of religion to subdue people and/or oil money to finance their extra-large security forces and civil services (Sadiki 2009; Ross 2001; Morrison 2009).

However, despotism and dictatorship is not uniform across the region. In Morocco, there have been serious reforms which led to free elections and relative freedom after King Mohammed VI's accession to the throne in July 1999. There have also been political reforms and relatively free elections in Jordan since the beginning of the 1990s. Although they are not democratic, Gulf States are not totally repressive regimes and citizens there are prosperous and relatively free within the traditional social structure existing in their respective countries (Crystal 1995).

Until 2003, Iraq was ruled by the harsh and inhumane dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the Baath party. Iraqis lacked even basic freedoms: no political parties, no free press, no free trade or even the choice of not belonging to the Baath party. People were forced to join the Baath party, the regular army, the People's Army, Al-Quds Army (the last two were armed groups at the disposal of the Baath party) and Fidaeyi Saddam (another brutal armed group with the single aim of defending Saddam Hussein with the Arabic meaning of 'Saddam's self-sacrificers'). Many Iraqis were also encouraged,

even forced, to spy on their own friends and family members. Therefore, it is natural that people would rise up one day against the regime that is turning them into slaves. This is exactly what happened in March 1991.

'Iraqis are first'

Iraq's population is diverse, ethnically and religiously. The Arabs form around 80 per cent, while the Kurds, Turcoman, Assyrians and others form the rest (Ghabra 2001). It is a largely Muslim country, although there is a sizeable Christian population in Baghdad and Musil, shrinking though it certainly is, due to instability and the immigration opportunities offered to its members in the West. Muslims form 97 per cent but they are divided between Shia (65 per cent) and Sunni (35 per cent) (Ghabra 2001). Since there are no accurate figures for the proportion of Sunnis and Shia to the population, there are different estimates, such as those published by the Lebanese writer and researcher in Iraqi affairs, Chibli Mallat, which put the Shia between 55 and 60 per cent and Sunni Arabs between 15 and 20 per cent, with the Kurds (who are mainly Sunni) at 20 per cent.

Iraqis always repeat the phrase 'we have always been first' and they are not far from the truth. Their country is the cradle of civilization, where writing was discovered over 5000 years ago, the home of the first city, Uruk, and the first written law, the Hammurabi Code (Pollock 1999). It has also been the centre of the greatest ever Islamic caliphate, the Abbasids. In recent times, the first airport in the Middle East was built by the British in Basra in 1927. Iraq also became a state in 1921, before all other countries in the region. It even had the first army and first radio and TV stations in the Arab world. But does 'first' always mean 'better'? Certainly not. Iraq had the first military coup in the Middle East, led by Brigadier Bakir Sidqi in 1936. The country has a long history of being a theatre of war, violence and public dissatisfaction since the beginning of history. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, King Khosrau of Persia, Governor Hajjaj, the Abbasid caliphs, the Mogul invaders, the Ottoman Sultans and finally Saddam Hussein all launched wars, killed civilians and suppressed rebellions.

Since this chapter is confined to the causes and effects of the Arab Spring in Iraq, I shall, from now on, neglect events prior to 1968, when the Baath party took over power in Iraq. During the three decades following the Baath's ascendance to power, Iraqis died in their thousands in state-organized repression and three long regional wars. Many Iraqis believe that Saddam Hussein killed over 2 million of them and this figure is not far from reality when taking into consideration all the victims of wars and repression. But conservative estimates put the number killed by the dictator at 1 million. This makes Saddam Hussein proportionately surpass Stalin, who killed 20 million people.

The 1991 Intifada

Iraq's relations with all its neighbours have not been so friendly over the last four decades. A war broke out with Iran in 1980 and lasted eight long years, from 22 September 1980 until 8 August 1988. Just two years later, on 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and was only evicted when the international community, armed with a United Nations mandate under Chapter VII (UN Resolutions 660–666), sent armies from around 30 countries led by the US. At that point Iraqis felt enough was enough. It was time to end Saddam's dictatorship. People rose up in their millions against the regime in March

1991. The rebellion started in Basra in the south when returning defeated troops began shooting at Saddam's portraits in Sa'ad Square, but it soon spread to all the southern and northern provinces, which fell to the opposition. Only Baghdad and the three predominantly Sunni Arab provinces of Anbar, Musil and Salahuddeen remained under government control (Haddad 2011; Makiya 1993).

But within three weeks, the regime managed to regain control. It used severe firepower, including tanks and helicopters to crack down on the rebels. Saddam's forces ransacked even holy cities such as Karbala and Najaf. Although Saddam Hussein agreed to humiliating terms imposed on Iraq as a defeated state in a ceasefire agreement with Allied forces commander Norman Schwarzkopf at a tent in Safwan airbase on 1 March, the Allies allowed the regime to use helicopters 'for government work'. The opposition interpreted this as an American green light to crack down on the rebels. Helicopters were used to chase the protesters and transport troops loyal to the regime to all rebellious areas. With no international support or even condemnation of the cruel methods that Saddam used, the Iraqi Spring was thwarted and Saddam Hussein prevailed, with thousands of rebels in the central and southern parts of the country killed. Thousands others fled to Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria, the only countries in the world that allowed Iraqi refugees in. The Kurds in the north fled to the mountains and some to Iran (1 million) and Turkey (450,000), fearing recrimination and persecution (Ghabra 2001: 39–41).

A huge humanitarian crisis erupted with millions of people climbing up the mountains in the freezing cold to escape certain death. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees called it the largest exodus in its 40-year history (Johns 2006). The humanitarian disaster in the Kurdish region persuaded the Allies to create a safe haven in northern Iraq for the Kurds. Regime forces could not regain control of the north as the area was protected by the Allied forces and UN resolutions. Saddam Hussein was banned from using his fixed-wing airplanes beyond the 36 parallel in the north and the 32 parallel in the south. While regime forces never entered Kurdistan, except briefly in 1996 following a call from Kurdish leader, Masuad Barzani, to intervene in his war with his arch rival, Jalal Talabani, the current president, the regime was totally free in the south. Saddam Hussein poured all his anger there, killing the old, women and children, and anyone who was thought to have participated in the uprising (accounts of various participants in the intifada relayed to the writer). The extent of the suppression of the 1991 uprising was only discovered after the fall of the regime in 2003, although it was clear from the beginning that Saddam wouldn't entertain the idea of leaving people who oppose his rule 'above the soil'. It was found later that thousands of people were summarily executed and buried in mass graves for opposing the regime. These were people who rebelled against the regime in March 1991 and later. Many mass graves containing the bodies of thousands of people were found in central, southern and northern Iraq following the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003. Many Iraqis believe the Iraqi regime would have fallen in March 1991 had it not been for the active and tacit support of the Allied forces and the silence of the international community (interviews with opposition leaders in London).

Short-lived Iraqi Spring

It is not a coincidence that many Iraqis feel the real Arab Spring started in their country in the spring of 1991 when they revolted against Saddam Hussein following his

defeat in Kuwait. It was an unprecedented popular revolution in Iraq against a regime that was unprecedented in its oppressive and repressive ways. Although the Iraqi Spring was short lived as Saddam Hussein managed to brutally suppress the intifada, many believe he was helped by the Allies who allowed him to use his helicopters to crack down on his opponents. Western silence or lack of condemnation of Saddam's brutality was enough proof for many Iraqis that the West wanted Saddam to stay at any cost. The Iraqi intifada was indeed the first ever popular revolt against dictatorship in the Arab world. Iraqis were encouraged to rise against the Saddam regime when President George Bush called upon them 'to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside' (Bush 1991). This message was broadcast on all TV stations across the world and Iraqis believed it and began to do exactly what the president suggested. Whether Bush was actually serious or bluffing, nobody knows. What is certain is that Iraqis did call his bluff and he failed to support them. Saddam Hussein's regime was falling apart under the hammerings of the Iraqi people. He even packed his bags to take asylum in Algeria, according to some news reports (*LA Times*, 2 March 1991). The US and its allies did not support the people's uprising as they did in Libya or even Syria. They sat idly by and just watched. Dick Cheney explained the reasons. 'It would be very difficult for us to hold the coalition together for any particular course of action dealing with internal Iraqi politics, and I don't think, at this point, that our writ extends … to trying to move inside Iraq and deal with their internal problems' (Saletan 2003).

Conservative estimates put the victims of the Iraqi intifada at 300,000, while other estimates were substantially higher. Whatever the estimate, it is a huge number by any account considering that the Iraqi population was then around 22 million. The American generals must have had it on their conscience that they did not support the people's uprisings when they could. The Bush family has certainly felt responsible for the Iraqi disaster since it allowed it to happen, and some believe that one of the reasons for the US invasion of Iraq of 2003 was a feeling of guilt that they allowed a mass murderer to slaughter people before their eyes just because it suited their politics at the time. President Bush felt he needed to finish what his father had left behind. In fact, the US ambassador to Iraq, James Jeffery, apologized to the Iraqi people on behalf of the US government for not supporting the 1991 intifada (*New York Times*, 10 November 2011).

Regional fear of the Shia

In a roundtable conference organized by Maastricht University in Brussels on 1 and 2 December 2011 about the policies of the European Union towards the Arab Spring, Ian Manners, professor of globalization and Europeanization, University of Roskilde, said the US took the advice of Saudi Arabia not to topple the Saddam regime. It was for this reason that he remained in place. It is widely believed that the Saudis were worried about a Shia rule in Iraq that might be sympathetic to Iran for sectarian reasons. Such a rule, the Saudis are thought to believe, would undermine the stability of the Gulf region since the Shia minorities might be encouraged to rebel and demand more rights. The Wahhabi Sunni religious school, which is predominant in Saudi Arabia, considers the Shia as infidels, and to them an infidel has no rights at all Al-Jabhan 1988). But Paul Wolfowitz, the American deputy defence minister under George W. Bush, denied in a recent article published at *alrabia.net* that the Saudis had anything to

do with the American failure to support the Iraqi intifada of 1991. He said the 'Saudis should not be responsible for an American decision.'

After the brutal suppression of the intifada, Iraqis realized that they alone could not topple Saddam Hussein. They needed a strong foreign power to intervene to help end the regime, and who better than the United States to do it for them? Thus, Iraqi opposition leaders began to approach the US for help to topple Saddam, now that he was an international pariah after his invasion of Kuwait and brutal suppression of the intifada. Prior to that, Saddam had received support from the US, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and many Arab and Muslim countries. No dictatorship enjoyed the level of foreign support that Saddam Hussein did. This was done in the full knowledge of his contempt for human rights, democratic values and international law and norms.

The reasons are many but they revolve around the geopolitical and economic interests of Western and regional powers. Western countries were fearful of Islamic Iran's influence in the region and they felt that supporting Saddam Hussein was one way of limiting this influence and containing Iran. As mentioned above, Arab countries were believed to be sceptical about Shia influence in the region if Saddam fell. They knew that the Shia, being the majority in Iraq, would be leading any post-Saddam government, whether Islamic or secular. Saudi Arabia, being the heartland of Sunni Islam, may not have been in favour of a political change in Iraq for various reasons (sectarian, psychological, historical and political). Many in Iraq believe that the Saudis lobbied the US government very hard to stop short of toppling Saddam Hussein and they managed to persuade the Bush Senior administration to do just that. The US administration favoured a *coup d'état* to topple Saddam Hussein and even Bush's famous message to the Iraqi people to 'take matters into their own hands' was meant for top Iraqi officers to take action (Graham-Brown 1999). Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, opened several avenues for Iraqi opposition groups and for those Iraqis who rebelled against the regime. Saudi Arabia housed thousands of Iraqis fleeing from Saddam Hussein's persecution, civilians and soldiers alike, at the Rafha refugee camp near the Iraqi border. They were later transferred to the US, Western Europe, Iran and other countries which accepted them as political or humanitarian refugees. It also allowed certain opposition parties to open offices in Jeddah, as well as a radio station. Jordan also allowed one opposition group (Iraqi National Accord Movement led by Dr Ayad Allawi) to open offices and sustain opposition activities on its soil. Other Arab countries received opposition figures, such as Ayad Allawi (INA), Ahmed Chalabi (INC), Baqir Al Hakeem (SCIRI) and Ibrahim Jaafary (Dawa Party) (information based on various news reports). The idea was to influence the alternative to the Iraqi regime which they knew would fall sooner or later.

Widened Iraqi opposition

The Iraqi intifada also acted as a wakeup call for all opposition forces abroad as well as for those Iraqis with political ambitions to get their acts together and work towards bringing down the regime. Earlier, there was no real hope of toppling the Iraqi regime due to its tight grip on the country, its harsh crackdown on any form of opposition and the regional and international support it was getting since the Iranian revolution in 1979. Opposition forces didn't know the extent of popular discontent with the regime. Leading member of the Islamic Daawa Party, Dr Haider Al Ibadi, told a public

meeting in London attended by the writer in 1991 that the intifada surprised the opposition abroad. But the intifada sent a clear message to Iraqis as well as the world: the majority of Iraqis were against Saddam Hussein's regime and they were prepared to do what it takes to bring him down. It also made it clear that the regime can be removed by popular uprising when circumstances allow. Political activities among exiled Iraqis began in earnest. In March 1992, Ahmed Al Chalabi, the Iraqi Shia millionaire, began his political activities in London by commemorating the first anniversary of the intifada in March 1992. He spent lavishly on the occasion with free food, hotels and air tickets for participants. Influential Iraqi speakers and poets were brought from different countries of the world to speak against Saddam Hussein in the West End of London. It was a successful event that placed him at the forefront of opposition politics (the author was personally present). In June of the same year, he organized an opposition conference in Vienna where he officially established the Iraqi National Congress (INC), which he led. In December, he managed to persuade most Iraqi opposition forces to attend a conference in the resort of Salahuddeen in Iraqi Kurdistan, which was then under international protection. That landmark conference brought together rival leaders, Arabs and Kurds, Sunni and Shia, Islamist and secular. They all agreed to the original formula that Chalabi had set out in Vienna. Even the name remained the same, although the word ('Unified') was added to it to become 'The Unified Iraqi National Congress'. Chalabi was elected as chairman of the executive council and a tripartite presidency council was also elected to represent the whole opposition. It was made up of a Kurd, Masuad Barzani, a Shia Arab, Muhammed Bahrul Uloom, and headed by a Sunni Arab, Hassan Al-Naqeeb. This council invokes another presidency council formed after the 1958 coup and led by Brigadier Abdulkareem Qassim, 'the Sovereignty Council' which had similar sectarian and ethnic components.

Chalabi was then able to lobby the American administration for support since he was able to claim that he was the 'undisputed leader of the whole Iraqi opposition', which was not far from the truth at the time as most opposition groups were under the impression that the Americans had actually 'chosen' Chalabi to lead the upcoming change in Iraq. They were happy with the prospects of the 'change' but not necessarily with Chalabi's leadership, but it was something they could put up with for a while. Throughout the 1990s, all organized Iraqi opposition parties, with the exception of the Daawa and Communist parties, and some marginal nationalist groups, were coordinating efforts with the Americans to topple Saddam Hussein, but to no avail. The reasons were clear. There were not enough people willing to rise up against the regime and bear the fatal consequences that those who rose up during the March 1991 intifada had to bear.

US military intervention

The Americans realized that it was not possible to topple Saddam through a 'palace coup' as they were hoping, while a popular uprising was almost impossible after the failure of the 1991 intifada. The regime's intelligence services were capable of preventing army officers from staging a coup. So there was only one way to overthrow Saddam and that was through military force. They did just that in spring 2003, 12 years after the first Iraqi spring in 1991. Most people welcomed the change, although everyone had something different in mind. Chalabi thought he was going to be crowned president since he was the first to lobby the Americans for military action. He also had a

close working relation with the Pentagon, who actually promoted him for leadership of the new Iraq. Ayad Allawi, the leader of Iraqi National Accord, another American-backed group, also expected to be the new leader since he was a veteran politician who knew Iraq and Iraqis well. He was a leading Baathist in the 1960s and 1970s but he differed with Saddam Hussein on the way to rule Iraq, resigned from the party and left the country. He lived in London since the early 1970s, but even London was not safe for him. In 1978, Saddam's hired killers broke into Allawi's London home at night with an axe, leaving him and his wife for dead. He miraculously survived after many months in hospital, including many weeks in a coma (this was relayed by Dr Allawi himself to the writer on a number of occasions).

The Islamic parties, especially the ones which coordinated efforts with the Americans, such as the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, led by Ayatullah Baqir Al Hakeem, expected to be in the lead since they had been fighting the regime on the ground through their military wing, the Badr Brigade. The Islamic Daawa party expected to reap the fruits of the downfall of Saddam Hussein since it had long been an established party that offered many martyrs and sacrifices. It was persecuted under Saddam, but refused to cooperate with the Americans who were planning to invade Iraq. Both positions were regarded as positive stands for the party. Even the defunct monarchy had a space within opposition forces. A distant cousin of the murdered king of Iraq, Shareef Ali, who speaks Arabic with an English accent, also tried to re-establish the monarchy in Iraq and become king. Why not? It was muddy waters and fishing might produce results. But it was farfetched in a country where the leader of the 1958 military coup which toppled the monarchy and during which all members of the royal family were murdered, General AbdulKareem Qassim, was still popular across the country, 40 years after his death in another bloody coup. The Kurds wanted their own state in the north of the country, but they wanted to build up Iraqi, regional and international acceptance of it before announcing it.

With all of these conflicting agendas, the US felt it couldn't hand power to any of the conflicting forces. It decided to stay. On 22 May 2003, 43 days after the fall of the statue of Saddam at Firdaws Square on 9 April 2003, the United Nations passed resolution 1483 to regard the US as an occupying power. The US replaced its military governor, General Jay Garner, with a civilian administrator, Paul Bremer, an ambassador who worked in US counter-terrorism efforts. Bremer presided over the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which was the effective government of Iraq until 28 June 2004 when an Iraqi government took over. He began the process of engaging Iraqi political forces but admitted on the record that he was 'no expert on Iraq'. After lengthy negotiations with Iraqi leaders, he appointed a 25-member Governing Council (GC) which represented the main Iraqi political, religious, ethnic, social and regional groups, or at least this is what the Americans thought. The GC appointed a new government which worked with American advisers who were accountable to Bremer. The government was accountable to the GC but it was the CPA that was pulling the strings in Iraq. The author was appointed in October 2003 by the GC to be spokesman for the full duration of its term.

The democratic process

On 28 June 2004, Paul Bremer officially handed over power to Ayad Allawi, the interim prime minister who was selected jointly by the GC, the UN and the US administration.

It looked as if he was running away from the country as the plan was to hand over power to Allawi on 30 June, the auspicious anniversary of the popular 1920 Revolution against the British which eventually ended the British occupation. Allawi took over at a time when terrorism was at its height while Iraq's relations with its neighbours were at a nadir. There was hardly any army or police. State institutions were in their infancy. Iraq was a battleground between the Americans and terrorist groups. Elections were held as set out by Iraq's provisional constitution, known as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), on 30 January 2005, seven months after Allawi's takeover. A Shia electoral alliance won 138 seats of the 275-member National Assembly. Allawi, who was hoping to be returned to power, won only 40 seats. The Shia United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) used religion and relied on sectarian loyalties to win. It also used the good name of the religious leader Ayatullah Ali Sistani, whose photo was on the UIA's electoral posters distributed across the country to persuade people to vote for its candidates.

A transitional government was formed by the UIA and headed by Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, a non-practising medical doctor who had lived in exile in Iran and then London since 1980. During his term, security deteriorated so much that a sectarian war broke out between the Sunnis and Shia. People were killed because of their sectarian identity. Al-Jaafari was not popular among many sections of Iraqi society. Sunnis rejected him because he came via a sectarian ticket. Kurds were not happy as he refused to compromise on Kirkuk. The Americans were unimpressed by his poor performance. Even his Shia Alliance was divided on his suitability for leadership. A second election was held some ten months later, after a new constitution was approved by a referendum on 15 October 2005. The Shia alliance was returned to parliament with a similar number of seats while Allawi won even fewer seats than in the first election. What helped the Shia religious parties to sweep the elections was that all religious parties left their differences behind and united in one bloc, which was supported by the highly influential Shia religious authority of Ayatullah Sistani. Jaafari was ousted by the Shia Alliance and a more charismatic and decisive leader, Noori Al-Maliki, was selected.

Maliki, a prominent leader of the Daawa party, formed a new government with all winning parliamentary blocks participating in it, bar the Dialogue Front led by Dr Salih Al-Mutleg, who preferred to remain in opposition. Mutleg, a UK-educated university professor and a successful businessman during the reign of the former regime, represented and attracted the disaffected Baathists and Saddam loyalists who were still very angry with regime change.

Under Maliki, problems in the country continued to hinder any progress in security, employment and services (mainly lack of power supply); but the majority of people felt they were represented in parliament and government as well as in provincial councils. There was freedom of expression and relative freedom of press, considering the power and influence of all the armed groups and militias operating in the country. The government completed its four-year term in full, despite a brief period of boycotts and objections from participating groups. The main achievement of the government over the four years it ruled the country was to halt the sectarian war that broke out during the Jaafari government and to stabilize security which had deteriorated so much. American forces, which numbered around 170,000 at the time, were fully behind the Maliki government. They managed to pacify the rebellious province of Anbar and over 100,000 people engaged in government security efforts under the umbrella of the Awakening Councils (Iraqi official figures). Security improved rapidly and the sectarian war abated. By the end of 2008, the Maliki government signed an agreement with the

US to end the presence of American forces in the country, which was popular among all political groups, even though some were apprehensive of the consequences of an American withdrawal. But no political group could officially demand that American forces stay. It was politically incorrect and no one had the courage to demand it even though they felt they continued to need American support.

On 7 March 2010, new elections were held. The result was a hung parliament with no obvious winner, even though the Iraqia List led by Ayad Allawi won the largest number of seats (91), albeit by two seats, but not enough to form a government, which needs 163 seats. Although the constitution on government formation states that the leader of the list with the most seats should form the government, there was a legal challenge to this article. Maliki's State of Law bloc went to the Federal Court and won a ruling to allow bloc-formation after the elections (*Washington Post*, 1 June 2010). This made it possible for Maliki to go back to his old Shia allies, of which his group branched off prior to the elections, and form a new alliance called the National Alliance. After nine months of wrangling and dithering, political parties agreed (under pressure from the US and Iran, as close allies to the leaders of the two rival blocs told me) to let the incumbent prime minister form the new government in coalition with the other main blocs (Iraqia and Kurdish Alliance). This outcome was made possible by the high court ruling. Prior to that, it was thought that blocs can only be formed before the elections.

The advent of the Arab Spring

At the time when Maliki was forming his second government, the Arab Spring suddenly arrived in Tunisia in December 2010. Although I say 'suddenly', this is probably true for the outside world. But for those living in the Arab world and those following developments there, it was not surprising, although its vigour was. It claimed its first victim in January 2011 when President Zein Alabideen Bin Ali fled the country to Saudi Arabia under the pressure of rising popular protests. A month later, the Egyptian regime fell when millions of protesters, encouraged by the success of the relatively smaller nation of Tunisia, went out and demanded change. Abdul Muneim Abulfutooh, a leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and later a presidential candidate, said in a lecture at the University of Westminster in mid 2011, where the author was present, that the Egyptians could not bear the fact that the Tunisians were able to topple their dictator who was less harmful than theirs, Husni Mubarak. 'This encouraged them to move and they embarked on their revolution', he added. The leader of the Tunisian Nahda Islamic movement, Rachid El Ghannouchi, was also present and commented on Abulfutooh's statement half seriously: 'This is arrogance on the part of the Egyptians.' Encouraged by the Tunisian and Egyptian success stories, youth across the Arab world began protesting in large numbers, demanding regime change. The slogan 'The People Want the Downfall of the Regime', which began in Tunisia, has become a popular chant all over the Arab world.

In Iraq, too, people got fed up with the lack of progress in the country, especially with regards to the deterioration of services and widespread corruption. Iraqi youth began gathering at Liberation Square (Sahatul Tahrir) in Baghdad, the counterpart of the famous Liberation Square in Cairo. There were also demonstrations in the southern parts of Iraq. Every Friday there was a big gathering at the square to protest against the failure of the government to find solutions to the numerous problems facing the country. But these protests were linked to the Arab Spring by the participants themselves.

There was a call to the youth of Iraq to stage a demonstration in Liberation Square on 25 February 2011, which was hailed the biggest demonstration against the government so far, and many young people were determined to make a stand on that day.

The government was alarmed by the plan, which would have brought together 1 million people, by some estimates, to the square. The main protesters would have been the followers of young cleric Muqtada As-Sadr, leftists, communists, liberals and disaffected people from all walks of life. The government didn't leave matters to chance. It worked hard to foil a large protest and managed to persuade the leader of the Sadrist Trend, Muqtada As-Sadr, to come out prior to the protest date and call upon his followers not to participate in the planned demonstration. He urged them to 'give the government six months' until it managed to sort out some of the urgent problems. The protest went ahead on the planned day, but it was not large enough to frighten the government. Demonstrations continued every Friday afterwards but they didn't draw the large crowds the organizers were hoping for.

The government also took other measures to contain further protests. According to protesters, it blocked roads leading to liberation square, arrested and even assaulted some activists, and imposed a curfew on cars on protest days. These measures made it difficult for people to come to the square. Gradually, protests linked to the Arab Spring in Iraq died down, although other forms of protest continue today. It must be said that no one from the protesters has seriously demanded regime change as protesters in other Arab capitals did. Rather, they wanted reforms. A serious development happened on 8 September 2011. One of the leaders of the protest, Hadi Al Mahdi, was murdered in his flat in Baghdad, one day before a big protest was planned. No one claimed responsibility and the police investigation produced no results. This acted as a warning to many protesters not to continue with their protests, although it is difficult to imagine that the government was behind it. Many people close to the government told me they believe the opponents of the government were involved since they had an interest in such an act, and in Iraq, things sometimes do happen this way.

Iraqi Spring brought about by US

On another note, most people feel the change in Iraq did take place in April 2003 when the dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled. Since 2003, there have been six governments, four prime ministers, three presidents, four general elections, three provincial elections, and two constitutions, provisional and permanent. People are free to criticize the government and the press is relatively free to report events and criticize government officials, with some caveats regarding security restrictions on the movements of journalists and cameramen in certain areas due to security considerations, and the non-cooperation of some officials with some media organizations for political or other reasons. However, the presence of underground armed groups in the country scares people, especially journalists who feel their freedoms are limited by such presence. Many journalists, writers, cameramen and government officials, as well as ordinary people, have been assassinated, kidnapped or killed in explosions over the last nine years or so. But because of the relative freedom, the free market economy introduced by the Americans after the 2003 and frequent provincial and general elections, most people did not feel there was a need for a regime change since the government, theoretically at least, can be changed by elections.

However, by clinging tenaciously to power, Prime Minister Al-Maliki has actually made many people, especially secularists, Kurds, Sunnis and members of other Shia religious parties, feel that a dictatorship is in the making. On the other hand, Prime Minister Al-Maliki does enjoy some support and popularity in the country for being decisive over many issues, especially security, where he cracked down on Shia and Sunni armed groups with equal vigour. He also enjoyed the backing of the most important power in the region, Iran, and the most important power in the world, the United States, which didn't want any distraction in Iraq in an election year. But how long can the Iranians and Americans sustain their support for Al Maliki? After the April 2014 elections, Al-Maliki found himself unwanted by most politicians in Iraq as well as the US, and even Iran who backed him in previous elections. He tried to cling to power but was unable to as the Shia religious leader, Ayatulla Ali Sistani, recommended a change of prime minister in a clear reply to a letter sent to him by the leadership of the Daawa Party asking for guidance. The leadership of the party, together with other leaders of the Shia National Alliance List, nominated for Prime Minister Dr Haider Al-Ibadi, another leading figure in the Daawa Party and State of Law List. President Fuad Masoom then had to ask Al-Ibadi to form the government.

Looking at the four regimes that have fallen so far as a result of the Arab Spring, only two of them, the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, were removed by the people without outside intervention. The other two, in Libya and Yemen, were changed via North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military intervention in the first, and an American-backed GCC diplomatic initiative in the second to persuade the veteran President Ali Abdulla Salih to hand over power to his deputy. The fifth, the hereditary regime of Bashar Al-Assad, has managed to survive due to the unequivocal support it is getting from Iran, Russia and China and the inadequate Western or Arab support for the opposition. However, a year ago, very few people expected Assad to survive the Arab Spring in the long run, especially after the mass killings that his security forces have committed or allowed to happen over the course of the Syrian intifada. But he survived and is likely to stay for the time being, and the reason is that his opponents are divided, linked to terror groups such as Al Qaeda. Some have also committed heinous crimes against civilians.

Foreign successes and internal failures

The Arab League, in reversal to its past conduct regarding Iraq, managed to organize an Arab summit in Baghdad in March 2012. The summit was low key with only 10 out of the 22 heads of states attending. Leaders of important countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen did not attend. But the mere fact that it was held in Baghdad after nine years of Arab boycott is significant. The summit has given moral and political support to Prime Minister Noori Al-Maliki, who has been experiencing difficulties with his coalition partners. Sunni Vice President Tarik Al Hashimi has been accused of organizing terrorist attacks against the state. He fled the capital, Baghdad, and took refuge in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), before leaving for Turkey where he currently resides. A court in Baghdad has sentenced him to death. This issue, along with others such as the Kurdistan Region's production and sale of oil without the approval of the central government, has made relations between the centre and the KRG very tense. KRG President Massoud Barzani has even threatened, in various speeches and statements, to declare independence if Maliki didn't change his 'dictatorial' ways.

What made things worse for Prime Minister Al-Maliki was that five parliamentary block leaders, including Muqtada As-Sadr, the leader of the Sadrist Trend's Ahrar (Liberals) bloc, a constituent component of his National Alliance bloc, as well as his other rivals, parliamentary speaker Usama An-Nujaifi, Iraqia leader Ayad Allawi, President Jalal Talabani and KRG President Massoud Barzani, met in Erbil on 28 April 2012 to discuss the possibility of unseating him through a parliamentary vote of no confidence. They issued an ultimatum to Maliki, giving him 15 days to implement the Erbil Accords or face a no-confidence vote in parliament. The Erbil Accords, which were signed late in November 2010 by Maliki, Barzani and Allawi, laid the basis for the current National Partnership Government. Maliki's partners in the Iraqi bloc accused him of reneging on the accords while he insisted that he had fulfilled his side of the bargain. One of the issues of contention was the position of 'Chairman of the National Council for Higher Policies', which was agreed to be filled by Iraqi leader Ayad Allawi. The position is not provided for in the constitution but the parties agreed to create it. Another issue is drawing the rules of procedure of the Council of Ministers agreed upon in the Erbil Accord but not yet implemented.

Disputes among leaders on these issues and others do spill into the streets and translate into violence and discontent, and this is acknowledged by Iraqi officials themselves, including Adnan Al-Asadi, the deputy minister of the interior, in an interview with the Arabic Iranian Al Alam TV channel broadcast early in 2013. Al-Asadi, who is a senior member of Maliki's Daawa party, is the *de facto* minister for interior and he is in charge of the security portfolio since the formation of the second Maliki government in late 2010 which contained no interior minister.

The Sunni Intifada of 2013

In December 2012, an incident happened that had serious implications for the whole political process in Iraq. Iraqi security forces arrested an officer working as a guard for Dr Rafi Al Essawi, the finance minister and senior Sunni leader. He was arrested with other guards while they were with the minister in the Green Zone. Essawi regarded this as an insult and he held a press conference in which he attacked Maliki and claimed that a militia, as opposed to the national police, arrested his guards. He then left Baghdad for his own province of Anbar. A few days later, there was a huge demonstration in the city of Ramadi, the capital of the province, protesting this incident and chanting against the government. The demonstrations spread to other Sunni provinces such as Musil and Salahuddeen, as well as Diyala and Kirkuk, where Sunni Arabs constitute a significant proportion of the population. The protests continued unabated and became larger and larger over the coming months to a point that made most observers believe they were going to disrupt the whole country. It was obvious the protests were receiving substantial political and financial support from within and outside Iraq and this was manifested in many ways. Hundreds of tents were erected for the protesters and high-quality food was served on a daily basis. Some talked of cash being distributed among the protesters, although this is not verified by independent sources.

Radicals with fiery speeches dominated most of the platforms of the protests in all the protesting provinces. In some areas, some protesters had large quantities of sophisticated weapons, which were shown on TV. When Sunni Deputy Prime Minister Dr Salih Al-Mutleg went to his province of Anbar and tried to talk to the protesters,

he was attacked and large crowds chased him and his guards as they were trying to leave the protest ground. He believes they were trying to kill him and that he had a lucky escape (this account was related to the author by Dr Al-Mutleg himself in his home in Baghdad).

In the small town of Haweeja, which is part of Kirkuk province, the army stormed the main protests square where some armed militants were also based and this resulted in the killing of at least 60 protesters and soldiers. There was wide condemnation of the incident and the role of the army in it, but it was soon forgotten in an area that is bedevilled by ethnic, rather than sectarian, strife, and where the Arab community there relies heavily on central government support in the face of Kurdish attempts to swallow the whole province into the Kurdistan region.

The Iraqi government, in the meantime, formed several committees to deal with the demands of the protesters, which were mainly the release of prisoners, especially women, abolition of Article 4 of the penal code regarding terrorists, which they blame for the arrest of innocent people, and more equal treatment of Sunnis in state jobs and other state opportunities. It also announced the release of over 2500 prisoners and increased the salaries of the Sahwa fighters (Sunni Arabs who were recruited to fight terrorism in their areas). The government also offered other concessions, but the protests continued unabated with more vigour in the centres of three provinces, Anabar, Musil and Salauddeen, as well as in some other Sunni Arab population centres, including parts of Baghdad. Many observers believe the protests in those Sunni areas, which took a shrill sectarian and religious tone and were led by firebrand clerics, were encouraged by, and somehow linked to, the Syrian intifada against the Syrian regime, which many thought would topple Bashar Al-Assad's secular government and replace it with a Sunni Islamic one that can back up radical Iraqi Sunnis in their fight against the Shia-led government. But with dwindling international and regional support for the Syrian armed opposition, and active Iranian and Russian support for the Syrian regime, the overall picture in Syria has changed dramatically. No one now expects Bashar Al-Assad to go, after it has proven that it has support among all components of the Syrian people, including the Sunnis. The Syrian regime, despite all the odds stacked against it, managed to survive, and it wouldn't have done that with just outside help. At the same time, the armed opposition was weakened by international boycotts due to its links to Al Qaeda and the heinous crimes some of its members have committed against Syrian soldiers and civilians, especially from the Christian, Shia and Allawite sects.

The protests in Iraqi Sunni areas quietened down and almost disappeared except for Friday prayers where some fiery speeches are still delivered by radical clerics. Some sources close to Prime Minsiter Maliki say that mediation is continuing to bring back the estranged finance minister, Dr Rafi Essawi. Other Sunni leaders who supported the protests, such as parliament speaker Usama An-Nujaifi, have met with the prime minister and shared a platform with him and expressed a common stance regarding the danger of terrorist attacks facing the country. The leader of the mainly-Sunni Iraqia List, Dr Ayad Allawi, who supported the protests at the beginning, now has second thoughts about their direction after the clear sectarian tone of some of the views expressed by some of protest leaders and their demand for the establishment of a Sunni federal region, which he opposes. The latter is a point of agreement between him and his arch rival, the prime minister, Al-Maliki. Sunni Deputy Prime Minister Salih Al-Mutleg kept his post working with the prime minister and other Shia leaders. Those Sunni

ministers in education, agriculture and science and technology who boycotted the government at the beginning of the protests have gone back to their posts and seem to be working well within the government. Although many of the Sunni demands, especially the abolishing of Article 4 and the establishment of a Sunni federal region, have not been fully settled. The protests which began in December 2012 went on roaring until they were broken by force in January 2014 by the Iraqi military. A controversial Sunni MP, Ahmed Al Alwani, who was agitating the crowds with incendiary sectarian rhetoric was arrested and his brother was killed. Al Alwani is still in jail even though he was supposed to have parliamentary immunity; the military says he fired on them killing one soldier and this annulled his immunity. Indeed one soldier was killed in the operation to arrest Al Alwani's brother who was wanted by the authorities for his alleged role in violent activities.

New Threat

On 10 June 2014, a major event happened that shook the whole country and the world with it: the fall of the second Iraqi province, Al Musil, to the terror group ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). Iraqi army units in Musil melted away and the terrorists gained easy control of the city. ISIS leader, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, felt so safe that he went to the main mosque in the city and led the prayer. The whole country was shocked and confidence in the Iraqi military collapsed. The Shia religious leader, Ayatulla Ali Sistani issued a fatwa for jihad against ISIS in order to encourage people to defend the country. The arrival of ISIS in Iraq changed all priorities for the country, even politics. Sunni politicians, who used to deny the existence of ISIS, began to call for urgent action to defeat them. The fall of Musil forced a rethink and contributed to the change of prime minister and the nature of the government. Prior to 10 June, the notion of a majority government was gaining weight. But afterwards, all political blocs agreed, without the usual wrangling, to share power because if one bloc rules without the others, it is likely that those outside power will lose out and this loss may be permanent. The newly formed Al-Ibadi government has all the leaders of political blocs in it, and this is a source of strength for the government since all of them will seek to make it successful. This is in contrast to Al Maliki's government which had representatives of the blocs who were not actually decision makers and may not have been strong enough to face up to the Prime Minister. Now everyone agrees that the state must be strong enough to defend its citizens and their interests. The shock of 10 June has changed the thinking of politicians and citizens alike in Iraq.

Iraqi regime standing firm

Despite all the problems, the current Iraqi regime seems to be standing firm since it enjoys a popular base, as well as the backing of the Americans, who first set it up in 2003 after toppling the former regime militarily, and their rivals, the Iranians, who are happy to see their long-time Shia allies in power in a country that has been nothing but a headache to Iran over the years. Devolution of power to the provinces has actually made it impossible for a dictatorship to have long-lasting effect on people's lives. Over the last ten years, provincial governments have changed three times. There are now local political blocs which enjoy some independence from the central government. The existence of so many parties and political groups as well as civil society organizations

will make it very difficult if not impossible for one-party rule to prevail. One senior politician told me in October 2013 that even the prime minister, who currently holds the most power in his hand, cannot stage a *coup d'état*. The age of the military coup has long gone and democracy is here to stay.

With rising oil prices, American and Iranian support, and relative economic openness, trade liberalization, freedom of expression and relative political pluralism, Iraqi society is becoming increasingly affluent and many people hope the quasi-democratic process that has been going on since 2005 will increasingly produce more efficient and competent government as time goes by.

In the wider Arab world, the spirit of the Arab Spring is still roaring, even though it has claimed four regimes so far and the fifth is fighting for its life. It may not lead to more regime downfalls, but it is likely to lead to more reforms in all Arab countries, even the stable prosperous ones. The Arab masses, having seen the fruits of their uprisings, will not sit silent in the future. They now know they can change their governments. Governments also know that they can be changed. But one thing both the world and Arab masses have to contend with for a few more years to come is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, or 'political Islam' as it is often called, through democratic means. This phenomenon, which was not actually instrumental in bringing about the Arab Spring, has emerged to reap most of its fruits and dominate the lives of the people.

However, after three years, the Islamic trend which has dominated the Arab Spring seems to be giving way to a more practical and pragmatic politics. On 3 July 2013, the Egyptian military toppled the Egyptian elected Islamist president, Muhammed Mursi. This action by the military seems to have received a warm welcome by a large section of the Egyptian people, who have clearly been disappointed with the way in which the Islamists, and in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, ran the government. The military appointed the head of the constitutional court as an interim president, who, on his part, appointed an interim government. The new government has cracked down hard on the Muslim Brotherhood and has actually outlawed it completely. General elections were held and a new parliament was elected. Shortly afterwards, presidential elections were also held and General Abdul Fattah As-Sisi was elected overwhelmingly as president, although there was only one candidate standing against him. With the army back in power, it looks that real democracy in Egypt may take decades to be established, especially with the banning of the Brotherhood.

In contrast to Egypt where the Islamists stuck to their guns until they were toppled by the military, the Tunisian Islamic government of Prime Minister Hammadi Al Jebali resigned after failing in its mission, which Jebali himself called a 'disappointment' in an interview with the BBC published on its website. Jebali may be the only Islamist politician brought by the Arab Spring to abide by the rules of the democratic game so far, hence keeping the military at bay. In Libya, the government seems to be so weak that even the prime minister is 'kidnapped' by armed groups operating in the country. The situation there is volatile, especially with the failure of Western powers, who ousted the regime of Colonel Gaddafi by force, to support the new regime. Calls for help by Prime Minister Ali Zaidan seem to have been falling on deaf ears. Western powers are hesitant to send troops or even advisers and trainers to train the Libyan police and army to fight armed groups and militias. If they stick to their current policy in Libya, the country may descend into chaos or be divided into several tribal entities. Judging by what has happened in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and with the Islamic Syrian opposition failing to reach power, the Islamic trend, which has dominated the Arab Spring politics, seems to be giving way to a more pragmatic, rather than ideological, politics.

The Iraqi government believes that the fall of the Syrian regime would have a negative impact upon Iraq as it fears the alternative would be the ultra-orthodox Muslim Brotherhood which has a negative view of the Shia-led government in Iraq. Many Iraqi politicians and observers believe that if the Brotherhood rules in Syria, Al Qaeda may find a sanctuary there. It may use Syria to launch attacks on Iraqi targets as it has done in the past. (Al Qaeda has already done so, and the recent rise in attacks in Iraq is due to the fact that this terrorist organization has consolidated its assets and has developed a transnational two-war strategy where it is involved in deploying its resources in both countries to carry out attacks in either of them, as evidenced lately by cross-border attacks from Syria into Anbar). An orthodox Sunni regime in Syria may support extreme Sunni groups in Iraq which were somehow forced to lay down their arms and join the anti-Al Qaeda forces due to lack of funding and lack of outside support.

In fact, the security situation in Iraq has deteriorated greatly in the second half of 2013, with car bombs and suicide bombers exploding on a daily basis in the streets of the capital as well as other provinces, which, until recently, have been peaceful. Many Iraqi observers link deteriorating security in Iraq to the situation in Syria where armed groups have been working there since the beginning of the Syrian intifada in 2011.

Conclusion

Iraqis feel they were the first to rise up against dictatorship in the Arab world. Their intifada in the spring of 1991 against Saddam Hussein was, indeed, the first of its kind in the region. It was a popular uprising against a dictatorial oppressive regime. It failed because the democratic world didn't support it and chose to stand by the dictator who they thought would serve their interests better than a popular regime, which would have replaced him. However, other factors which have helped intifadas in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen to succeed, such as the spread of social media (Facebook, Twitter and email), electronic media, satellite TV and mobile phones, did not exist in 1991. In addition, a huge political change was under way in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at the same time as the Iraqi intifada, and Western efforts may have been more focused on next door neighbours than the Middle East. The Soviet Union was weak but the world was still bipolar. The world also feared Islamic movements then, and the Iraqi opposition was mainly Islamic and allied to Iran at the time, so it did not qualify for Western support. These adverse factors have actually contributed to the failure of the Iraqi intifada of 1991. Had the Iraqi intifada of March 1991 succeeded in toppling the Iraqi regime, the Arab Spring may have come much earlier.

However, change did happen in Iraq in 2003 and a democratic process came about after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Although many Iraqis feel that their democracy is not really stable and a dictatorship and religious state may finally emerge, due to the continuous violations of the constitution, restrictions imposed on public freedoms, exploitation of the judiciary in the service of the incumbent government, failure to stamp out corruption and the flawed management of state institutions, not many currently feel there is a need for an Arab Spring-type revolution in Iraq. There is a feeling of optimism after Prime Minister Al Maliki was forced to step down in mid-August 2014 and replaced by the pragmatic Haider Al-Ibadi. Al-Ibadi, who lived in Britain for over thirty years, knows what is needed for a democracy to work and is likely to promote such a culture. If his government continues, which is likely, the democratic system

will be enhanced and rival political parties will flourish since he is not likely to place hurdles in their way as his predecessor did. But the challenge posed by the ISIS and other militant groups remains a serious threat to democracy in Iraq. Although ISIS will not be able to take over any more parts of the country, attention will be focused on winning back territory from them and establishing state authority instead of strengthening democratic institutions. Al-Ibadi will need the cooperation of all political parties and blocs, especially Sunnis, who need to play their political part in persuading their communities that a democratic Iraq would serve their interests better than supporting armed groups. With the US and Britain back in Iraq fighting ISIS, Al-Ibadi is in a strong position to pursue his political and economic programmes without fear of being left alone to deal with the imminent threats of terrorism and Sunni insurgency. But he will have to work hard to win over supporters of his predecessor and other Shia skeptics who need to be reassured that his government won't be weak in the face of demands from the Kurds or the Sunnis. All things considered, Iraqi democracy is on the right track.

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Protest and Reform

The Arab Spring in Oman

James Worrall

Introduction

Early in the process of the uprisings which shook the region during the early months of 2011 it appeared that with the exception of Bahrain, the turmoil was mysteriously confined to the Republican side of the fault line which characterized the period of what has come to be known as 'the Arab Cold War' (Kerr 1972). The media rapidly got caught up in the fever of the events and there were soon predictions of major uprisings in the Monarchical States of the Gulf. At the same time, however, the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria easily overshadowed events elsewhere in the region, especially as regimes actually toppled and violence increased. This, combined with the abysmal failure of the so-called 'Day of Rage' in Saudi Arabia meant that, with the exception of the situation in Bahrain, media attention on the dynastic regimes of the Arabian Peninsula dwindled and rapidly expired. The events of Oman's Arab Spring, though, were significant in the context of the Sultanate's politics and polity. But they were also a clear warning, for those paying attention, of the potential dangers facing those states which had seemingly managed to dodge the turmoil engulfing the Middle East. The surprising neglect of the events of spring 2011 in the Sultanate, in terms of both media and academic coverage, has led to Oman being characterized as the 'Forgotten Corner' of the Arab Spring (Worrall 2012). While the Sultanate experienced minimal violence and the regime was clearly never in danger, the protests plainly exposed underlying problems and tensions in Omani society, proving that the long-term stability of dynastic regimes was not assured. This chapter argues that the Oman Spring was significant in a number of ways: as a warning sign of future potential problems for rentier states, as an indicator of key challenges for Oman and as a reminder that despite surface similarities and the impact of external dynamics, the specifics and extent of protests are ultimately down to the most local and parochial of concerns, and it is these that we must understand.

The events

The protests and sit-ins in Oman, which were the form the Arab Spring took in the Sultanate, began quite early, in fact, just days after Bin Ali had fled Tunisia for Saudi

Arabia. They begin in a small and innocuous manner but were to slowly grow over subsequent weeks to become relatively large-scale protests, which at times turned violent. Protest is rare but not unprecedented in Oman; however, the events in the wider region meant that when on 17 January 2011 around 200 people came together in Muscat to march against rising prices and corruption and to demand higher salaries, this demonstration was clearly of greater importance than the small numbers of participants would suggest. Soon after this initial protest other gatherings took place, followed by further demonstrations which began to spring up in Muscat and elsewhere. One of the leading groups behind these early protests were teachers who began from early February to protest against higher pension contributions and to demand more frequent promotions and higher housing allowances. These protests led to the closure of large numbers of schools around the country and were spread through text messaging and the internet (Worrall 2012: 99).

Perhaps the most significant development in the early days and weeks of the protests in Oman was the attempt to crystallize all the various minor demonstrations, which often had quite parochial demands, into a broader, more unified protest movement under the name of a series of Green Marches. The first of these on 8 February was the first real sign that something was happening that had potential to get out of hand. At this stage in the wider Arab Spring Mubarak had not yet fallen and it was not until 14 February that the protests spread to Bahrain. It could be said that these two events added fuel to what had already begun in Oman, but things were still building slowly at this stage. The second Green March on 18 February only attracted 400 or so protesters to its march on the main miniseries district; this protest is significant not because of the numbers but because it culminated on 23 February with the handing over of a petition to the Diwan of the Royal Court officially articulating the demands of the protesters. This is where the protests began to seem like they might go beyond expressing a vague kind of dissatisfaction and take on more explicitly political overtones, although as protests began to spread from 25 February the mass of issues raised could still seem overwhelming and were often linked to localized concerns or a general feeling of relative deprivation.

Once the protests began to spread outside of the capital area at the end of February it was clear that something potentially significant was occurring; this was especially the case when the capital of the southern province of Dhofar experienced its first protests. This march delivered a petition to the governor, addressed to the Sultan entitled 'the call to good'. These protests in Dhofar would grow in size throughout March to number more than 10,000 out of an Omani citizen population in the region of an estimated 150,000 (Ministry of Information 2013). This number clearly represents a significant proportion of the citizen population of the region and was particularly worrying considering the legacy of the attempted secessionist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

If the growth of the peaceful protests and sit-ins in Salalah was worrying, then the real concern about the future of these protests and where they may lead was not in the south but in the north, in Oman's third city and major port and industrial centre: Sohar. On Saturday, 26 February, large protests erupted in the port city demanding more employment. That evening a new phase was entered when protests took on a threatening and violent character as a crowd 500 strong blockaded shoppers into the local Lu Lu supermarket. Soon after, a protest camp was established at the town's focal point, the *Kurra Ardiyah* or Globe Roundabout, in a clear echo of what was happening in Manama's Pearl Roundabout or Cairo's Tahrir Square. On Sunday 27 February,

events escalated still further as the port was blockaded and the Lu Lu supermarket was torched and looting and arson spread to neighbouring shops. In addition, the protesters were quick to spread their attention to the governor's office and a local police station which were both set on fire, along with a number of parked vehicles (Worrall 2012: 100). Until this point protests had been tolerated; there had been no obvious impediments to people's right to express their concerns and to gather, march and protest peacefully.

This violent turn of events was unexpected and changed the nature of the protest considerably, leading to much of the wider public sympathy for the protesters for the most part evaporating and to the organization of a number of counter-demonstrations, with people expressing their disgust at the violence and their support and loyalty for the Sultan. With the use of violence, the targeting of the institutions of the state and a clear breakdown in public order it is no surprise that the response from the authorities was much more robust. Tear gas and rubber bullets were fired to disperse protests in Sohar and one death was reported from these actions.

As a response to the violence in Sohar, calls on social networking spread for a peaceful protest outside the Shura Council (Majlis) in Muscat; this was to be followed by similar sit-ins in Sur and other smaller towns. The protests were now truly nationwide but the violence in Sohar had shocked many and there was no hint that these other protests were anti-government or violent in their intentions. On Tuesday, 1 March, the army moved in on the Globe Roundabout in Sohar and cleared it of protesters, although the main industrial area remained under blockade. At this time protests remained quite large, with even official government estimates putting the figures at 10,000 in Salalah and 5000 in Sur. There is a question mark about how many of these protests had real political demands and how many were band-wagoning to see what concessions could be extracted or because the protests became an exciting, slightly transgressive social occasion. But clearly something had happened; protests on this scale in so many locations with the use of violence seen in Sohar, were unprecedented.

In March, while the sit-ins continued, a new protest dynamic became visible with strikes affecting many sectors of the economy, including the hotels, banks and the aviation sector, as well as in some of the light industries at Rusayl and Sohar. On 20 March, strikes spread to the refineries in Muscat and Salalah; it seemed that despite the violence, the Arab Spring in Oman was growing again. It also became increasingly political. For example, on 21 March a demonstration of over 7000 people handed a petition to the public prosecutor in Muscat demanding the immediate investigation of the finances of all ministers, advisers and officials. This clear politicization, aside from the occasional and very isolated incident, never led to chants demanding the downfall of the regime as elsewhere in the region. At most the chant was modified to demand the reform of the regime. Reform was generally the most extreme demand of the protesters. Indeed, it is important to note not only the existence of protests against the demonstrations and in support of the government and the Sultan, but also the often extraordinary lengths to which protesters went in order to show their loyalty to the Sultan. For example, on 1 March, protesters in Sohar issued a public statement which expressed regret for the violence and publically apologized to the Sultan for the sabotage (Worrall 2012: 106–107). This is in marked contrast to the speed with which protesters in Bahrain very quickly went from showing support for the king to demanding his overthrow and the immediate demands flowing from the crowds in Egypt and Tunisia.

Despite the overwhelming support for the Sultan, the protests clearly had potential to threaten the existing order and there were clear demands for reform of the system itself, even if not perhaps at the mass level. It is plain that the protests were not exclusively about socio-economic issues. When the various grievances are teased out and attempts are made to classify them, there are clear commonalities across the various sites of protest in Oman. The protesters showed concern for unemployment, better wages, increasing subsidies to cushion the impact of higher prices, the need to increase the ease of access to higher education and better training opportunities. They also showed anger at corruption and demanded the removal of those ministers known to be corrupt, as well as the establishment of institutional mechanisms to monitor and investigate allegations of corrupt practices. In the key petitions from Salalah, Sur and Muscat there were also a number of demands for political reform, including the granting of more powers to the Majlis, more judicial independence, making the security services more accountable and demands for the right to create trade unions and professional associations.

The very focus of the protesters' demands was a considerable advantage for the government, meaning that it had a decent enough idea what the demands were, and while eliminating the clearly unachievable, could offer responses which showed that reasonable demands would be heard and responded to. Through the simple expedient of not demanding the downfall of the regime, the protesters ensured that the political space to address some of their concerns was present.

The broad responses from the Sultanate's authorities attempted to deal with the socio-economic issues which were the basis of the protests, to make a show of dealing with corruption and finally to offer more explicitly political concessions in terms of governing structures. There were also a series of gestures to demonstrate that the channels of communication were open and that the government was willing to listen. The authorities could be criticized for their failure to react to the protests for more than a month; a more generous interpretation would say that at the same time this delay showed that they were not afraid of the protests; the delay gave them time to map out the demands and formulate a more coherent response, and, just as importantly, to coordinate their public relations response so that concessions could be properly absorbed by the population. In reality, the government's failure to react and its subsequent announcement of reforms probably falls between the two extremes. At times the reforms and concessions appeared to be rushed and came in waves; yet, at the same time, many were well targeted and the government broadly succeeded in creating an atmosphere in which it didn't appear to be on the run and in some cases even seemed to get ahead of the protests. Indeed, there was a key announcement on 17 February of a 43 per cent increase in the minimum wage for citizens working in the private sector to 200 riyals per month (Arnold 2011), which perhaps demonstrates a degree of alacrity on the part of the state.

The state's response began in earnest on 27 February with the declaration of an emergency session of the Shura Council, which quickly established a special committee to study the protesters' demands. This seemingly minor move actually sent two clear messages. The first was that the state was taking events seriously and the second that the existing institutions could work, in the sense that it increased the visibility of previous reforms and drew on the importance of the widespread respect for the tradition of s*hura*, which underpins Omani politics. This was followed by a relatively minor cabinet reshuffle. On 28 February a series of announcements were made which were designed to address the key economic grievances of the protesters. Among the most

prominent of these promises were the creation of a new unemployment benefit of 150 riyals per month, the promise to create 50,000 new jobs and the establishment of a new Public Authority for Consumer Protection to monitor prices and quality. In addition, two potentially very important political demands were seemingly met through the announcement of an inquiry to examine the possibility of granting new powers to the *Majlis ash-Shura*, as well as the removal of prosecutorial powers from the Royal Oman Police (Worrall 2012: 106–107). As the protests continued in March and April, further announcements were made and Royal Decrees issued. Some of the most important of these appeared to start to address the protesters' concerns about corruption and began with the abolition of the notoriously corrupt Ministry of National Economy and the establishment of a National Audit Committee to tackle corruption. In direct response to some of the protest's demands for more powers for the Majlis, on 13 March the Sultan announced that the body would be given legislative and regulatory powers for the first time (Vaidya 2011). It was not made clear at that instant exactly what the scope of these powers would be, but it was clearly a significant step.

The initial cabinet reshuffle at the end of February was followed by further personnel changes at the powerful Diwan of the Royal Court on 5 March and a major cabinet reshuffle on 7 March. This reshuffle saw the departure of 16 of the 29 members of the cabinet and brought in a number of those who had been elected to the Majlis in 2007. As March drew to a close, further announcements were made which led to a 50 per cent increase in some pensions, a 100 per cent increase in the Social Insurance Pension and the announcement of additional allowances for the military and security personnel. This last announcement, in particular, perhaps shows the level of government concern which had built up by this stage about the potential and seriousness of the unrest.

Overall, the Sultan's response demonstrated understanding of the main grievances and a realization that violence without concession could escalate things further. This not only demonstrates that the authorities have an awareness of their limits and value their legitimacy, but it also highlights the underlying strength of the order which has been built up since 1970. This is underpinned by the concept of *shura*, or consultation, and is demonstrated by the formal submission of petitions by protesters and the desire on the part of the government for dialogue, exemplified by the sending of ministers to discuss the main issues with the protest leaders.

The Sultan's announcements from 27 February onwards had clearly responded to some of the demands of the protesters and took the sting out of much of the protests, but towards the end of March the situation remained fluid even though the protests seemed to have reached a plateau in terms of numbers. The government at this point took its chance to apply the stick after such a conspicuous showing of the carrot. Warrants were issued for the release of troublemakers in Sohar and a small protest camp which had re-established itself at the Globe Roundabout was cleared. These arrests in Sohar sparked further protests demanding the release of those in custody; these soon turned violent and police were heavily stoned and replied with force, leading to the death of a second protester. Soon after this, the army was called in to help restore order and remained on the streets in force until 9 April. The success of this clear show of force and sustained will on the part of the authorities, along with the further announcements by the Sultan, meant that by mid April the trouble in Sohar was effectively over.

Protests, however, still continued in Salalah, Muscat, Sur and elsewhere throughout April and well into May. It appeared that this situation could continue for some time but having seen how effective a more robust response had been in Sohar and feeling

that the protests were long past their peak, on 14 May the security forces were ordered to break up the sit-in in Salalah. This created a violent reaction from the protesters and led to running battles on the streets, with the army bringing in armoured personnel carriers and escalating its use of force. The same day, the long running protest outside the Majlis in Muscat was broken up peacefully. As many of those arrested as part of these actions were released by 22 May, organizers began to call off protests, with those behind the Salalah sit-in being the first. The authorities' show of force, their concessions and the arrival of the really hot weather, coupled with the looming arrival of Ramadan, led to protests being called off, postponed for the holy month or simply losing all momentum. By early June, then, the Arab Spring in Oman was essentially over and any danger to the regime had passed.

The causes

One of the most useful ways to examine the causes of conflict is to focus on the difference and interaction between the *underlying* and *proximate* causes of dissatisfaction and conflict. Underlying causes are those which are necessary but not sufficient conditions for conflict, while proximate causes are those that accentuate these underlying causes. At this point it is important to specify that conflict does not have to mean violence. Further to this simple structure we can also identify the need to identify the immediate causes: those acts and events which trigger protest. While this framework was originally designed to explain ethnic conflict, which is clearly not applicable in the case of Oman, it still offers us a useful tool with which to briefly explore why the Sultanate experienced such unprecedented protest in 2011.

The underlying causes of conflict in the Middle East had long been identified by a number of scholars of the region, and indeed could have been pointed out by virtually anyone who had travelled in the region with their eyes and ears open, or who had read the 2007 bestselling translation of Ala al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building*. There were some who went beyond this general identification of socio-economic issues and political repression and clearly stated that certain states were ripe for revolution (Bradley 2009; Osman 2010); but overall it is widely perceived that, to quote the title of one article, 'Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring' (Gause 2011):

> The vast majority of academic specialists on the Arab world were as surprised as everyone else by the upheavals that toppled two Arab leaders last winter and that now threaten several others. It was clear that Arab regimes were deeply unpopular and faced serious demographic, economic, and political problems. Yet many academics focused on explaining what they saw as the most interesting and anomalous aspect of Arab politics: the persistence of undemocratic rulers.
>
> *(Gause 2011: 81)*

Perhaps missing the potential for protests in Oman therefore becomes understandable. If the underlying causes of the Arab Spring in places such as Egypt and Tunisia were evident to a wide range of observers, then those in Oman were much less so. Not only is Oman much more prosperous and with a far smaller population, but there were little or no obvious indications that anything was seriously wrong; indeed, the Sultanate had earned an enviable reputation as an oasis of tranquillity in a turbulent region.

In Oman's case, as evident from the previous section, the demands of the protesters were mixed; but two clear themes emerge. The first of these is a focus upon living standards and the second is a more directly political concern with corruption. The underlying causes of tension can be classified into broad groupings: structural, political, economic, and social and cultural. It is to these that we first turn. The long-term political issues revolve around a disconnect between the elites who had held cabinet posts for, in some cases, decades and the younger generations. This, coupled with difficulties in exercising proper *shura*, an overly paternalistic approach to government and the growing corruption of sections of the elite form the backbone of the underlying causes of protest. In the economic sphere the challenges are much clearer, with continuing pockets of relative poverty, real difficulties in creating sufficient private-sector jobs for a growing population who do not need to be paid for out of the government's relatively meagre resources, and an increasingly expensive lifestyle. On the socio-economic front the fraying of the quality of education and healthcare and the lack of some welfare provision represented key problems which were highlighted in the demands of the protesters. Overall, the underlying causes of protest had been present for some time and one wonders why there had not been protests of one kind or another sooner, or at the very least more pressure to continue with reforms.

The proximate causes of the protests in Oman are harder to identify with any clarity, but the impacts of the worldwide downturn, especially in terms of price rises, appear on the surface to be the most likely, although at the same time, inflation in 2011 was around 4.2 per cent whereas in 2008, when there were riots in Egypt, it had been 13.24 per cent. This discrepancy can perhaps be ascribed to a cumulative effect of higher inflation over the preceding years coupled with relatively low wages which had not kept pace, leading to people feeling like a breaking point had been reached (Worrall 2012: 104). The immediate cause for the protests was clearly the wider events in the region, which gave the perfect opportunity for these grievances to be expressed. When political space was also created for these protests in the initial weeks it also clearly encouraged greater numbers of people to get involved.

The aftermath

If the Oman Spring can be said to have essentially petered out by the end of May 2011, then it would appear that the Sultanate authorities had effectively dealt with the most significant challenge to the established order since the end of the Dhofar war in the 1970s. The aftermath of the events of spring 2011, however, have continued to show remaining underlying tensions playing out between the authorities and those with residual grievances. At this point it may be helpful to classify this dissent into two clear groupings, the first being the more 'professional' activists of whatever stripe who have continued to agitate for greater and quicker reform, and the second those who have residual issues and are becoming more interested in expressing their opinions and discussing political issues.

From the seeming end of protests in May 2011 there have been a number of further developments which indicate that tensions have not completely diminished and that there is potential for further flare-ups if the promised reforms are not properly implemented or the economic situation were to deteriorate. In late July 2011, just before the start of Ramadan, there was a small protest in Salalah of around 200 and a more significant one in Sohar, which attracted around 1000 demonstrators. The focus was on

the release of prisoners and more jobs, and in Sohar the formation of a national dialogue council was suggested (OIC 2011). In late June the first trials of those arrested in earlier months began and included custodial sentences for some of those involved in the protests in March, such as the imposition of jail terms of three months to three years for those involved in arson and protests in Ibri at the height of the troubles (*Gulf News* 2011). While clearly those involved in violence and arson needed to receive proper punishment, there still remained the danger that further protests could be sparked, which is why, perhaps at the same time, charges were dropped and relatively modest fines were imposed on others who had become caught up in events.

With the end of Ramadan in September there were concerns that the protests could start to gather pace again but there were very few incidents, the most serious of which was on 10 October when around 100 teachers gathered to protest outside the office of the directorate general for education in Rostaq. Around 12 arrests were made and police used tear gas and batons to break up the protest (*Muscat Daily* 2011). The next significant protests did not occur until February 2012 when students who had received poor exam results went on the rampage demanding that they be given higher grades; this led to incidences of violence and arson of schools (*Times of Oman* 2012). The likelihood of this occurring in Oman before the protests of 2011 was minimal; but in the new atmosphere it appears that those with grievances are much more willing to use these kinds of tactics to express themselves. How this fits with the wider protests and whether it represents a threat to the regime is open to interpretation. On the one hand, clearly something has changed and there is a danger that this new generation could be more volatile; on the other, it appears to simply be a case of taking advantage of a wider situation in the hope of securing an illegitimate demand. Either way, though, it shows the danger of escalation and opportunism if the main causes of protest are not dealt with. More serious developments began in May 2012 with strikes for better pay and conditions hitting the oil fields in the desert near Fahud (*Economist* 2012). When attempting to visit these demonstrations on 31 May, two human rights and democracy activists and a prominent lawyer were arrested and detained (Salisbury 2012). This led to protests in which their release and further reform were demanded outside police headquarters in Muscat on 11 June. At this protest a further 30 or so protesters were detained; this was the third such protest about prisoners in the same location and represents a continuing problem which could easily escalate in the future (Reuters 2012a).

While protests have overall remained quite limited, some of the real changes have evolved in the virtual sphere where Omanis have begun to discuss political issues in online chatrooms, such as *As-Sablat al-Arab* and using Facebook and twitter. This has led to a certain cat and mouse game, with police and prosecutors taking a harder view of where the red lines are in such discussions. Indeed, what we have been increasingly witnessing is government attempts to prevent future protest by clamping down on dissent and creating a certain atmosphere of fear designed to deter people from becoming involved and to maintain a relatively tight grip over those who are committed activists. This had led to prosecutions for such crimes as 'illegal gatherings' and 'disrespectful speech' leading to terms of up to a year in prison (Reuters 2012b).

At the same time, other signs are somewhat more encouraging, with two elections having taken place since the events of spring 2011. The Majlis election of 15 October 2011 had long been scheduled but came at a useful time for the authorities. The election saw positive increases in participation with the number registered to vote rising from 388,009 in 2007 to 520,000 and the number of candidates rising from 700 to 1300

and turnout increasing from 63 per cent in 2007 to 76 per cent in 2011 (Al Jazeera 2011). In addition, campaigning was also much more vibrant and open than in the previous election. Clearly, Omanis believe that the elections are legitimate and will have the ability to effect change, especially when combined with the increasing number of cabinet members drawn from the Majlis. This is also reflected in the fact that three leaders of the protests were elected (Kerr 2011).

The municipal elections of 22 December 2012 were also an important further development since they were the first of their kind in Oman and could play an important role in encouraging people to get involved in the difficulties and compromises of day-to-day politics. Turnout was a healthy 50 per cent from a lower registration base of around 448,000 potential voters (Vaidya 2012). Overall, these two elections represent quite important strides forward for Oman in terms of political reform but it remains too early to tell what their impact will be in the longer term.

The future

Looking back at the events of spring 2011, where the Omani state managed to avoid the type of unrest seen in much of the rest of the Arab world, it would initially appear that while interesting, little has really changed in the Sultanate. There were some cosmetic reforms made, more money was spent and the people expressed their grievances; but largely things remained the same. Indeed, a cursory analysis would back up these impressions: reforms do seem unclear and somewhat fractured and perhaps the state was fortunate to have experienced these traumas during a period of high oil prices and after new gas fields and export markets had come online.

Yet, at the same time, it is also possible to think a little deeper about the impact of the Arab Spring on the Sultanate and to argue that something more significant has taken place which will have longer-term impacts. At the very least the protests have got people talking about and engaging with politics in new ways and in greater depth than ever before. Oman has essentially been on a path of development even before the official start of *an-nadha* in 1970; but in the political sphere, in particular, that path has been a slower one than that of economic development. The past decade saw limited progress on this front; the protests have led to some serious steps forward down this path. We should clearly not expect full representative democracy just yet, but the granting of some legislative and regulatory powers to the Majlis is significant and will become increasingly important as the boundaries of these new powers are tested. The willingness of the population to engage with these newly reinvigorated structures will be key; but the increased voting in the 2011 Majlis elections is a good sign. Reform needs to be a conversation between the authorities and the population.

This does not mean that Oman does not face real problems, however; clearly the response of opening the funding floodgates is unsustainable, as is the increase in employees in the public sector. There was already a problem with the lack of Omanis employed in the private sector, which is doubly undermined by the increase in the minimum wage for nationals in the private sector. This seems to send a strong anti-business message while the increase in public-sector employment feeds in to the existing bias among the population towards government work with its higher pay, absolute job security and the low expectations placed on productivity. Clearly none of this is helping Oman down the road of gradual economic diversification and increasing local entrepreneurship.

The arrests and detention of bloggers and other activists, as well as the rowing back on the freedom of speech and assembly guaranteed in the Basic Law, is also a real concern. This is partly because activists represent the vanguard of reform and are to some extent out of step with much of Omani society as a whole, which is content for reforms to come slowly. This dynamic is important because it keeps reform moving ahead but acts as a brake to prevent it from going too quickly for the mass of the population to feel comfortable with (see for example Teller 2012).

Qaboos has achieved great things and remains universally popular, but as he ages it is important for his people to begin to take more responsibility and to be more realistic about what can be achieved. Facing up to the harsh realities of a world uncushioned by Baba Qaboos's presence, with a new unknown Sultan on the throne, who may not have the same qualities and will certainly not have the same legitimacy, is a vital coming development in Oman's political progress. The realization that the Sultan is neither infallible nor immortal is an important step forward for Oman; and, to some extent, the unrest represents a degree of fear about what comes next when he leaves the scene. If these protests succeed in securing a less personalized, more institutionalized system with more checks and balances, then the transition to the period after Qaboos will hold fewer uncertainties for Omanis.

It is too early to be sure whether the Arab Spring in Oman will lead to more realism and significant changes for the better; but the initial signs are, on balance, relatively positive. If all the events of spring 2011 do is to encourage Omanis to confront the challenges they face, think more about the future, cherish their stability and see the importance of engaging in more *shura*, then the nation's prospects will have benefitted from the Arab Spring.

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37

Palestine and the Wind of Arab Revolution

Tahani Mustafa

Introduction

While the Arab populations of surrounding states erupted in protest, demanding 'freedom, dignity and social justice', Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) have remained quiescent. This is all the more puzzling as historically, Palestinians have proven that they have a formidable capacity for popular mobilization and resistance.

However, resistance is not self-constituted. Instead, it is the product of a dialectic relationship that sees power producing its own vulnerabilities. In order to explain why grievances can be channelled into forceful and purposeful collective action, it is important to analyse its interaction with the surrounding mechanisms of control and how these create and structure opportunities for resistance. Scrutinizing the way in which authoritarianism functions in the oPt provides a more fruitful line of enquiry into understanding why Palestinians, trapped between direct occupation and an oppressive authority, have failed to play a dramatic part in the Arab Spring. Three factors within this framework – the Israeli occupation, divisive intra-Palestinian politics with its significant dependence on coercive apparatuses of control, and the unaltered core tenets governing the dynamics of geopolitics in the region – will be the foci of analysis. They will be used to illuminate the structural/institutional impediments that have effectively crippled domestic space as a sphere in which alternative discourses could be promulgated and the means for the general population to challenge the dominance of, or hold to account, the elite group created by the new post-Oslo Palestinian political structures.

Contextualizing the Arab Spring in Palestine

One of the region's first encounters with mass mobilization and popular resistance in recent history came in 1987 in what became known as the *Intifada*. It was an unprecedented civil disobedience movement calling for social and political emancipation against a foreign occupier. Its spirit and motivation resonated with the populations of surrounding Arab states, whose perceptions of their own local authorities represented some degree of foreignness. Many of these Arab regimes were seen as puppets of foreign

patrons, unresponsive to the needs of their populace. Importantly, it epitomized 'hope that people-power resistance might one day enable disaffected Arabs to achieve their objectives of justice, equality and emancipation' (Sadiki 2000: 83).

The symbolic significance of the *Intifada* is echoed today in the use of the term to reference the recent Arab uprisings. Like the 1987 *Intifada*, the Arab uprisings were not provoked by a singular event nor were they an expression of new grievances. In an act of spontaneity, unity erupted across divides, bringing to the fore a mass movement with peaceful methods. This time Tunisia was its trendsetter, but the domino effect that swept so many regimes before it has not reached the oPt.

This does not imply that resistance in the oPt is defunct today. There are many cases of ordinary Palestinians committed to the cause of their own liberation through activism in various civic forms all over the West Bank and in Gaza (Leech 2012: 18). This chapter seeks to explain why despite this history of defiance, the oPt today has not undergone the same level of mass mobilization experienced in surrounding states. This failure resides, in large part, in the structural impediments Palestinians find arrayed against them. Thus, despite grievances being ubiquitous, rebellion is not (Dalacoura 2012: 67).

Neve Gordon asserts that the means of control ranging from coercive mechanisms to various institutions of governance are used not only to circumscribe social behaviour, but also to generate resistance against the status quo (Gordon 2008: 3). Put simply, power generates its own resistance. Accordingly, this dialectic relationship is precisely why it is important to look at its interaction with the surrounding mechanisms of control that permit the opportunities for resistance as we try to explain why grievances can be channelled into forceful and purposeful collective action. This assertion is given further weight by the fact that despite the recent Arab uprisings that witnessed simultaneous popular revolts expressing discontent and frustration, each case had precipitated different outcomes.

At first glance, problems that contributed to unrest in the other Arab countries are widely perceived to exist to a lesser or greater degree in the oPt. These include limited economic and professional opportunities, rampant corruption, as well as a nepotistic, unaccountable and repressive authoritarian regime. While in Tunisia the self-immolation of Mohammed Buazizi in 2010 shocked and galvanized a nation into protest, a similar act by a teenager in the Gaza Strip, Ehab Abu Nada (Barzak 2012), who set himself on fire in protest to economic hardship, failed to spur a similar reaction despite two other separate similar attempts in the West Bank and Israel (Kaufman 2012).

The end of 2012 saw the worsening economic crisis in the oPt spur on a series of protests in the West Bank from Hebron in the south, to Jenin in the north (Abdullah 2012). The economic crisis was attributed, in part, to the rising cost of basic commodities and the Palestinian National Authority's (PA's) ever expanding structural deficit, US $1.3 billion so far (Leech and Quzmar 2012). These protests saw President Mahmoud Abbas at the Arab League summit openly proclaim, 'the Palestine Spring has begun, and we are with what the people say and demand' (Abdullah 2012). The *Middle East Monitor* at the time claimed that it was not a matter of *if* the Palestine Spring would happen but *when*. However, they ended with a sombre note that the outcome of a Palestine Spring would not be determined in Ramallah but in Tel Aviv, where constant preoccupation with security will see Israel come to the rescue of Abbas and his 'cronies', if anything were to significantly threaten the status quo (Abdullah 2012). This was reaffirmed by Israel's subsequent proposal for financial assistance to prevent the PA

from falling into an economic and political abyss (Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies 2012). Israeli occupation is, thus, the definitive structural impediment to any change the Arab Spring can deliver in Palestine.

Managing the occupation: Usurping public space and mobility

A growing body of literature deals with the genealogy of Israeli occupation. This section, however, is concerned specifically with those aspects that have severely restricted public space in the oPt and can account for the lack of widespread popular mobilization and agitation against the backdrop of recent regional events. Israel's monopoly over both movement and violence has been a pivotal 'mechanism for containing resistance to Zionist colonization as it re-engineered the demographics of occupied Palestinian space' (Parsons 2010: 63).

Physical public space is not only a place where people protest, but where they extend their protest beyond the immediate circle. It is this epidemic potential that threatens the authorities (Bayat 2003: 12). This assumption provides a useful starting point in understanding the relationship between space and political mobilization. The specific aim of civil planning in Palestine is extending domination and re-inscribing it in space. This reinforces what Halper terms Israel's 'matrix of control', which among other things requires the physical occupation of territory to render the opponent immobile, controlling every aspect of Palestinian lives in the oPt (Gordon 2008: 179).

Settlements and their settlers serve as a physical apparatus that not only participates in the confiscation of land but also functions as a civilian apparatus to monitor and police the Palestinian population. They act as seemingly omniscient fortresses operating from numerous locations in the West Bank. Their distribution, layout and architectural design down to the positioning of windows serve the purpose of military domination by supervising, controlling and, consequently, rendering the occupied inhabitants visible and docile (Gordon 2008: 138).

This is further compounded by the regime of ID cards, checkpoints, by-pass roads, permits (conditional on the applicant having no political background) and the separation barrier, serving the dual purpose of seizing land and separating or circumscribing the activities of the Palestinian inhabitants. Movement is restricted for those who wish to exit the oPt as well as those who wish to move within it. The current geographical terrain of the oPt is comprised of numerous enclaves, each consisting of Palestinian population centres effectively separated from each other. Gaza, on the other hand, despite possessing territorial continuity, has been transformed into an open-air prison with no sovereignty over its land, sea or air space.

The reorganization of power and space has been deliberately designed to prevent the kind of mass mobilization the Arab Spring embodies. For Israel, and to some extent the PA, this is far too reminiscent of the last two, unwanted, *intifadas*. Consequently, Palestine has nothing like Egypt's Tahrir Square, whose physical space became the symbolic site of popular power. *Al Manara* circle in Ramallah does not compare.

In the aftermath of both the first and second *Intifadas*, there was a deliberate intensification of the systems of control over physical space that sought to contain the possibility of another large scale uprising. The full extent of this was felt by the inhabitants when whole villages and towns were garrisoned off. Curfews and internal closures significantly hindered the regimentation of daily life, increasing unemployment and having a detrimental effect on economic development (Zureik et al 2010: 10). This was

intensified after the second *Intifada,* which saw more violent forms of resistance against the occupation than the first. This has serious implications for a cost-benefit analysis when it comes to future popular mobilization. In any case, for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, the dominant political reality is an occupation that enables Israel to continue to impose its own realties and continues to perpetuate their material suffering. Continued Israeli incursions, settlement activity and mobility restrictions serve as constant daily reminders that they are not free agents as they do not exercise absolute control over their own movement and space.

Israel's apparatuses of control are substantially underwritten by its monopoly of violence and coercion. The outbreak of the two *intifadas* had two specific results. First, they unmasked and politicized the occupation that each era of Israeli rule has tried to normalize (Gordon 2008: 168); and, second, Israel's reaction demonstrated not Israeli strength but Palestinian weakness. Nothing made this clearer than the violent destruction of the PA's security infrastructure and the siege of their leadership.

The significance of this according to one activist has been to prevent wide-scale support for any form of political activism and explains the low turnout in the recent demonstrations. It is not that people are not politicized to an extent, but that the ongoing psychological and physical aspects of the occupation and previously failed attempts at resistance have made many think twice before engaging in any further political activism, especially without a clear strategy that offers real hope for change. Importantly, the reduced visibility of the occupation has made it even harder to channel discontent at the crux of the problem, with the PA's institutional presence serving as a buffer between the occupier and the occupied. In this way the occupation, particularly after Oslo, has served to strip Palestinians of their agency and instead transformed them into captives of the occupation (Quzmar 2012). The Oslo Peace Accords have come to symbolize a reduction in popular power and collective agency.

Oslo was the product of an Israeli strategy of finding a more resourceful mechanism to contain anti-colonial resistance. The historical significance of the accords for its optimists was that it set in motion a process that led to the formation of a Palestinian self-governing authority and a number of Palestinian state-like institutions in the West bank and Gaza Strip. The largest and most resource intensive of these was Palestinian security establishment (Lia 2007: 1). The Israeli incentive when entering Oslo was to transform the PLO into a set of institutional arrangements that would function as Israel's proxy in policing the Palestinians, thereby guaranteeing Israeli security (Gordon 2008: 169) by effectively criminalizing anti-colonial resistance.

This precludes any possibility for real democratic government given the contradictory position the PA found itself in, where it was tasked with proscribing anti-colonial resistance while under colonial domination. This is reaffirmed by the following statement by a former US ambassador to Israel: 'The Israelis came to us and said basically; Arafat's job is to clean up Gaza. The assumption was that he would get control of all these terrorists who'd been operating in these areas for decades' (Call and Wyeth 2008: 226). Oslo thus represented another era in the evolving structure of Israeli occupation. It was not, nor should it be seen as, an instrument of decolonization but the framework that changed the means of Israeli control: one that obscures Israel's power by making the exercise of it appear to be empowering rather than dominating.

Importantly, the effective monopoly of violence was never devolved, but remained with the occupier. This was illustrated when Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) failed to quell anti-colonial resistance during the first decade of their inception.

They soon incurred the full force of colonial military power which reactivated to devastate the PA (Zureik et al 2010: 368). Another demonstration of colonial might came in 2008. Gaza was collectively reminded of the fearsome repercussions of a confrontation with Zionism (Zureik et al 2010: 368) after the electoral victory of Hamas, an organization that prioritized anti-colonial resistance. Significantly, in both cases, social grievances triggered anti-colonial resistance, as the Israeli occupation was seen to be the main obstacle to social emancipation. This has been echoed once again in current protests.

The economic protests that targeted the PA and its policies toward the end of 2012 led *The Economist* to the assumption that whereas Israel's land expropriation and sporadic bouts of violence have failed to rouse the Palestinians to a mass insurrection, the cost of petrol and bread might yet succeed (*Economist* 2012: 49). However, as Neve Gordon asserts, it would be rash to think that Palestinian protesters are blaming the PA. Palestinians are aware that the West Bank's fragmentation, and the strangling effects of the Paris Protocols that effectively made the Palestinian economy a fledgling sub-economy of Israel, are part and parcel of the Oslo Accords. 'It consequently seems reasonable to assume that the protestors are blaming [Prime Minister] Fayyad for continuing to play the Oslo game' (Gordon 2012).

Therefore, if anything is to be learned from recent protests, it is the total failure of the 'liberal peace' as the model for conflict resolution favoured by the international community. This top-down approach is premised on the idea that the key to establishing peace between Israel and Palestine is the prior establishment in Palestine of the liberal state. These institutional, social and economic arrangements include the rule of law, democratic institutions and a liberal economy (Mullin 2010: 529). If anything, developments since the outset of the Oslo process, culminating in today's current predicament, highlight that social emancipation is impossible without political emancipation. While history illustrates that it is not impossible to create the institutions of a state under occupation (as the Jewish community itself did in Palestine under the British mandate), this requires the colonial power to give its colonized subjects space and freedom to manoeuvre (Frisch 2008: 4). The Palestinians in Israel have been denied this freedom. Their presence is seen as destabilizing. In this context, Israel's security comes at the price of Palestinian freedom. Consequently, Israeli occupation has significantly reduced public space both politically and physically for any potential mobilization either against the occupation or the PA.

Intra-Palestinian politics: Hijacking the political

The most thorough characterization of the PA is what Henry and Springborg describe as 'a bully praetorian republic'. It is a system of governance in which the power of ruling elites rests almost exclusively on the operations of the military/security/party apparatus (Henry and Springborg 2001: 134). These elites are not drawn from a particular identifiable societal group but instead are separated from the general population through the exclusivity of their access to and dependence on the institutions of the regime. These regimes rely heavily on coercion, particularly in times of crisis; but they are also dependent on co-optation and rent-seeking arrangements. These two factors have played out in both polities in the West Bank and Gaza, and have significantly contracted the political sphere.

Disregard for the rule of law intensified after 2007 as the PA was more determined than ever to gain the monopoly over force after it lost its control over Gaza. With

Israeli, US and European Union support, the PA was provided with funding and training of its repressive security apparatus. Therefore, Abbas was provided with the coercive means to clamp down on opponents in an attempt to undermine the democratically elected government of Hamas, which was perceived as a target of the 'war on terror' in the oPt, and had come to monopolize control over the Strip. The PASF employed a myriad of tactics and practices that violated existing laws and internationally recognised human rights. They have also enforced a number of executive orders that curtail freedom of expression in public spaces and cracks down protests against Israel (Leech 2012: 17).

In asserting its control over Gaza, Hamas behaved the same way to repress any challenge to its power. This created the current situation in both the West Bank and Gaza, where the security sector has effectively become the mediator between the population and the regime. These developments have been pivotal in creating a widespread culture of fear with regards to political activity.

A recent report conducted by the Norwegian Peace Building Resource Centre, investigating the lack of engagement of Palestine's youth, found those that had a background of political activism had either been arrested, had job opportunities closed to them, or came to believe that resistance is futile in achieving change against the structures of repression (Christophersen et al 2012: 3). Consequently, they were more likely to refrain from political activism. Others resorted to less dangerous cultural and social activism while more critical voices chose political exit rather than confrontation with the authorities (Christophersen et al 2012: 18).

This climate of fear was further illustrated in February 2011 at a demonstration held in the West Bank in solidarity with Egypt. It went ahead despite the regime's use of aggressive tactics via intimidation and arrests to break up earlier attempts to hold anti-Mubarak demonstrations in Ramallah. That these protests were allowed at all was only because they were not directed at the PA or its policies. Similarly, coercion was once again overtly utilized during protests in July 2012. Protesters campaigned against prospective negotiations between the PA's unelected president and Israeli vice prime minister, Shaul Mofaz. That the meeting was supposed to take place in the Muqata'a, where Yasser Arafat had been besieged for almost two years by the Israeli military under the command of the then General Shaul Mofaz Israel's chief of staff (and later defence minister), was extremely provocative (Leech and Quzmar 2012). Palestinian youth organized in Ramallah under the banner of 'Palestinians for Dignity'. In response, the PASF reacted with brute force that left several protesters badly injured. This spurred further protests the following day against police brutality, in which again protesters were confronted by a brigade of PA Security Forces in uniform, Mukhabarat (secret police) and plainclothes police officers infiltrating the crowd (Leech and Quzmar 2012). Owing to the highly politicized atmosphere, protesters have kept their demands geared towards unity, reconciliation and the rejuvenation of the PLO's executive body, the Palestinian National Council. It is considered far more legitimate and representative of the Palestinians as a people, both inside and outside the territories, than the institutions of the PA. These demands are perceived as less threatening to both Hamas and Fatah than a call for outright regime change. The idea is that elections will offer a more viable means for changing the status quo (Silver 2011).

Palestinian politics has never been homogenous. However, with the 'self-rule' agreement of Oslo, factional hostilities became more divisive since there was something more tangible to fight about: namely, the (non-)state structures that offer access to

power, position and wealth (Roy 1995: 250). The consequence of this mutually exclusive competition, which has fostered mutual hostility and suspicion between the PA (Al-Hayat 2012: 1) and the *de facto* government of Hamas, who present each other as 'usurpers of legitimacy' (Al-Aqsa 2012), has been the significant repression of political dissent and contestation. This has come at a detrimental cost to the democratic institutions and public space that effectively saw Hamas and Fatah usurp the political scene, thwarting alternative forms of mobilization and agitation for alternative progressive ideas. Whatever the 'puzzle' to reconciliation and unity (*Maan News* 2012), this fierce and suffocating competition between political elites over the leadership of the national movement has severely hindered grassroots activism, the backbone of the first, and, to some extent, the second *Intifada.*

Co-optation has been another crucial factor in accounting for the ongoing political situation. It has helped to forge the structural/institutional relationships that prevent various groups who would otherwise be the basis of mobilization against the regime. The security sector is revealing example in this case. The PASF is a highly partisan institution. While the security sector is a vital coercive tool, it is also a dependent one. The security services, in particular, provide one of the few job opportunities for Palestinians, especially those without higher education. In both territories this sector consumes over 40 per cent of state budget (Sayigh 2011: 20). This keeps a large segment dependent on the system, given the lack of more viable alternatives, and this has effectively created a situation where political demobilization is achieved through institutionalization.

The possibility of uncertainty is frightening, even more so under occupation. The current surge of protests, driven by the slowly growing political engagement of youth movements, is unlikely to succeed for this reason. They have no clear strategy and these tools of resistance have been tried before. Palestinians have tried a range of means to channel their grievances, from civic mass protests and strikes to armed resistance and even elections. Despite all of this, they find themselves no closer to national liberation but sandwiched between occupation and an oppressive authority that itself has limited room for manoeuvre. It is, then, not any wonder why many have chosen to remain quiescent. The activists of today do not take action over new grievances. In 2006 these grievances were expressed in the most civic and democratic way possible, through the ballot box. That election resulted in a rare event in the region's political history: an opposition party become a government. Scholars and commentators have stressed this owed less to the religiosity of society than to the opportunity for protest it presented. It was a protest against Fatah's corruption, the failure of the peace process and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions throughout the territories. However, this civic expression of resistance resulted in an attempted coup by Fatah, Israel and its Western supporters against what was the legitimate and democratically elected representative of the population. While democratization in the oPt has been tenuous at best, this attempted coup against an elected government severely inhibited, if not destroyed further prospects for democratization. Instead, it led to spread of excessive forms of authoritarianism and human rights violations in the oPt to the extent that one commentator could note 'whether in the West Bank or Gaza, human rights are bestowed or withheld as a matter of discretion rather than obligation' (Sayigh 2011: 21).

On the international level, Fatah currently faces an uncertain political environment amid the changing regional landscape. Egypt has been an important mediator in the conflict in the last three decades. Abbas lost a close political ally with the ouster of

Hosni Mubarak, and the PA leadership views the Muslim Brotherhood and the ascendancy of political Islam in the region with suspicion (Asharq Al-Aawsat 2012). This was illustrated in the detention of Hamas members in the West Bank, following the meeting between Hamas delegation and the Egyptian Prime Minister, Hisham Kandil, in Cairo (Al Jazeera 2012). This made the PA's insistence that these arrests carried no political motive, highly suspect.

Fatah has come to resemble many of the old revolutionary republics, which sold out their revolutionary credentials to align themselves to the dominant imperial powers they previously contested, making them highly susceptible to the insecurities of the Arab Spring. Consequently, Fatah is not only an obstacle to a potential Palestinian Spring, but its potential victim. Its main priority is to sustain the status quo and its power base. Uncertainty has led the PA to pursue contradictory political and diplomatic measures that have seen it move from the announcement of the completion of a two-year state building project in the West Bank, to an inconclusive national reconciliation process with Hamas, to an international diplomatic state recognition campaign in the UN (Khalidi 2012).

One noticeable impact of the Arab Spring has been its impact upon Hamas, which like the region as a whole has found itself at a crossroads and has consequently been forced to rethink its *raison d'être*. This is apparent in light of the paradigm shift the regional landscape is experiencing with the unexpected legitimization of a specific branch of political Islam advocated by Islamist ruling parties in Egypt and the Arab Maghreb, whose revolutionary zeal has been significantly diluted.

'When the uprisings began, Hamas rejoiced at what it saw as the reshuffling of a regional deck that had been stacked against it' (ICG 2012: 1). Hamas is trying to present itself and Palestinian liberation as integral elements in this by publicly supporting the uprisings (Al-Quds 2012) and utilizing the discourse and rhetoric of the Arab Spring. This is illustrated by Hamas's Prime Minister Ismail Haniya' stating that 'the Arab Spring continues until all the pillars of persecution and tyranny fall in order for the *umma* (Islamic nation) to regain the initiative and complete all other outstanding issues, the most important of which is the liberation of all Palestine, Jerusalem and al-Aqsa' (Al-Akhbar 2012).

At an ideological level, Hamas sees vindication in its Islamist politics, having continually portrayed itself as the *amal al-umma* (hope of the Islamic nation). This has been translated at the structural level where it is no longer isolated in the regional diplomatic arena. By denouncing the Syrian regime's brutal suppression against the opposition, Hamas has pulled away from 'the axis of resistance' against Israel, consisting of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. Although it has potentially lost an important political and financial patron in Iran, its alliances with the wider region have been redrawn (Al-Quds 2012). Thus, for the first time in its history as a governing body, Hamas's prime minister embarked on two regional tours to previously hostile states, including Tunisia, Egypt and Qatar. Simultaneously, it has been able to secure financial support from these states as well as receiving invitations to house its leadership, formerly in Damascus (ICG 2012: 39).

However, Hamas is also finding that many of the old rules still apply, such as the continued Egyptian refusal to fully open the Rafah crossing and supplying Gaza with fuel and electricity. Moreover, the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has reinstated a regime hostile to it. Importantly, Abbas is still considered the legitimate Palestinian representative (ICG 2012: 39).

The movement is divided over how best to profit from the regional upheaval. Unity in the movement has prevailed at the cost of withholding any strategic decisions and remaining inactive (ICG 2012: 39). In relation to reconciliation, fear among the internal leadership that Fatah could gain a foothold in Gaza through elections is further fuelled by doubts that Fatah is willing to make the changes in the PA or PLO required to accommodate Hamas. Essentially, the debate comes down to a turf war.

Hamas is a very pragmatic political institution. One need only look at how it has evolved since its inception. It is very much aware of and responsive to its surrounding environment, and its experience of holding power will shape its future course. At the same time it has, as Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010: 7) remind us, a very clear sense of identity and knows how to adapt its image without altering its underlying fundamentals (Radio Kairouan 2012). In this sense, any substantial change in policy from Hamas will also require the other actors, namely the US and Israel, to rethink their own discourse and policy, which has so far been premised on the weakening of Hamas.

Geopolitics: Continuity amid change?

In May 2011, the Obama administration outlined its position on the altered political landscape in the region, namely that in the following address by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to the State Department:

> Our choices also reflect other interests in the region with a real impact on Americans' lives – including our fight against al-Qaida, defense of our allies, and a secure supply of energy. Over time, a more democratic Middle East and North Africa can provide a more sustainable basis for addressing all three of those challenges. But there will be times when not all of our interests align. As a country with many complex interests, we'll always have to walk and chew gum at the same time.
>
> *(Keiswetter 2012)*

In other words, the impact of the uprisings on US policy will be complex but will not profoundly alter its parameters.

In the same month, both Obama and Netanyahu made public declarations on Israeli–Palestinian peace. The proposals were a recycled version of old approaches to the conflict. The US advocated a 'viable Palestine and a secure Israel', declaring that the borders of the two states should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps. Obama proposed the resumption of negotiations focusing on borders and security, not addressing refugees and Jerusalem.

Netanyahu once again emphasized Israel's security needs by emphasizing that Palestinians must recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and insisted on the continued construction of settlements. He stressed that Israel must have a military presence along the Jordan River; that refugee resettlement must be only in Palestine, not in Israel; and that Jerusalem would never be divided (Keiswetter 2012).

This development or, rather, lack thereof supports the assumption that the Israel/Palestine conflict continues to be subject to the dynamics of *realpoltik* that is very much based on interests of the more powerful actors in the international system. In this sense, the Arab Spring has failed to challenge this underlying rationale.

The fact that the Obama administration has failed to take advantage of the changing political climate in the region is further illustrated in the diplomatic theatre. The US

opposition to the 2011 Palestinian bid for UN membership and its subsequent termination of funds to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after it voted to admit Palestine as a member state (Bhungalia 2012), have stood as stark affirmations of its avoidance of anything that could tip the balance between Israel and Palestine. This was reaffirmed once again in November 2012 when the US and Israeli governments strongly contested the awarding of non-member observer status in the UN to Palestine.

The human rights discourse appropriated by the popular movements in the Arab Spring found a large international audience receptive to its political and civic demands. However, Palestinian demands for political and social emancipation are by no means outside the recognized and supposedly 'universal' rights framework. However, these concepts cannot be understood in isolation from their context. The Israel–Palestine issue is still a highly politicized one, and any alteration of the status quo is seen as potentially destabilizing to Israel's dominance and her allies' regional order. This is reaffirmed by the fact that international pressure led to humanitarian intervention in Libya and isolation of Mubarak in Egypt. However, despite the brutality with which civic protests in the oPt were repressed, these events hardly received any international media coverage and did not provoke any of the major powers to condemn the PA's brutality. To temper the optimism generated by those that saw the beginning of the end of post-colonialism in the Arab Spring, one needs only to look at the unchanging politics of the Israel/Palestine conflict to see its continuing structural presence.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to offer a comprehensive consideration of the structural impediments that have severely undermined Palestine's opportunity for its own spring among a population whose very identity has been shaped by a history of defiance. Structural obstacles, ranging from Israeli occupation and internal political division at the micro level to the dynamics of geopolitics at the macro level, have severely hindered popular mobilization. The Arab Spring has thus far failed to bring about a situation that could throw these factors out of sync. However, its long-term impact upon Palestine has yet to be discerned. Although Palestine has not played a dramatic part in the Arab Spring, it is nonetheless a key part of Arab politics, and if Palestinian history and recent events in the region have taught us anything, it is that things can change in an instant.

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38

Turkey and the Arab Uprisings

Derya Göçer Akder and Marc Herzog

Introduction

Turkey can be considered a significant non-Arab actor in the recent 'Arab uprisings' because of its increasing political and economic activities in the Middle East since the end of Cold War and, more particularly, since the election of the conservative, centre-right Justice and Development Party (AKP).[1] In the two years since the onset of the Arab upheavals, the labelling of the process itself has become controversial. 'Arab Spring' as well as 'Arab Awakening' seem to be the most popular labels in academic, media and policy circles. In this chapter, we use the term 'Arab uprisings' to differentiate between terms of analysis and terms of practice. Turkish policy-makers and the mainstream Turkish media have embraced the term 'Spring', with all its 'positive' connotations, as a term of practice. Turkey was eager to use its 'soft power' (Altunışık 2008) in the new processes of democratization in the expectation of augmenting its regional influence, though this soft power has mostly not lived up to the expectations of Turkish foreign policy actors.

Turkey's response to the process in the region is full of U-turns and contradictions (Öniş 2012), most notably Turkey's shifting position with regard to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) intervention in Libya and to the Syrian regime. These contradictions are relevant to foreign policy analysis. They were also noted by different social actors in the region. A good example is the letter written by Iran's Green Movement to Turkish President Abdullah Gül demanding that Turkey adopt the same attitude towards Iranian Prime Minister Ahmedinejad that it had towards Hosni Mubarak.[2] At the time of the post-election uprisings in Iran during the summer of 2009, the Turkish president and prime minister were the first leaders to call and congratulate Ahmedinejad on his victory, and did not act on behalf 'of the demands of the Iranian people' or demand a 'peaceful transition in Iran'. Moreover, this contradictory policy towards regional uprisings enjoys uncertain credibility inside Turkey. The Arab uprisings have not only highlighted what some argue to be qualities inherent in the Turkish democratic model but have also exposed the shortcomings of this model for Turkey's own democratization. This became especially evident during the nationwide

civic protests that erupted in June 2013, initially in response to the governmental redevelopment plans for Istanbul's city centre but quickly focusing on the increasing authoritarianism of the current government.

This chapter, after a brief discussion of democracy and transitions, will look at the actors in the Turkish discourse and, second, at the actual discourse about and policies towards the Arab uprisings, especially with regard to issues of democratization. It will then examine the discourses on the 'Turkish model' that are often invoked in regional and international debates. The specific constituents of these discourses will be outlined as well as the various international, regional and Turkish domestic actors that are identified with them. Lastly, the current stage of Turkey's own democratization and its contrasts with the discourses on the model are summarized. Taking the criticisms directed at democratization studies as its inspiration, this chapter will argue that Turkey's response, just as with democratization studies in general, falls short by not understanding the recent bottom-up dynamics[3] in the Arab world. Despite its claims to understand the region from within, Turkey has, at heart, acted to secure its security, economic and general strategic interests.

Turkey's response should be seen as part of its new attitude towards the Middle East in the last decade and its longer-term position on the international scene, especially in relation to the European Union and US, both of which have been crucial in resolving Turkey's dilemmas with regard to Libya and Syria. In that sense, Turkey has shown great adaptability regarding the behaviour of extra-regional actors such as the US and NATO and regional actors such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, but less adaptability with regard to the social and economic demands of the Arab grassroots. At the international level, the Turkish case is not unique, as other actors, including the US and Iran, have also shown selective support by privileging some parts of the Arab world and some Arab publics over others.

Turkey's response, however, diverges from the regional response when we distinguish who in Turkey is producing knowledge on the Middle East and who is formulating the response. Unlike in the Arab countries, where the upheavals were diffused in various ways to different segments of society and both authoritarian learning (Heydemann and Leenders 2011) and popular inspiration have been evident, Turkish civil society at large has remained relatively unaffected by this diffusion. It is at the state and the political party level that we see the most reaction. This also includes influential groups such as business associations and think-tanks. It is also these top-level actors that dominate the flow of information on the Arab uprisings to the Turkish public.

The conceptual marriage of the two key issues, Islam and democracy, in official Turkish discourse seems to set Turkey apart. It also sets Turkey apart from the Iranian state (Sen 2012), which seems only to have focused on the rise of Islamists in the post-upheaval elections, while ignoring the bids at 'peaceful transition' in the contentious politics of the Arab world.

Framing the Turkish response within democratization debates

As Robert Jervis has remarked, one cannot be surprised by the absence of a theory. Thus, we will trace relevant themes from recent debates on democratization theory, such as the importance afforded not only to fact-finding but also knowledge production and the inclusion of social movements in these debates. As Valbjørn (2012: 30) argues with respect to the democratization and post-democratization debates, 'there has been a too narrow focus on the regime level'. From this, a key issue springs up regarding

Turkey and the Arab Spring: are foreign policy-makers, in this case high-level Turkish politicians, as guilty as social scientists in focusing too narrowly on the regime level in formulating their responses to what are essentially bottom-up social movements?

It is argued that the Arab upheavals point to the re-politicization and revitalization of segments of society deemed to be apolitical, such as the youth, women and workers (Tadros 2012). It has also been recently argued that 'one limitation shared across disciplinary boundaries by most studies of democracy is the failure to approach democracy as a category of action, i.e., not merely a neutral category' (Teti 2012: 7). According to the post-positivist democratization framework, the lines between policy and knowledge-production are blurred. The question of whether the failure to view democracy as a category of action and confusing it with mere top-down 'peaceful transition' is also shared by the policy-makers then becomes crucial. We trace the Turkish discourse on the Arab Spring from this angle. This is important, since the main axes of Turkish democratization debates, such as Islamization, civil–military relations and the Kurdish question, increasingly form part of the regional debates. Thus, the Turkish response to Arab democratization also has a bearing on Turkish democratization as outlined in the second half of this chapter.

Turkey's discourse on the Arab uprisings and democratization

Actors

As with any discourse, it is crucial to identify who is producing Turkey's narratives on the Arab uprisings and how many discourses are in play. During 2011 and 2012, the key policy-makers within the AKP, including Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu, seem to have been the leading actors in Turkey's mainstream discourse and another dominant discourse has yet to emerge. We return to their narrative later and provide a short chronological appendix outlining the development of their discourse.

In terms of other Turkish political actors, we briefly survey political parties of various stripes. The parliamentary proceedings[4] reveal that the main opposition party, the centre-left Republican People's Party (CHP), attempted to counter the AKP discourse, especially after Turkey's change of policy towards Syria. CHP members of parliament representing the cities bordering on Syria are adamant in their criticism of current policy. However, due to the CHP's general ineffectiveness and AKP's dominance over Turkish mainstream media and the flow of information abroad, these criticisms lie buried in the parliamentary record. One notable CHP public declaration occurred when its leader, Kılıçdaroğlu, declared both Erdoğan and Assad to blame for the violence in Syria and charged that supplying arms to opposition forces was not helping a democratic transition.[5] Although the pro-Kurdish Freedom and Democracy Party (BDP) could have produced an alternative discourse due to the close links between the PKK (the armed Kurdish organization) and PYD (the main Kurdish organization in Syria), it has failed to develop a coherent response in the past two years. As of spring 2013, new negotiations between the Turkish government and the Kurdish movement will probably lead to a new Kurdish discourse on Syria's Kurds, but it has yet to be fully formulated. The Turkish left has also produced a critical discourse. The Communist party refused to countenance the term Arab Spring and pronounced that the Arab peoples' legitimate demands have been manipulated by the US and its allies to restore an imperialist order in the region.[6] The party did not deny the popular character of the

uprisings but emphasised the interventions by external powers, including Turkey. The Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) used the same argument, but adopted a slightly different tone. It is worth noting that both these parties have daily newspapers and online news portals that represent one of the few independent news sources outside the mainstream media.[7] A significant segment of Turkey's population, the Anatolian Alawite community, is not represented by a specific party but mostly supports the social democrats. This community opposes Turkey's response to the Arab uprisings, especially in Syria, and has been critical of Prime Minister Erdoğan's comments on Syria's Alawites as revealing the long-known discrimination against Turkey's Alawite community.[8]

In general, the opposition has emphasized how the government has used the Syrian conflict to muzzle the media, mostly by preventing journalists and civil society actors from going to towns near the Syrian border. Again, it was the opposition that tried to draw attention to the rapidly changing domestic dynamics in the Arab countries affected by the upheavals, as opposed to the AKP, which focused only on regime change, even inviting newly elected Arab leaders to its own congress. On the other hand, the opposition discourse has generally focused on Syria and less so on the rest of the region.

The discourse

The AKP's discourse on the Arab uprisings was formulated in the general context of Turkey's 'historic duties' and 'zero problems with neighbours' in the region, and within the framework of foreign policy devised by Ahmet Davutoğlu.[9] This framework had led to deep collaboration between Turkey and Arab leaders, personal friendships and business deals. However, when the Tunisian uprisings erupted, Turkey's policy became 'unsustainable' (Altunışık and Alessandri 2012). As Altunışık and Alessandri emphasize, the initial positive response to the Arab uprisings was by rhetorically framing them as 'peaceful transition'. Turkey could use its own experience of transition over the preceding decade as a form of soft power. This transition was generally initiated and seen through by the AKP's leadership, with little regard for civil society actors or other branches of power. In that sense, the transition was state-led by an elected party rather than a bottom-up social transformation by grassroots organizations, as seems to be the case in Tunisia and Egypt, where unions, youth organizations and professional associations, among others, have been involved in the protests.

In our opinion, Turkey's framing of the Arab uprisings as a similar 'peaceful transition' is an example of its focus on 'regime level' as opposed to radical transformations at the societal level. The 'peaceful transition' rhetoric is, as outlined later, inapplicable to the Syrian case and was inadequate in relation to Egypt's ongoing post-election clashes between Muslim Brotherhood and a heterogeneous opposition. Notwithstanding later regional and extra-regional interventions, the Arab uprisings started as bottom-up struggles: ignoring that dynamic is proving costly to the new regimes in Tunisia and Egypt as well as to foreign actors. As Goldberg (2013) argues, 'Egypt is by no means a country engaged in a democratic transition', and neither is Syria or Libya. Syria is in embroiled in a civil war in which external actors are deeply involved; Libya is engaged in violent conflict; while Egypt is polarized between Muslim Brotherhood and significant – and not necessarily secularist – segments of the 'lower middle and working classes'. Turkey, as argued above, might share some of the fallacies of democratization theorists, above all the focus on regime level. Another reason for the fallacy is projecting Turkey's perceived polarization between civil and military, Islamic and secular

on to these other geographies, ignoring other conflicts and contradictions in these societies, a fallacy sometimes shared by political elite, media and academia alike.

Turkey's transition discourse could be sustained about Egypt for a short time, as Turkey could discern parallels in the rising Muslim Brotherhood as well as in the Egyptians' struggle against military authority. Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel were also a significant factor here. During Erdoğan's Arab Spring tour, he was dubbed by the Turkish media as the star of the Arab street. Indeed, Egypt was one of the countries where opinion polls in recent years showed that people viewed Turkey as 'a model country'. However, Turkey's interventions in Syria, as well as other factors, have seen its popularity as a 'model country' drop across the region (Akgün and Gündoğar 2012: 20).

Still, it was Turkey's response to the Libyan situation, and even more to the Syrian, that underlined the unsustainable elements in the AKP's attitude and caused internal strife at home. Erdoğan's acceptance of a human rights award from Gaddafi in 2010 and his close personal connections with Assad seemed to validate growing anxieties about the increasingly authoritarian character of the AKP leadership. Indeed, at the beginning of 2011, just months after Erdoğan had accepted the Gaddafi award, Turkey's foreign ministry tried to protect Turkish corporate investments in Libya. In negotiations with European leaders as late as April 2011, Erdoğan wanted to play the 'mediating' role in a 'peaceful transition'. This resulted in anti-Turkish demonstrations among some of the armed groups in Benghazi opposed to Gaddafi (Kellner and Djalili 2013: 87). Erdoğan then called for Gaddafi's resignation, three months after Mubarak's fall in May 2011. Following Gaddafi's overthrow, Turkey moved decisively to secure its influence in the new Libya by training the police, offering donations and through official visits, which always included large groups of businessmen.[10] In fact, in Libya, Turkey is using what Kirişc (2012) has described as the economic and trade-related channel of transnational relations, and has matched its discourse accordingly.

Syria has proven to be more complicated for Turkey both in terms of managing day-to-day relations during the initial months and in framing an appropriate discourse and response. The AKP leadership initially calculated they had far more leverage in Syria than in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.[11] Syria was a neighbour with which there were many economic partnerships and good top-level relations. Indeed, detailed reform proposals were drafted revealing 'Erdoğan's sympathy for the Muslim Brothers' when he proposed that they be allocated 'a quarter or even a third of the seats' in a newly formed Syrian cabinet (Ilgıt and Davis 2013: 2).

This mediating role proved unsuccessful, despite the AKP leadership's proactive insistence. Turkey then shifted towards outright rejection of the Syrian regime, redefined the Syrian question as part of Turkey's internal affairs (August 2011) and proceeded to involve itself to an unprecedented degree in Syria.[12] Since the summer of 2011, Turkey has changed from the rhetoric of 'peaceful transition' involving incorporation of the Muslim Brotherhood, to supporting armed opposition groups along its borders. In particular, it has supported the Free Syrian Army group and acknowledged the Syrian National Council as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian opposition.

This change of attitude has been matched by the government's intense pressure on opposition and media with regard to the Syrian issue. The government stopped the planned visit by CHP members of parliament (MPs) to a refugee camp in the south, has censored reporting from the region and has suppressed anti-war demonstrations in border towns using force.[13] Negotiations with the Syrian opposition as well as regional

and extra-regional powers were mostly conducted behind closed doors. This has led to further speculation about Turkey's role in the Syrian conflict, with Prime Minister Erdoğan exacerbating tensions by using discriminatory language towards the Alawites or by accusing Assad of playing the Kurdish card. These moves have 'domesticated' the Syrian situation and Turkish discourse is increasingly oriented towards securitization rather than democratization. Of course, Turkey's response to Syria has also been shaped by its international relations, a subject beyond the scope of this chapter.

Discourses on the 'Turkish model' and their congruence with reality

We now focus on discourses on an available Turkish 'model' or 'source of inspiration' among different actors and audiences in the decade preceding the Arab uprisings, as well as during and after them. As already noted, the 'model' discourse informed the AKP discourse on the Arab uprisings. Discourses about a Turkish model have been a longstanding element in Turkey's soft power engagement within the wider Middle East. A 2012 poll taken across the region showed that over half the respondents still thought of Turkey as a regional model, although this perception was losing ground (Akgün and Gündoğar 2012: 20). Turkey's relevance to regional debates on political governance and democratization has, however, remained disputed. Within the context of the Arab uprisings, for instance, some state that Turkey's 'model-hood' has either lost relevance, as domestic actors and democracy activists in the region focus more on affairs in their own backyards (Abou-El-Fadl 2012: 153), or that it cannot be transplanted since it is the product of particular socio-political and historical developments (Cavdar 2006: 497). Ülgen (2011: 28), however, argues that discussions about Turkey in the present climate are not confined to academic debate and have a direct rather than just theoretical bearing on what is happening.

In this context, a range of experiences, processes and practices associated with the Turkish case is often suggested as reference points and perspectives for the Middle East and the broader Muslim world. Since the AKP's 2002 election victory, Turkey has taken on an unprecedentedly multidimensional presence in the region, akin almost to a 'rediscovery' (Önis 2012: 55). It is during this period that the discourse on the 'Turkish model' re-emerged. Even before, in the 1990s, such discourse had arisen in relation to Central Asia's newly independent countries; but its influence was limited. In the Middle East, the 'model' has multiple overlapping dimensions that engage with the learning, knowledge-making and diffusion-oriented aspects of democratization that can be regionally circulated. Its many different variants have almost turned the 'Turkish model' into a floating signifier attaching itself to a plurality of interpretations. For one, the model discourse has been constituted in part over the past decade by the image of a dynamic, fast-growing and export-oriented economy, on the one hand, and of an assertive, regionally engaged foreign policy, on the other, able to operate autonomously of Western agendas while also enjoying Western respect. As noted above, this autonomy was and is still being challenged in the context of the Libyan intervention and Syrian conflict. However, regarding democratization within the Middle East, it is the aspects of the model related to democratic governance and domestic politics that are most relevant.

It is argued that Turkey's history offers a rich and multifaceted seam of stories that can be tapped as experiences relevant to wider processes of democratic learning. Among these are themes of religious moderation and integration within plural democracy; the

balance between religion, secularity and modernity in state and society; the reconciliation and inclusion of Muslim politics within electoral democracy; and the primacy of the ballot box for political contestation. In Egypt especially, the trajectory of Turkey's civil–military relations and political demilitarization in the past decade has received widespread attention (Cook 2007). Turkey's record of parliamentary democracy since 1946, despite periodic breakdowns, can anchor these elements within an image of democratic longevity.

These themes have been emphasized in varying degree by various actors in the Middle East and beyond that have utilized the discourse on the Turkish model. In the international sphere, this includes the US and other major Western powers, especially in the post-September 11 2001 period. The Bush administration particularly promoted the Turkish experience within its 'War on Terror' framework and the Greater Middle East and the Broader Middle East initiatives. Apart from citing Turkey as an example, the US democracy-promotion toolkit also highlighted the AKP as a case study of the 'good Islamists'. Turkey's 2003 parliamentary decision to deny the US use of its territory to invade Iraq and the subsequent damage to bilateral relations muted the US praise of Turkey as a model for a while. However, the Obama administration has resumed this emphasis in recent years. It seems that negotiating with 'good Islamists' will remain on the US agenda in the post-Arab uprisings context, seemingly upholding the AKP's relevance in the new Middle East.

Within Turkey itself, the ruling AKP has monopolized the model narrative and used it as a source of symbolic capital in domestic, regional and international politics to validate the party's policies, approaches and modes of governance. Particular themes that are stressed relate to the demilitarization of the public sphere and the primacy of electoral politics. Furthermore, the AKP's articulation of Turkey's model-hood has focused on the country's growing economy in the past decade and promotes the role of regional trade, investment and economic interdependence. At the party's September 2012 conference, which was attended by Mohammed Morsi, Khalid Meschal and other international dignitaries, Erdoğan openly declared that Turkey's proclaimed success under the AKP affirmed its status as exemplar (*örnek-ülke*) not only to the Middle East but also the broader Muslim world (AKP 2012). The model discourse has also been widely used in party literature and government pronouncements in recent years.

The regional emergence and diffusion of the 'Turkish model' discourse accelerated with the rapid deterioration of Turkish–Israeli relations following the 2008 invasion of Gaza. Turkey's 'model-hood' has and continues to be invoked by a multiplicity of Middle Eastern actors. In particular, moderate Islamist parties such as Tunisia's Al-Nahdha or Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party refer to it. They see the AKP as a role model and point to its experience as illustrating instances of electoral success; pragmatic learning, policy- and decision-making; and positive governance relevant to their own democratic aspirations. Al-Nahdha's Rachid Gannouchi described the AKP as 'the best model I can think of' (Yinanç 2011) and Tariq Ramadan (2011: 41) argued that Turkey under the AKP could be seen as a 'democratic template' for others. In this interpretation of the 'Turkish model', the focus relates to the perceived success of the AKP, as a moderate, Muslim–Democrat party, in gaining legitimacy and inclusion within the wider framework of electoral democracy. Regarding these discussions, the next section briefly reflects on the particular realities of contemporary Turkey – in contrast to the elements of the model discourse – relevant to current discussions of democratization in the Middle East.

Indisputably, Turkey's image as 'military democracy,' in which the armed forces' regular interventions in the political process were seen as legitimate and constrained the space for electoral, civilian politics, may be fading into practical irrelevance. Significant processes of institutional demilitarization in recent years have strengthened civilian politics and electoral alternation as the main locus of political interest articulation and representation. This has been accompanied by the gradual emergence of a more consolidated, multi-vocal and pluralistic civil society, with wider inter-regional links and connections. However, ironically, while held up as a particular reference point within the affective geography of the Arab uprisings, the direction of Turkey's political development in recent years raises urgent concerns about the state of its civilian democracy. Multiple sites of democratic regression and de-liberalization are weakening democratic consolidation and prompting comparisons with present trends towards electoral and populist authoritarianism in Russia.

One can point to the increased use of arbitrary state power as a tool where the ruling government is acquiring a cross-institutional, hegemonic hold on the body politic. This has coincided with growing pressures on freedom of the press and of expression, and other civil liberties and rights. Turkey's current position as the world's top jailer of journalists in recent years is one indication of this.[14] Large-scale trials concerning sinister hidden networks in the state bureaucracy, the military and intelligence services are also increasingly seen as a means of intimidating and weakening the political opposition. These various concerns were perfectly encapsulated by the government's heavy-handed treatment and police repression of the civil protests which flared up in June 2013, resulting in almost 8,000 injuries, thousands of detentions and at least five deaths (Radikal 2013). This harsher climate has exacerbated polarization in Turkish society along several cleavages, which could significantly hinder further democratic reform. For instance, the flagship project of drafting a new constitution to replace the current one, written under military rule in 1982, has hardly made headway in past years due to lack of agreement among the political class on key themes and subjects. Notably, the widespread oppression of Kurdish civil and political movements, such as the closure of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Turkey party (DTP) in 2009, has contributed to the violent escalation of the Kurdish conflict in recent years. In a 14-month period up to September 2012, fighting between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK claimed at least 700 lives (International Crisis Group 2012: 35).

The multiple crises of domestic democratic governance have weakened Turkey's ability to pursue the development of pluralist democratic spaces within the state and within wider society. These observations highlight the need for critical distance in viewing how Turkey has been framed within various model discourses and for examining the complex nature of the country's politics on its own terms. As Ülgen (2011: 28–29) comments, it is clear that the persuasiveness of the Turkish experience's relevance for other settings of democratic learning has suffered from these tensions and setbacks. The harsher climate of democratic regression and populist authoritarianism could render the Turkish model irrelevant or reduce it to a fragmentary and contradictory narrative. The more the model rhetoric is invoked and used to promote Turkey as a noteworthy 'source of inspiration', the more its disjuncture with contemporary realities may deter and disappoint observers. More importantly, the widening gap between democratic rhetoric and semi-democratic reality could also disseminate other, more harmful messages – for instance, that half-way, hybrid electoral authoritarianism is a sufficient aspiration, needing no further improvement.

Moreover, Turkey's engagement with the political geography of the Arab uprisings has been by no means unidirectional: there are risks that the dynamics, experiences and examples of the uprisings could affect it in turn. As previously stated, the continuing civil war in neighbouring Syria has exposed ethnic and sectarian fractures between various communities within the Turkish body politic. As noted, the mainstream political debate between government and opposition has involved sectarian discourses focused on the Alawite community. Furthermore, Syria's civil war has strengthened the regional position of the Kurds. The ongoing peace diplomacy between the Turkish government, PKK and Kurdish civil political movement since late 2011 may well have been influenced by the need to prevent a spill-over of the Syrian conflict into south-eastern Turkey and to avoid wider regional unrest and conflagration.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the main actors in Turkey's discourse on the Arab uprisings of recent years, the changes and contradictions within that discourse, and how this discourse has interacted with existing Turkish model discourses. Specifically, the chapter has firstly emphasized the selective nature of Turkey's response towards the Arab uprisings, its support for some countries but not others (including the 2009 Iranian uprisings), as well as its change of course in terms of interacting with the Arab world's fallen and challenged leaders. We have shown that Turkey was eager to tap into the 'soft power' it thought it had accumulated since the AKP's electoral rise in 2002 to navigate the Middle East in the transition period. However, both soft power and alleged autonomy from the West reached their limits sooner rather than later, and Turkey faced the consequences of its focus on regime change. Turkey's leaders may have guidance to spare for the mainstream Islamist parties that have won the elections in the Arab geography, but they have much less soft power in the ongoing internal clashes between the newly elected regimes and the broad and heterogeneous opposition in Tunisia, Egypt and Bahrain. Thus, the chapter recognizes Turkey's importance for the Arab uprisings, but also acknowledges its limitations, especially given that this process is one of action and social movement instead of peaceful regime change/transition.

Secondly, the chapter has stressed the disparities between model discourse and the increasingly hard-to-ignore realities of Turkey's own democratic practices. The myth of moderate Islamists holding the key to social peace and unity in a secular democracy is challenged by the daily struggles of journalists, students and political activists. The AKP's increased resort to prosecution and censorship also challenges this myth. Having involved itself in Syria's struggles, with their strong sectarian elements, Turkey's regional engagement will deepen as these sectarian issues become more urgent within Turkey itself. The drafting of a new constitution and presumed change to a presidential system are increasingly discussed within the framework of the Kurdish issue and Syrian situation. Turkey is currently trying to secure more international cooperation on Syria, especially from the US. If this collaboration materialises, Turkey will play an important role in post-war Syria, but Syria will also play a huge role in Turkey's own path, especially in terms of the Kurdish issue. The Arab uprisings may not have diffused to Turkey through the burgeoning social movements, but the new political conflicts in the region have made their way into Turkey's transition towards increasing authoritarianism.

Notes

1 On Turkey's engagement with its regional neighbours, see Kirişci (2012).
2 Bianet, 14 February 2011. Available at http://bianet.org/bianet/dunya/127893-iran-yesil-hareketinden-cumhurbaskani-gule mektup, accessed March 2013.
3 On these dynamics, see the excellent volume by Beinin and Vairel (2011).
4 To access the parliamentary discussions on Syria and the Middle East in general, a good start is Davutoğlu's speeches and the responses given to him. Available at http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/genel_kurul.konusmaci_tutanak?pkonusmacisicil=6648&pdonem=24, accessed 11 March 2013.
5 CHP website, 9 October 2012, http://www.chp.org.tr/?p=88375.
6 See http://mlam.tkp.org.tr/makaleler/arap-dunyasi-ve-orta-dogudaki-gelismelere-dair, accessed February 2013.
7 See http://haber.sol.org.tr/, http://www.birgun.net/.
8 Erdoğan accused the Alawites of siding with Assad simply because they belong to the same sect (7 September 2012). Available at http://www.birgun.net/actuels_index.php?news_code=1347005197&year=2012&month=09&day=07, accessed March 2013.
He later argued that the Alawites are not a religion, do not have a define place within Islam and that their lifestyle does not follow in the footsteps of Ali (22 February 2013). Available at http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=radikaldetayv3&articleid=1122494&categoryid=78.
9 For the most recent defence of this framework, see Davutoğlu (2013).
10 A total of 804 Libyans graduated from a Turkish police school in spring 2013. See http://www.dha.com.tr/libyali-polisler-mezun-oldu_430064.html, accessed 4 April 2013.
11 For a background on Turkey–Syrian relation, see Altunışık and Tür (2006).
12 Erdoğan: 'We do not see the Syrian situation as a foreign affairs matter. It is an internal affairs issue for us.' See http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/suriye-meselesi-bizim-ic-meselemizdir/11521, accessed 1 April 2013.
13 See http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/21303936.asp and http://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/hatayda-turkiye-suriye-kardestir-diyenlere-polis-saldiriyor-halk-direniyor-haberi, accessed 1 April 2013.
14 The 2012 report of the Committee to Protect Journalists, an international organization that focuses on press freedom, stated that the number of jailed journalists in Turkey surpasses that of Iran, Eritrea and China. Committee to Protect Journalists. 2012. *Turkey's Press Freedom Crisis*, p6.

Chronology of Turkey's responses to the Arab uprisings

1 February 2011: PM Erdoğan calls for the resignation of Mubarak: 'We are all mortal, Mubarak.'
21 February 2011: Turkish foreign minister visits Tunisia.
March 2011: Erdoğan opposes military intervention in Libya.
3 March 2011: President Gül visits Cairo and is the first head of state to do so after the fall of Mubarak: 'We are experienced in transitions and are ready to help.'
18 March 2011: 'Every leader that is deaf to the demands of society will sooner or later fall to the winds of change.' Erdoğan refers to Gaddafi.
19 March 2011: Turkey is not invited to the Paris summit on the Libyan situation.
24 March 2011: The Turkish parliament approves Turkey's military participation in operations in Libya. This includes supporting the no-fly zone.
June 2011: AKP is re-elected for a second time.
July 2011: Turkey recognizes the Transitional National Council in Libya.
12 August 2011: Erdoğan still hopes that Syrian regime will reform.
13–17 September 2011: Prime Minister Erdoğan visits Egypt, Libya and Tunisia during an 'Arab Spring tour' and is accompanied by 280 businessmen.
October 2011: Davutoğlu meets with the Syrian National Council that has been established in Istanbul.
25 November 2011: Davutoğlu agrees to join economic sanctions against Syria if Assad refuses ultimatum of Arab Council.

22 June 2012: A Turkish airforce jet is shot down near the Turkish-Syrian border.
10 October 2012: Turkish F-16s intercept a Syrian Air jet from Moscow and force it to land.
19 October 2012: Foreign Minister Davutoğlu calls for 'direct humanitarian intervention' in Syria.
April 2013: Syrian refugees in Turkey total more than 293,000.

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39

Turkey

A Model for Continuity or Change?

Cengiz Günay

Arab uprisings … Ottoman and Turkish historical links

Despite regional, cultural and historical differences, the attempt to catch up with Western modernity is a common constant in the history of the Middle East. Modernity in this context does not refer to a precise concept. It can be perceived as a whole range of phenomena that accompany the spread of capitalism outside its native Europe (Zubaida 2011a: 2). Nor does modernity only define a process, but also a period, which began at the end of the 18th century and which continues today (Bayly 2004: 26). In the context of the Middle East, modernization attained the character of a top-down political process that was pursued by state elites and implemented through state institutions. Modernization implied the adoption of Western conceptions, norms, rules and ways of doing things, and was inevitably accompanied by the gradual 'disembedding' of religion from social institutions and practices. Secularization did not refer to the weakness of belief and observance, but to the structural and institutional separation of social spheres from religion and religious authorities (Zubaida 2011a: 3). In the Ottoman Empire, modernization was introduced by Sultan Selim III in 1792 under the title of New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*). In light of a degeneration of the patrimonial Ottoman system, this military and administrative reform programme had the goal of re-establishing state authority on the model of European statehood. Reforms entailed the creation of a new army, new educational institutions, and the introduction of new bureaucratic methods, rules and norms modelled on the Westphalian territorial state. The reforms implied the gradual departure from absolutist patrimonialism and changed the configuration of the ruling elites. While the representatives of the traditional institutions such as the *ulama* and the Janissaries lost power and status, a new bureaucratic and military elite, trained in modern Western sciences and often fluent in French and English, gained influence and set the course of further modernization.

Large parts of the Middle East were introduced to modern forms of administration and law by Ottoman reforms in the course of the 19th century. The *Tanzimat* reforms, for instance, introduced the Arab provinces with land law, administration, conscription,

civil law and public education (Tripp 2007: 14). Tripp emphasizes the 'reconquest' of the three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul; 'this was no longer a matter of choice, of willed engagement or disengagement: the modern state, with all its techniques of persuasion and compulsion, its retinue of committed servants, its opportunistic cam followers and its overall ethos had come to the Arab lands' (Tripp 2007: 14, 15). The reforms strengthened the authority of the centre and its grip on society. The state became more effective, more coordinated, more visible and more tangible. The tax collector, the gendarme, the judge and other representatives of the central state authority became more feared then ever (Zürcher 2004: 207).

The army as the first institution to be reformed became a motor for further modernization. In the post-colonial era, in most countries of the region, the military became a key actor in shaping the process of nation-building. While the Turkish army is one of the few examples where the military withdrew to the barracks and handed power over to civilians, most of the coups set the beginning of authoritarian rule. The 'military regimes' that emerged from the 1950s on in the Arab world adopted socio-economic reforms that can be framed as what Gramsci calls 'revolutions from above' (Ayubi 2001: 259). These regimes embarked on radically transforming the modes and methods of mobilization and distribution through social engineering (Ayubi 2001: 196). The populist–corporatist modernization policies (Ayubi 2001) of the authoritarian regimes not only favoured the growth of a highly centralized bureaucratic apparatus, but also strengthened the powers of the ministerial elites in the centre.

The Arab revolutions removed the authoritarian leaders, but they have not been able to remove the authoritarian structures and the paternalistic self-understanding integral to state authority. Egypt and Tunisia are two examples where most of the authoritarian state apparatuses and their methods have endured the 'revolutions'. In his interpretation of the French Revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville points out the continuities between the revolutionary and the ancient regime. De Tocqueville highlights that 'a great many procedures employed by the revolutionary government had their precedents and examples in measures taken with regard to the common people during the last two centuries of the monarchy' and that 'the old regime provided the revolution with several of its patterns' (Bayart 2001: 285). At the same time, he saw the French Revolution increasing the powers and rights of the public authority. 'If centralization did not perish in the revolution, it was because in itself it was the beginning of that revolution and its emblem.' The revolution was not concerned to destroy, but to convert power (Bayart 2001: 285).

Similarly, the Arab revolutions did not remove the massive state apparatuses and the overly inflated security sectors or the so-called 'deep state'; most of these structures remained intact. In the case of Egypt, after President Mubarak's resignation, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) quickly sought to isolate reformist and revolutionary societal forces by forging a tacit interest pact with Islamist forces as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists that helped to maintain most of the structures. The post-revolutionary processes played in the hands of established political groups and marginalized non-institutionalized protest movements that demanded comprehensive state reform. The democratically elected Islamist post-revolutionary governments have been concerned with power consolidation against the 'deep state' by converting the power of the centralized state rather than destroying or deconstructing it. At large, in most Arab Spring countries, authoritarian state structures, a legacy of modernization policies, have continued to exist.

In the discursive framework of the post-September 11 2001 era, Turkey has often been highlighted as a model for political reforms in the Arab world. Arguments brought forward have mainly built on images of Turkey as a vivid example of the compatibility of Islam and democracy and as a counter-thesis to radical Islam. The discourse revolved mainly on how Turkey *is*, or how *it is perceived*, and less on what it *does* (Ülgen 2011). The revolts of the Arab Spring revived these debates. With reference to Huntington's assumption that 'democratization in one country encourages democratization in other countries' and that demonstration effects are 'strongest among countries that are geographically proximate and culturally similar' (Huntington 1991: 102), proponents of the 'model debate' pointed at comprehensive democratic reforms during the first term of Turkey's ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) (Kahraman 2001: 707). The AKP became the face of the Turkish model. The party itself emerged from the Islamist movement and is a produce of Turkey's neoliberal transition initiated in the 1980s. Its members' response to the challenges of a globalized market induced de-ideologization and a more 'pragmatic' approach to policy-making.

With the AKP's growing authoritarian and less compromising and reformist strategy, the number of those who have propagated Turkey as a model for democratic reform dwindled. Instead of being a model for state reform and democratic transformation, Turkey should be examined as an example for the continuity and endurance of authoritarian structures that originate from top-down modernization policies.

From this perspective, Turkey has never experienced a 'Revolutionary Moment'. Ottoman reforms, Kemalist secularization policies, transition to a multiparty system and democratic reforms in view of European Union membership were not the result of popular demands, but decisions taken by the state elites. The state elites were hardly motivated by social or societal questions, but they focused on the welfare of the state and remained limited to legal amendments. Although the reforms altered the form and composition of institutions or legal procedures, they hardly changed the authoritarian self-understanding of the state or induce any structural breaks. In short, transition to multiparty politics hardly touched on the authoritarian and paternalistic character of the Turkish state.

In the following section, I argue that the resilience and continuity of the paternalism and a bureaucratic state tradition, as a legacy of state-led modernization policies, makes Turkey into an interesting case of reference from the perspective of the transitions in the Arab world.

Turkey's paternalistic state tradition

From the early days of Turkish statehood, Turkish state tradition has been defined by the recognition of the state's absolute right to legislate on public matters (İnalcık in Heper 1985: 17). Traditionally, the state (*devlet*) has been seen and sanctified as the guarantor for the welfare of the religious community and often equated with the nation or the homeland. Despite its Islamic mission born out of its frontier position at the borderland between Islam and Christianity, in practice, the Ottoman state had never been a purely Islamic state. It rather combined elements of Islamic state tradition with the tradition of the Turkic step empires and Byzantine absolutism. From the early days of their reign on, Ottoman rulers had eliminated any potentials of a feudal class or hereditary aristocracy. Absolute authority was bundled at the palace apparatus in the capital. The elites in the centre owed their status, power and wealth to the state. In

Ottoman–Turkish state tradition, the state was considered as a separate entity, with its own ruling class aloof from society. The elite's devotion to the state entailed the willingness to sacrifice personal interests to that of the state. The ability of the individual to identify his own aim with that of the state found its expression in the common saying '*Allah din-ü devlete zeval vermesin*' (God protect religion and state) (Mardin 2000: 106).

The Ottoman Sultans ruled in a patrimonial way. Power and sovereignty emanated from the Sultan's household. 'The state was his household; the subjects his retainers' (Lapidus 2002: 260). The role of the sultan on the top of the state was reproduced on many micro-levels. This did not imply a formal paradigm, but was rather reflected by informal patron–client relations at all levels. The organization of power the sultan represented at top of the hierarchy was inscribed into the governors, officials, and all the way down to the family structure (Reynolds 1996). Informalism also enabled a more flexible way of ruling where different regions, social and religious groups were governed according to different rules. Whereas in the classical period of the Ottoman Empire 'difference' had been a given and accepted as such, and nothing demanded different groups to merge into one, this changed in time. As a consequence of modernization 'difference' came to be seen as a challenge to unity and stability (Reynolds 1996). The struggle for 'sameness' replaced a more flexible and pragmatic Ottoman ruling of the classical period. It was accompanied by growing hostility towards any individual demands coming from within society. Class specific, regional, ethnic or religious demands became to be perceived as a danger to national unity and security (Bianchi 1984: 91).

The founders of the republic represented a radical wing of the reformist elites within the army and the bureaucracy. Mustafa Kemal and his supporters were determined to make a clear break with the Ottoman past and to rebuild Turkey on the model of a modern secular nation state. The newly founded Turkish Republic (1923) was to become a part of Western civilization. The republican elites replaced the Ottoman's reference to the community of believers with the concept of the Turkish nation (*Türk ulusu*); but the idea that the cohesion and welfare of the community was connected with the welfare of the state persisted. The Turkish nation was to be constructed of secular and modern individuals as an organic social concept, without social, cultural or religious divisions and where, under the guidance of the state, different social groups could work together for the welfare of the national community (Seufert 1997: 59). The concept of *hürriyet* (freedom) was not concerned with the defence of individual rights *vis-à-vis* the state, but it was a collectivist argument which was concerned with keeping the right sort of society functioning (Çağla 2012: 566). Education was considered to be the major tool in constructing the desired rational society. Faith in positivism which regarded science and technology as the means to development and advancement became the guiding principle of the Turkish educational system (Yavuz and Esposito 2003: XXI).

Mustafa Kemal's status as a national leader in the fight against Western imperialism bestowed upon his mission charismatic authority. The Kemalist project of radical transformation of state and society fostered elitism. Influenced by French positivism and Compte's social engineering aspect, the republican elites thought that the knowledge they had attained through their education provided them not only with a political legitimacy, but also with a mission to reconstruct society (Heper 2000: 68). While the republican elites were determined to forge the country in their way, the populace was not organized for political action. Until transition to multiparty politics in 1946, the bureaucratic elites regarded society as an arena to be mapped, controlled and civilized

without any say of its own (Günay 2008: 35). The republican elites defined modernization as a mission for the good of the people. The transformation of state and society was to be implemented if necessary against the will of the people. They were determined to eradicate any potential independent and oppositional movements that might have posed a threat to their radical modernization programme. Local and municipal governments have had rather little powers, while the real powers lay in the hands of the higher bureaucracy. Kazancıgil points out that despite modernization, the republic was also 'heir to the old patrimonial tradition, which assumed the dominance of the state over civil society and reserved the monopoly of legitimacy and authority to the state elites, at the expense of social and economic elites' (Heper 1985: 17).

Toprak highlights that after transition to multiparty politics, an overpowering modern bureaucracy posed an obstacle to the development of civil society in Turkey. Applications and permissions are often connected with endless and complicated bureaucratic procedures, restricting the room for individual initiative and collective action (Toprak 1996: 91). The bureaucracy often tried to hinder, delay, control, incorporate or restrict any independent initiatives. These measures had the common aim to neutralize independent thoughts and to establish an order of uniformity (Günay 2008: 51).

The synthesis of Turkish nationalism and Islam

Many social scientists have highlighted centre–periphery tensions as a determinant in the study of state–society relations in Turkey (Mardin 1973). The Kemalist project of cultural transformation did not lift but amplified the cultural dichotomy between the modernist bureaucratic elites at the centre and a predominantly culturally conservative provincial society. Mardin holds that as the Kemalists had missed the revolutionary mobilizational aspect, radical secularization policies had failed to transform and reconstruct provincial society into the aspired Kemalist ideal (Heper 1985: 18). The periphery remained to a large extent autonomous from and hostile to the Kemalist social engineering project. After transition to a multiparty system in 1946, the so called counter-bureaucratic elites challenged the statist hegemony of the Kemalist bureaucracy by activating the oppositional potential within provincial society against the authoritarian secularist reform policies. Consequently, anti-establishment movements attained a populist character, mobilizing the periphery against the 'progressive' secularist centre through conservative messages and the promise of economic liberalization.

Turkish conservatives have struggled for the preservation and protection of what they have considered as traditional Turkish culture against the secular elite's Westernization policies. In this context, Turkish conservatism has highlighted the concept of 'indigenousness'. Indigenousness has been set equal with the Turkish tradition of Sunni Islam, standing for the traditional moral and cultural values of the periphery. Different from Islamism, which has considered religion as a social, economic and, before all, political order, Turkish conservatism has not emphasized a different or alternative state-model, but was concerned with the preservation of Turkish Islamic traditions, values and mores, often expressed through the concepts of *namus* (honour) and *ayıp* (shame) (Günay 2008: 83).

Although conservatism was in opposition to radical secularization policies, conservatives proved to be an important ally in order to guarantee the authority of the state. During the 1960s and 1970s fights between rightist and leftist groups began to dominate not only the political discourse; radicals also clashed in the streets. Leftist

groups had gained a foothold among students and mainly Alevite youth in the urban squatters. The state elites regarded communism as the biggest threat to the unity and stability of the state and to the Kemalist project. While the security forces took vigorous action against leftist groups, they often spared nationalists and Islamists.

The military coup of 1980 brought this secret alliance to the fore. The *raison d'être* of the general's intervention was to re-establish the overall authority of the state in the public space, to stop political polarization, and to put the economy back on the rails (Günay 2008: 114). By eliminating political parties and civil society organizations, neutralizing the once powerful trade unions and suspending democratic liberties, the coup not only eradicated political activism, but also paved the way for a radical neoliberal turn without disturbances. Atasoy holds that the neoliberal refashioning of the development project was as much an act intended to transform economy as it was also a bureacratically and politically manoeuvred act designed to reorganise the country's political power structure and to re-establish the supremacy of the Kemalist state. By promoting the implementation of neoliberal market-oriented economic policies, military coup leaders initiated a social reconstruction project (Atasoy 2009: 76). Adjustments to the Kemalist social engineering policies should eliminate ideological polarization in the country and reinstitute a politically strong, interventionist state (Atasoy 2009: 79).

In order to regain hegemony and counter leftist (un-Turkish) thoughts, the military leaders, advised by conservative intellectuals, decided that it was necessary to reconcile Turkish nationalism with conservatism. A new conservative notion of Turkish nationalism emphasized the uniqueness of Turkish culture, which was found in the synthesis of the family, the mosque and the barracks (Birtek and Toprak 1994: 6). Their aim was not to water down secularism but to create a new Turkish youth, one which was free from any ideology, guided by traditional family values, attached to Turkish nationalism and obedient to the state. According to the so called Turkish–Islamic Synthesis which constituted the programme for the reconstruction of society, the nation was redefined following the concept of the community of believers (*cemaat*). The state used its very own secular institutions to 're-traditionalize' political society, according to the new Republican state ideology. The Turkish Broadcasting Company (TRT), the Department for Religious Affairs, the education system, schools and universities became the institutions that spread the new cultural and political leitmotif (Birtek and Toprak 1994: 6).

Neoliberal market economy also had effects on religious communities and fraternities. More and more *cemaat* (communities) became involved with the market. They used their religious networks also for economic and business purposes. Some of them, such as the Gülen movement, grew into big business corporations encompassing companies, publishing houses, newspapers, TV and radio stations.

Islamic civil society began to develop a counter hegemony to the secular elites. Islamic symbols, rhetoric and behaviour began to permeate the public space. The proponents were an emergent urban middle class, mainly comprising people who had a provincial cultural background. Despite their critique of Kemalist reform policies, they did not challenge the legitimacy and the authority of the Kemalist state. Economic liberalization enabled the further integration of these politically marginalised groups with the prevailing system.

An organic crisis: Enter Islamist politics

Despite transition to multiparty politics in 1946, Turkish democracy was characterized by inter-elite struggle. Although conservatism played an increasingly important role in

maintaining political hegemony and stability, the political game was still dominated by representatives of the Kemalist elites. The so-called centre-right parties standing in the tradition of the Democratic party, which was founded as a splint-off from the Republican People's party – the political institutionalization of Kemalism – had been able to absorb the conservative and Islamist electorate through a conservative rhetoric and through the mobilization against communism. However, in the post-1980s era, the centre-right politicians gradually lost their hegemony over the conservative constituencies.

In contrast to the centre-right and the centre-left politicians whose leaders were members of urban Kemalist high culture and felt obliged to adhere to the Kemalist idea of modernization, Islamists became a more credible voice of a growing morally and culturally conservative urban middle class. Many of its representatives had a provincial background. Although they made up the majority of urban citizens, they felt culturally isolated, economically and socially underprivileged, and politically silenced. In contrast to the centre-right and left, Islamists credibly voiced the feelings, habits, dress codes and behaviours of this conservative majority. Islamists not only addressed social injustice but also they also raised identity issues important for the middle class, such as the headscarf ban. While during the 1960s and 1970s the Islamist constituency was to be found mainly among *the petite bourgeoisie* of provincial towns, from the 1980s on Islamism had become a mainly urban middle-class movement. A professionalized and more pragmatic Islamist movement was able to present itself as the voice of the 'real people'. The Islamists' rise coincided also with the Left's decline. The Islamists promoted a concept of social solidarity that based on a 'vertical ethic' in which the rich are responsible for the poor and that was more compatible with the requirements of neoliberal market economy (Haenni 2004).

Islamists first conquered the urban space. They gained elections in the country's largest cities, including Istanbul and Ankara. The Islamists' rise into local municipalities opened up public financial sources to the emergent Islamic sector. Islamic business circles and networks became organized through political channels and their pushing forward towards participation in power also increased their social and intellectual prestige (Toprak 2004: 5). Neoliberalism, which was thought to re-establish the Kemalist centre's authority, had fostered a movement which was not directed against the incumbent economic system (although it could successfully exploit the deficiencies of this system); rather, it challenged the political hegemony of the authoritarian Kemalist worldview and the economic privileges of the Kemalist elites.

In 1995 the Islamists also won the parliamentary elections. The army, the bureaucracy and the grand bourgeoisie pressed hard to hinder any participation of Islamists in power, but they were not able to bridge the gap between the estranged centre parties. The Islamists formed a coalition government with Tansu Çiller's True Path party. Once in power the party leadership came under pressure from all sides. While, on the one hand, the Kemalist elites, backed by the army, signalled that they would not accept any deviations from Kemalism, on the other hand, Prime Minister Erbakan also had to take into account the expectations and demands of the grassroots supporters who had worked hard for the party's rise and who expected a radical change. Trapped in this dilemma, Erbakan began to send out ambiguous messages. He adopted a strategy which combined conformity with the Kemalist state elites (mainly the military and the high bureaucracy) and at the same time challenged these very institutions through aggressive and inciting rhetoric (Günay 2008: 160).[1] The Welfare party was not strong enough to replace the old centre and establish hegemony. The balance of forces shifted

back to the Kemalist elites. On 28 February 1997 the National Security Council (NSC), a body established after the military coup in 1960 in order to secure the army's supremacy, declared Islamist reactionism to be the greatest threat to national security. In the so-called post-modern coup, the Kemalist state elites declared war on the Islamist segment of society that challenged the discursive, political and economic hegemony of the dominant class.

The AKP was founded in 2001 as a result of Islamist self-critique (Yılmaz 2004: 615). A younger generation of reformists around Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arınç came to the conclusion that Erbakan's defeat was the defeat of ideological Islamism and a consequence of too openly challenging the Kemalist state. Comparable with Tony Blair's Third Way, these Islamist reformers suggested a less ideological and more pragmatic approach. They did not abandon Islam; rather, they adapted their programme and their rhetoric to a globalized market. In order not to challenge the Kemalist elites, but to reach out to broader constituencies, they moved the party closer to the centre of the political spectrum. The AKP called its programme 'Conservative Democracy'. Erdoğan explains 'Conservative Democracy' as the unification of two existing tendencies in Turkish politics: of conservatism and democracy. According to Erdoğan: 'the AKP neither borrows its political line from the past nor from any other civilization, but rather wants to produce a line which includes globally tested conservative approaches, which is also adapted to our own tradition of thought' (Erdoğan in Akdoğan 2003: 123).[2]

A passive revolution?

The military's intervention in 1997 had not been able to bring the organic crisis to an end, but it had delayed it. The financial crisis in February 2001 was a consequence of the ramifications of the centre parties' clientelistic networks which permeated the economic and, before all, the banking sector. The general elections in November 2002 had the taste of an electoral revolution. The AKP, which had been only founded a year earlier, won a landslide victory, while none of the parties of the earlier legislation, including the former ruling parties, were able to pass the 10 per cent threshold. The AKP had been able to absorb not only most of the constituencies of the centre parties, but also some of its prominent representatives. For instance, the AKP's promise to press ahead with reforms in light of European Union membership created broad societal support for the government's reform agenda.

In light of the Kemalist elite's attempts to intervene in the democratic process, the AKP was able to present itself as a victim of the old Kemalist order and a champion of democracy. The elections became a vote on the Kemalist elite's tutelage of the political system. The AKP was able to increase its vote to 46.47 per cent and consequently Gül was elected president. Equipped with a strong mandate, the AKP began to consolidate its power by reshuffling the bureaucratic apparatus and the personnel of public companies. As the largest landowner and commanding over a highly centralized bureaucratic apparatus, the Turkish state is vested with enormous economic powers. Despite market liberalization, the state's resource distribution through clientelistic networks created a business community whose emergence based on good relations with the government. From its second term on, the AKP also began to rebuild relations with the business communities. By favouring the emergent Islamic bourgeoisie, represented by MÜSIAD (the Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen) through

preferential treatment at calls to tenders, in privatization processes or by facilitating external relations and by promoting the further internationalization of the Turkish market, the government pushed back the dominance of the established business groups represented by TÜSIAD – the Turkish Industrialist's Businessmen's Association. Atasoy holds that the AKP's struggle to reconfigure the Kemalist state has been taking place within the territorial space of the state but that it has been constituted through the incorporation of global processes (Atasoy 2009: 11, 12).

The AKP did not deconstruct the Kemalist state, but set about reconstructing the myth of the republic by replacing secular symbols with Islamic Ottoman references. Neo-Ottoman nostalgia was reflected in the government's rhetoric and foreign policy approaches. Neo-Ottoman elements began to influence architecture, fashion and popular culture. Films, books and TV series dealing with Ottoman history, and mostly highlighting the grandeur of the empire rather than its decay, have flooded the national and international market. Moreover, the government has consciously chosen Ottoman names and references for its prestige projects. Cases in point are the third Bosporus Bridge to be called after Sultan Selim or a replica of 19th-century barracks planned on Taksim Square. In many ways, the AKP's policies are reminiscent of the Hamidian era of the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Abdülhamid (1876–1909) had tried to create a new basis of solidarity in the shared religious heritage of the Muslim majority. Solidarity and unity on the basis of Islam required, on the one hand, more Islamic symbolism and rhetoric; but, on the other, in order to appeal to all Muslim subjects it also demanded the standardization and control of religion in form of a 'national' Islam. 'The standardised religious message emphasised loyalty to the state and obedience to the authorities' (Zürcher 2010: 58). The order Abdülhamid wanted to create was presented as a moral order that encouraged modernization – particularly technical innovation – but that rejected the libertarian excesses of the Tanzimat reformers (Zürcher 2010: 58).

The AKP's merger with the state slowed down its reformist and transformative verve and introduced a new era of authoritarian democratic rule. The lines between the government party and the state have become increasingly blurred. In light of a highly centralized political system with weak parliamentary rights, hardly any established autonomous political institutions, lacking checks and balances and strong economic redistributive powers in the hands of the prime minister, the ruling government party has become the only crucial patron.

A new group of bureaucrats, businessmen and journalists emerged under AKP rule. They have been less united by a common ideological outlook, but they have been bound together through clientalistic networks and a common allegiance to the prime minister and the power system he represents. These AKP profiteers have legitimized its existence through critique and hostility to the old Kemalist order. By keeping up a counter hegemonic class discourse, they have functioned as 'organic intellectuals' of an imaginary conservative social class that is politically represented by the AKP. Their discourse against the old secular establishment helped to mobilize the electorate and to conceal the growing social disparity within the party's constituency.

Turkey and Arab region: Shared horizons from Tahrir to Taksim?

While reforms in light of EU membership helped to reconfigure the state, they also fostered a liberal democratic discourse. Representatives of a liberal discourse had been strong supporters of the government's democratic reform agenda during its first term.

However, the government's departure from reformism in favour of power consolidation induced the gradual breaking away of the small, but influential group of liberal intellectuals. While they had first seen in the AKP a democratic reformist force and an ally against the authoritarian and paternalistic state, they became increasingly frustrated by the government's shift to authoritarian rhetoric and practices.

The protest movement which unfolded in June 2013 in reaction to the prime minister's plans to remodel the symbolic Taksim Square and to sacrifice a park for the replica of 19th-century barracks impressively displayed that an anti-authoritarian liberal discourse which demanded for further democratization was able to mobilize a nationwide protest movement. The mass demonstrations revealed that under the surface of constant economic growth there had also grown discontent among representatives of the urban middle class. Driven by a more libertarian understanding, they stood up against paternalism and high-handedness. The rallies were not only directed against the government, but also revealed dissatisfaction with the opposition parties. The slogans and demands which emanated from the youngsters who initiated the 'Gezi Movement' did not fit into the traditional patterns and schemes of Turkish politics. Secular in spirit, their messages were not directed against conservatism or Islam, but they challenged the hitherto unchallenged paternalistic self-understanding of the state and its representatives. In authoritarian state tradition the government perceived the protests as a threat to the unity of the nation and suspected the protesters of being a long arm of external forces. Its reaction to the protests was coercion. Nevertheless, the 'Gezi Movement' pointed out that democratic reform policies and the military's going off the political stage had fostered a diverse and rather unorganized, but vivid, civil society which is ready to take a stand against any signs of authoritarian rule. Although it is unlikely that the protest movement will evolve into a political movement, it has lifted the wall of fear among journalists and triggered a process of self-reflection.

According to Antonio Gramsci, Western European states underwent passive revolutions in the period between 1815–1870 when the bourgeoisie became part of the hegemonic system without popular participation and the aristocracy lost some of its economic privileges, but avoided its total extinction (Tuğal 2009: 32). In a passive revolution the thesis absorbs the representatives of the anti-thesis (Gramsci 2005: 110). Gramsci holds that a social group must already exercise 'intellectual and moral leadership' before winning governmental power. 'It subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well' (Gramsci 2005: 58).

Turkey is an example of a passive revolution through elections. While the Islamist movement was able to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse to the crisis-ridden political establishment of the 1990s, the AKP was the product of the transformation of the Islamist movement, essential for its integration with the hegemonic bourgeois system. In that sense, the AKP represents a post-Islamist movement that has adapted itself to the challenges of a globalized neoliberal market. Once in power, confronted with the resistance of representatives of the old establishment who feared to lose status and influence, the AKP chose to consolidate power. The AKP has transformed the state by including a formerly marginalized social group. But this transformation through inclusion has neither changed the authoritarian character of the overly centralized state and its paternalistic self-understanding, nor radically changed social redistribution. The inclusion of some parts of the formerly marginalized conservative masses has, rather, created the illusion of redeployment of capital.

In this regard Turkey constitutes an example for continuity of political structures and a hegemonic social and economic system. The developments in the course of the Arab transitions point at a similar direction. The hegemonic classes have tried to co-opt, isolate or extinguish revolutionary forces. While Islamists have been important allies of the immediate post-revolutionary moment, they have posed a threat to the established order as soon as they have come into power. Referring to the Turkish experience, this can be led back to two factors: on the one hand, that the Islamists were too openly challenging the incumbent order and that they were lacking the intellectual and moral leadership necessary to lead; and, on the other, that the incumbent elites still attempted to maintain their hegemony by keeping the Islamists and other alternative groups out.

Notes

1 In order to please his grassroots supporters, Erbakan attacked symbols of Kemalism. He announced his plans to construct a mosque at Taksim Square, a symbol of Kemalist republicanism, and suggested the re-transformation of the Aya Sofya Museum into a mosque.
2 Translated by the author.

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Iran's Own Popular Uprising and the Arab Spring

Shabnam J. Holliday

Introduction

An analysis of the relationship between Iran and the so-called 'Arab Spring' raises certain points that need to be highlighted. First, what exactly is meant by the 'Arab Spring'? If it is understood that the label represents popular uprisings that demand political reform and/or 'democracy' regardless of whether the demands are achieved, then we should also ask ourselves to what extent the 'Arab Spring' is particularly *Arab*? This chapter will problematize the idea of an Arab Spring by illustrating that dynamics associated with the Arab Spring, namely popular uprisings that demand political reform and/or 'democracy' regardless of whether the demands are achieved, exist in Iran. The events and aftermath of Iran's 2009 presidential election and what has come to be known as *Jibhi-yi Sabz*, or the Green Movement, bring into question the 'Arab' nature of the so-called 'Spring'.

Second, what are the implications of referring to such events in terms of a particular identity (i.e. *Arab*)? One such implication is that by restricting the examination of the trend of popular uprisings simply to the Arab world, analysts are at risk of neglecting the influence on these popular uprisings of both the regional (the Middle East including non-Arab states) context and the international context. Indeed, one could argue that the Islamic Republic was successful, at the time, in crushing the uprisings in Iran in the sense that thus far the Green Movement has not been able to realize its aims and that this success was a source of inspiration for Muammar Gaddafi and his attempt to quash the uprisings in Libya and Bashar al-Assad's continued efforts in Syria. In this case, of course, the relationship between the Islamic Republic and Syria also needs to be addressed.

Third, although Iran's Green Movement was not successful in overthrowing or reforming the regime it was resisting, namely the Islamic Republic as constructed by Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, we should consider what the Green Movement can tell us about the idea of 'democracy' and the process of democratization. In terms of understanding what is meant by these concepts, Laurence Whitehead's approach provides a useful framework. He argues that

theories of democracy and democratization need to be grounded in real experience. With this in mind, democracy cannot be considered a 'predetermined end-state', but rather as a socially constructed long-term and open-ended outcome. As such there is no single model of democracy (Whitehead 2002: 3). Consequently, democratization, 'the process of moving towards this not entirely fixed future state', is also open ended and should be 'analysed as a complex dynamic and long-term affair' (Whitehead 2002: 3).

These three points will be addressed by first examining the construction of democracy in Iran. A historical overview of Iran's democracy movement provides a context for the dynamics of the 2009 presidential election and the Green Movement and illustrates that the aspirations of the Green Movement are part of a long-term process that is grounded in a particular historical experience. Furthermore, the fact that there are multiple understandings of 'democracy' in Iran illustrates that democracy is, indeed, socially constructed. While we cannot predict when, and even if, this long-term process will ultimately produce some sort of fluid and open-ended political system that can be considered a 'democracy', the fact the ideas and aspirations continue to exist and develop is significant. They render futile the argument that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Finally, the chapter turns to the Islamic Republic's responses to the Arab Spring and illustrates while the responses are varied, they are consistent with the Islamic Republic's construction of itself as a leader in the region.

Literature on the Green Movement is largely in the form of editorial and opinion pieces (cf. OpenDemocracy.net) or part of larger works (see below). There is considerable scholarship, however, on the issue of democracy in general in Iran. Historical approaches include Azimi's (1989) analysis of the period leading to the 1953 coup, and Azimi (2008) and Gheissari and Nasr (2006). Mirsepassi (2010) examines the concept of democracy in terms of the debate regarding tradition and modernity. In terms of the Reform era, Matsunaga (2007), Sadri and Sadri (2000) and Mir-Hosseini and Tapper (2006) provide analyses of the ideas articulated by Reformists Mohsen Kadivar, Abdolkarim Soroush and Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari, respectively. Bayat (2007) addresses the significance of this post-Islamist movement, while Ansari (2006) examines the dynamics of Khatami's presidency and the influences on Khatami. Holliday (2011a) examines Khatami's Islamic *mardumsālārī* (democracy) and the Green Movement in terms of national identity construction. Afshar (2002), Honarbin-Holliday (2008), Rostami-Povey (2001) and Povey and Rostami-Povey's (2012) edited volume consider the role of women in the context of the construction of democracy. Iran's left and its relationship with democracy is addressed by Rahnema (2004) and Matin-asgari (2004). Several articles consider the prospect of a democratic Iran; for example, Fairbanks (1998), Samii (2001) and Milani and McFaul (2008). Holliday (2011b), Akbarzadeh (2011) and Tezcűr (2012) consider the impact of external factors upon the democracy movement during Ahmadinejad's presidency. Finally, Dabashi (2011) examines the Green Movement specifically and (Dabashi 2010) its relationship with the US.

The construction of democracy in Iran: A long-term process

The Iranian Constitution of 1906 is widely argued by Iranians as 'epitomizing the genesis of their struggle for democracy' (Azimi 2008: ix; see also Ansari 2006; Gheissari and Nasr 2006). The end of the Qajar period (1796–1925) saw an increasing involvement from foreign powers in Iranian affairs and the Qajar establishment (Keddie 1999: 44). Efforts to resist these forces culminated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Two

products of the Revolution were Iran's first parliamentary system and the adoption of a constitution, which were 'inspired by a strong … desire for the creation of a constitutional representative democracy' (Azimi 2008: 19).

The inter-regnum period (1941–1953) which includes the premiership of Mohammad Musaddiq (1951–1953), in particular, is regarded as an important period in the development of democracy in Iran (Ansari 2006; Gheissari and Nasr 2006; Azimi 2008). Gheissari and Nasr argue that following the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, Iran experienced a 'democratic interlude' that was evident in the weakening of the state. This, in turn, allowed for 'greater freedoms of the press and association [and] a more prominent parliament' as well as 'political debates, party politics, and competition for power' (Gheissari and Nasr 2006: 46–47). However, during the 'democratic interlude' Iran also experienced growing British control over its oil industry. The 1933 Oil Agreement had ensured that the concessionary period for the British was extended for another 30 years. It was felt that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (the predecessor to BP) had not only turned an important part of the country into 'an almost autonomous colony, but that it indirectly ran the country as well' (Katouzian 1999: 64). Prime Minister Musaddiq responded to this by nationalising Iran's oil industry in 1951. In 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency and Britain's Secret Intelligence Service reacted to the nationalization of oil by orchestrating a coup to oust Musaddiq (Ansari 2006: 35). And thus the 'democratic interlude' came to an end.

There is some debate with regard to the role of the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in the development of democracy in Iran. On the one hand, supporters of the idea of the Islamic Republic and Reformists (see below), in particular, consider the revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic as an important, or even first, step in the development of democracy in Iran.[1] However, Azimi (2008: 358) refers to the period as one 'beset by the absence of a deeply rooted democratic culture' and Gheissari and Nasr (2006: 77) argue that the weakening of state institutions did not enable 'pluralism or liberal democracy'. Furthermore, as Moshaver (2005: 178) notes, while the president and parliament are fully elected, they can only be elected once the candidates have been vetted by a non-elected Council of Guardians and that ultimately the most powerful decision-making institutions are those of supreme leader and council of guardians, who are non-elected.

Despite these restrictions it is in the context of the Islamic Republic that the idea of democracy in Iran has continued to develop. This is reflected in the ideas of the Reform Movement, the relative political liberalization[2] of Khatami's presidency (1997–2005) and what has come to be called the Green Movement. These illustrate the vibrancy of contemporary political debate in Iran and the desire for reform of the Islamic Republic and/or 'democracy'. The ideas of the Reform Movement continue to be relevant in the context of the articulation of democracy as it illustrates how the desire for political reform and/or 'democracy' has emerged out of the very establishment of the Islamic Republic.

The Reform Movement was and in some respects continues to be a coalition of a number of groups, factions and individuals that came out of discussions regarding the nature of the Islamic Republic in the 1980s and 1990s. It is by no means monolithic in terms of intellectual aspirations or, indeed, in terms of the divisions between its members. One group considered an important part of the Reform Movement were *Rawshanfikrān-i Dīnī*, or religions intellectuals, who led internal dissent within the Islamic Republic (Dabashi 2006: 190). Bayat argues that they were the main intellectual source

of what he refers to as 'post-Islamist practices' and that their ideas 'generated one of the most remarkable intellectual movements in the Muslim world with far-reaching implications for religious thought and democratic practice' (Bayat 2007: 84). Women, some of whom were among the religions intellectuals, also played a significant role in the Reform Movement. As Honarbin-Holliday (2008: 46) argues, with the re-emergence of a women's press, women who were well versed in both the Quran and feminist ideology were determined to 're-conceptualise the position of women within the Islamic Republic as well as the media'.[3]

The aspirations of the Reform Movement included the call for democracy, civil society and the separation of religion and state, as well as democracy, within the context of an Islamic state. On the one hand are the secular approaches of journalist Akbar Ganji (2002) and cleric Kadivar (2002), who reject the idea of the Islamic Republic on the basis that it is incompatible with democracy. On the other hand, there is the idea of 'Islamic Democratic Government' as advocated by Eshkevari. He argued that 'not only are Islam and democracy in the realm of state and government not incompatible, but, on the contrary, Muslim government cannot be undemocratic' (Mir-Hosseini and Tapper 2006: 86). It is this idea of Islamic democracy that is advocated by Khatami during his presidency and reflected in the ideas of Mir-Hossein Mousavi in the 2009 presidential election campaign.

Khatami's presidency is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, he openly advocated ideals associated with democracy, such as civil society and the rule of law (cf. Ansari 2006; Gheissari and Nasr 2006; Azimi 2008; Holliday 2011a). He talked about Islamic *mardumsālārī* (democracy), where people have rights and the government has an obligation towards the people in the context of the Islamic Republic (Holliday 2011a: 114–121) and as such articulated the aspirations of the Reform Movement on a state level (cf. Ansari 2006: 114–116). Secondly, the fact that he was elected is significant. Seventy per cent of the 29 million who turned out voted in favour of Khatami (Kazemi 1999: 12). As Azimi (2008: 381) notes, his election reflected not only the 'strength of democratic aspirations', but also a 'rejection of authoritarianism'. Indeed, Khatami was upheld as the hope for democracy in Iran by both those in Iran and external observers. Thirdly, Khatami's presidency experienced relative political liberalization.

Political liberalization allowed for certain dynamics that in turn have enabled Iran's democracy movement to develop and grow. For example, there was a proliferation of newspapers and books, the extent of which, according to Milani (2001: 43–44), Iran had not witnessed since the 1979 revolution. The proliferation is important because it facilitated the transmission of ideas and discussion regarding Iran's political development (Ansari 2006; Holliday 2011a). It should be noted, however, that this proliferation was also accompanied by the shutting down of many publications: 'between 1997 and 2002, 108 newspapers and periodicals were banned' (Arjomand 2009: 93). Political liberalization also allowed for a proliferation in civil society activity which was evident not only in the proliferation of press but also of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This created space for youth expression and increased participation by women (cf. Honarbin-Holliday 2008).

However, although there was relative political liberalization, many Iranians, particularly the youth and women, felt betrayed by Khatami because of his failure to realize the ideas of civil society and reform of the Islamic Republic in concrete terms. This failure is evident in the clamp-down on the press (noted above) and in the numerous detentions of Reformists among others (see Ansari 2006: 285–296). The betrayal is

reflected in the student riots of 1999 (cf. Ansari 2006) and in the general sense of disdain felt among many Iranians towards the end of the presidency. Indeed, the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005 in some respects also illustrates the failure of Khatami. During his first term (2005–2009) much of the political liberalization that was encouraged and enabled during Khatami's presidency was essentially reversed. In the context of an escalation in international (European Union, US and United Nations) responses to Iran's nuclear programme in the form of sanctions imposed on Iran, Iran witnessed an exacerbation of human rights abuses (Amnesty International 2008; Human Rights Watch 2008).

Nevertheless, Khatami's presidency continues to be significant because it facilitated the development of Iran's democracy movement both intellectually as well as in terms of activism. In addition to enabling the articulation of Reformist ideas on a state level and the discussion of politics and political development in the press, Khatami's presidency groomed a generation of Iranians in the art of political activism. It should be noted that it is the generation of Iranians, both men and women, who gained practical experience, whether working in the media, NGOs or for Khatami himself, who played a crucial role in both the democracy movement during Ahmadinejad's presidency, in the 2009 election campaigns of Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi, and in the Green Movement.

2009 presidential election and the Green Movement

As noted above, the popular uprisings and the use of social media that are associated with the 'Arab Spring' exist in Iran. The protests and demonstration following the 2009 presidential election and the Green Movement's demands bring into question the 'Arab' nature of the so-called 'Spring'. This is illustrated by the fact that in the aftermath of the re-election of Ahmadinejad there was a clear indication of a desire for change in Iran. Social media tools, such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, were used by Iranians both inside and outside of Iran, and indeed by non-Iranians. Information about events inside Iran was transmitted to citizens and media outside of Iran and people were mobilized to demonstrate. While what has come to be known as the Green Movement cannot be separated from the controversial 2009 presidential election, it is also important to recognize that the demands of the Green Movement are part of a long-term process that are grounded in a particular historical experience, as outlined above.

Vetted candidates who were permitted to stand for office in the 2009 presidential election were former Prime Minister Mousavi, Speaker of Parliament Karoubi, former Commander of the Revolutionary Guards Mohsen Rezai, and the incumbent Ahmadinejad. During the campaign period there was large-scale political participation in the form of rallies, sophisticated election campaigns and six unprecedented television debates between all presidential candidates. Also unprecedented was the presence of a candidate's wife in the election campaign. Significantly, Zahra Rahnavard, a former university chancellor and former political adviser to Khatami played an integral role in Mousavi's campaign as his wife. The engagement of Iran's youth was also notable: young men and women painted their faces in the form of the Iranian flag, wore green ribbons and headscarves in support of Mousavi, in particular, and staged large-scale rallies. However, existing alongside this political participation, Iranians were also subjected to harassment, censorship and arbitrary arrests. The campaign period culminated in the re-election of Ahmadinejad, which many Iranians believed was fraudulent.[4]

Whether or not fraud took place, the extent of the demonstrations and protests indicated the strength of the desire for political reform in Iran. Indeed, in response to the re-election of Ahmadinejad, cities across Iran witnessed demonstrations and protests in which Iran's citizens carried placards enquiring 'Where is my vote?' On the days following election day, on 12 June, images of major roads and squares and university campuses in Tehran, Shiraz, Esfahan and Tabriz crowded with Iranians, men and women of varied ages and social classes, marching peacefully were transmitted not only by Iranian and foreign journalists but also by Iranians themselves through the likes of Facebook and enabled by Twitter and YouTube.

Individuals and groups that came together in support of Mousavi and Karoubi both before and after the election have come to be known as the Green Movement. The Green Movement is a fluid and far from monolithic movement whose supporters and activists included and continue to include Reformists, human rights activists, the students' and women's movements, artists, intellectuals, academics, and clerics, whether in Iran or part of the diaspora. In the years following the election, many more Green Movement activists and supporters became part of the diaspora (cf. Rivetti 2012). The fluidity of the movement is reflected in its demands. For some, the Green Movement, particularly at the time of the election, simply signified the desire for their vote to be recognized without indicating a specific system of government (although the transparent and democratic address of the election result was implicit). For others, such as Mousavi and Karoubi, the aim was a more fundamental reform and more democratic systems and practices within the framework of the Islamic Republic, which reflects Reformist ideals outlined above. Indeed, Mousavi and Karoubi were considered Reformist candidates who were supported by Khatami and Khatami's former Vice-President Abtahi, respectively. With these demands in mind, the Green Movement became the label used for Iran's democracy movement and, by implication, civil society movement.

It is important to note that presidential candidates Mousavi and Karoubi are very much products of the Islamic Republic and that they rejected a particular construction of the Islamic Republic (as constructed by the supreme leader and Ahmadinejad at the time of the election) on the grounds that it was un-Islamic (Mousavi 2009; Karoubi 2010). The ideals of Mousavi's demands, in particular, reflect those of Khatami's Islamic democracy, which includes 'the defence of human dignity and fundamental human rights independent of ideology, religion, gender, ethnicity, and social status' (Mousavi 2010). These are to be realized through a free independent press, an end to censorship, the strengthening of civil society, allowing NGOs to act freely, and reforming 'laws and regulations to eliminate any type of discrimination in society' (Mousavi 2010). The Green Movement also includes those who call for a distinctly secular understanding of democracy, as opposed to an Islamic democracy. This is reflected in the ideals and aspirations of individuals and groups such as Ganji and Kadivar (mentioned above) and *Sikūlār-hā-yi Sabz*, or the Secular Greens.[5]

The Green Movement is also significant because it represents a uniting of forces often opposed to each other against a particular understanding of the Islamic Republic. This is illustrated by the desire of the women's movement, which is by no means monolithic, to come together in support of Mousavi's candidacy. Prior to the 2009 presidential election disagreements between different groups – secular groups, women associated with the Reformists and Islamists – over the movement's aims had caused fractures. However, these groups, as well as those with allegiances with the regime came together in support of Mousavi's candidacy and established *Hamgarāyī-yi Junbish-i Zanān*

(the Coalition of the [Iranian] Women's Movement). Furthermore, not only was the women's 'vote' very important in Mousavi's campaign, women were very much visible in the protests after the election (Holliday 2011b: 70).

The regime clearly found the post-election protests, demonstrations and the demands of Iranian citizens a threat to its very existence and as such they were met with violence. In the immediate aftermath, the government employed a major campaign of repression where protestors, political figures and human rights activists were detained on mass and 'show trials' were orchestrated in August 2009 (Human Rights Watch 2010). There was also increased repression against 'women's rights activists, lawyers, advocates for greater rights for Iran's ethnic minorities and unrecognized religious minorities' (Amnesty International 2009). After the election there were reports that Iran carried out executions, ignored allegations of coercion and torture, and imposed restrictions on freedom of expression (International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran 2011). While some prisoners were released following the election of Hassan Rouhani in 2013, Mousavi and Karoubi remain under house arrest.

It is the post-election demonstrations, protests and demands outlined above that bring into question the 'Arab' nature of the so-called 'Spring'. If is accepted that the label 'Arab Spring' represents popular uprisings that demand political reform and/or 'democracy' regardless of whether the demands are achieved, then analysts should consider the events and aftermath of the 2009 Iranian presidential election. Certainly, as was the case in Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen, people in Iran took to the streets demanding not only for their vote to be counted, but also reform of the Islamic Republic and/or the overthrow of the regime altogether. Furthermore, in addition to their demands, parallels can be drawn between Iran, on the one hand, and these Arab states in terms of the use of social media to facilitate mobilization and disseminate information. The presence and political activism and role played by the youth in mobilization and the dissemination of information are another important parallel. Indeed, it should be considered to what extent the actions of the youth across the region, or indeed outside the region, have been a source of inspiration for each other.

While the citizens of Iran may well have been an inspiration to citizens elsewhere, it is also possible the reaction to their protests by the Islamic Republic was also a model for the likes of Gaddafi and Assad. While the ideas of democracy continue to exist, it cannot be denied that the Green Movement was constrained: many of its activists became refugees, were detained or lived in fear of detention. This 'success', as far as the Islamic Republic is concerned, shows that popular uprisings that demand political reform and/or 'democracy' can be restricted and restrained.

The Islamic Republic's responses to the 'Arab Spring': the 'Islamic Awakening'

The Islamic Republic's responses to the so-called 'Arab Spring' were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, while Iran's own protesters were condemned and repressed, those of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain were praised. Yet, on the other hand, Syria's protesters were visibly excluded from this praise. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic's responses were consistent with its regional aspirations and perceived identity as a leader in the Islamic world as well as regional hegemon. This is evident in the idea of *Bīdārī-yi Islāmī*, or 'Islamic Awakening', and Iran's support for its major ally, Syria, under the Assad regime. By restricting the trend of popular uprisings to a

particular identity, namely Arab, analysts are at risk of neglecting these regional dynamics.

The label of 'Islamic Awakening' is significant. 'Islamic Awakening' is the term that was constructed by the Islamic Republic for the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain. In conferences on the subject, Khamenei praised the *Muslim* youth of these states for their awakening and that, as far as he was concerned, it was this *Islamic* awakening that brought about uprisings and revolutions (Khamenei 2011a, 2012). It was in Iran's interest to see uprisings in the region simply as an '*Islamic* Awakening'. After all, the establishment of the Islamic Republic after the 1979 revolution witnessed the triumph of Islam over secularism and Marxism. Furthermore, by using the idea of an 'Islamic Awakening', Khamenei was able to legitimize the idea of the Islamic Republic and his position as supreme leader and demonstrate the 'greatness' of Iran. Iran was the first to have an 'Islamic Revolution' where an authoritarian ruler, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was believed to be a pawn of the US, was overthrown by the people. The parallel between the 1979 revolution, which is perceived simply as an *Islamic* Revolution, and the events in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Bahrain, is explicitly drawn in Khamenei's *Naw Ruz* (Iranian New Year) address (Khamenei 2011b). By attributing an Islamic identity to these uprisings, the Islamic Republic is able to justify and legitimize itself as a leader in the region as it was the first to experience an 'Islamic awakening' that brought about fundamental political change.

The exclusion of Syrian citizens from praise and the label of 'Islamic Awakening' is also significant. There were reports that Iran's support for the Assad regime went beyond simply being moral support. However, in an interview with France 24 in May 2012, Ahmadinejad denied that Iran had been sending equipment to Syria and maintained that the links between Iran and Syria were 'normal' and just like those with other states (Ahmadinejad 2012). While the nature of the relationship between Iran and Syria can be debated, the fact that Syria is not attributed the 'Islamic Awakening' label cannot be denied and we must ask ourselves why. Certainly the relationship between Iran and Syria is somewhat different from that with the 'Islamic Awakening' states. The basis of the relationship is evident in Ahmadinejad's insistence in an interview with CNN in October 2011 that the independence and sovereignty of states should be maintained and that there should be no interference from external forces (Ahmadinejad 2011). Furthermore, the Assad regime is one of the Islamic Republic's closest allies in what is perceived to be the dominance of US and Zionist hegemony in the region. This construction of a careful relationship with the Assad regime whereby independence and sovereignty are maintained in face of perceived US and Zionist hegemony in the region allows the Islamic Republic to construct itself as a leader in the region.

Conclusion

This chapter has problematized the idea of an *Arab* Spring by examining the case of Iran. The popular risings and demands for political change in Iran as illustrated by the protests and demands of the Green Movement following the 2009 presidential election question the Arab nature of the so-called 'Spring'. As was the case in Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen, Iranian citizens demanded political change. Furthermore, social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter were crucial tools in mobilizing people, facilitating protests and demonstrations and transmitting information outside of Iran. In many instances it was the youth of these states, both in

the Arab world and in Iran, who played a significant role in these processes. Furthermore, restricting analysis according to a particular identity, such as Arab, is problematic; as analysts we are at risk of neglecting regional and international influences. While international influences have been beyond the scope of this chapter, the relationship between Iran and Syria, and Iran's response to Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen in the context of the 'Arab Spring', highlight wider regional dynamics.

This chapter has also provided an analysis of the demand for political change Iran in its own right primarily though the varied aspirations of the Green Movement. This contributes to an understanding of democracy and democratization. It has been illustrated that although the aims of the Green Movement have not yet been realized, the Green Movement and the desire for democracy, whether secular or Islamic, are itself part of a long-term process grounded in a particular historical experience. The roots of the Green Movement lie in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, the premiership of Musaddiq, the Reform Movement and the presidency of Khatami.

Furthermore, the fact that this long-term process is organic (i.e. the demand for democracy comes from within Iran rather than from external actors) is significant. The very existence of the ideas of democracy, however constructed, refutes the essentialist argument that Islam and democracy are incompatible or that democracy cannot be achieved in the region because of Islam or a particular political culture (cf. Kedourie 1992). The events of Iran's tenth presidential election, the ideas of the Green Movement and, indeed, the events of the so-called 'Arab Spring' provide *further* evidence that the question regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy is not relevant. After all, as has been illustrated, in Iran there are organic demands for both secular democracy and Islamic democracy.

Notes

1 For example, interview by author with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005.
2 'Political liberalisation is understood as the expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to freely engage in free political discourse' (Brynen et al 1995: 3).
3 See also Povey and Rostami-Povey (2012) for the ideas and aspirations of women involved in the Reform Movement and Green Movement.
4 For examples of evidence put forward in favour of fraudulent results, see Ansari (2009), Ehsani et al (2009), Mebane (2009).
5 See Holliday (2011a: 137–147) for a discussion of the Green Movement's demands in relation to the construction of a civic Iranian national identity.

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41

The Israel Tent Protests

Alan Craig

As Israel's political analysts nervously peered into the fog of an Arab Spring, seeing troubling uncertainties undermining the stabilities of cold peace and stable enmities, the Israeli Facebook generation saw the possibility of changing Israeli society through social mobilization that bypassed the formal processes and structures of Israeli democracy. At its height in 2011, the Israeli Tent Protest mobilized over 400,000 people, which by any measure is a massive response from a population of 7.7 million. There was a confusing variety of protest groups from across all sectors of Israeli society unified by a sense of injustice. An emerging agenda coalesced around a narrative of an excessive economic liberalism that was abandoning large sections of Israeli society to an ever-increasing cost of living while channelling resources to an unproductive religious sector. With a proportionate representation voting system, the demands were less about political representation than they were about political policy. Banners expressed solidarity with Tahrir Square but the Israeli protest lacked both the rage and the violence of its regional neighbours. The authorities avoided confrontation, allowing the occupation of Tel Aviv's prestigious Rothschild Boulevard, while channelling political demands through the conduit of a hastily convened Trajtenburg Committee. As the summer came to an end and the protesters melted away, it appeared that this apparently spontaneous youthful protest had failed to influence grown-up politics. With the leaders of the protest gravitated towards the Labor party ahead of the 2013 general election, it seemed that the left were going to be the chief beneficiaries. But appearances can be misleading and the burden-sharing agenda generated by the 2011 Tent Protest reached out beyond the protesters and Labor's core voters to Israel's squeezed middle class, challenging their right-wing allegiances and empowering the centre parties. The outcome is uniquely Israeli. Unlike so many protests across the region that have empowered the religious and ethnic constituencies, the Israeli variant looks set to achieve the exact opposite.

From cottage cheese to social justice

Across the Middle East and North Africa, the excesses of economic liberalism that produced food shortages for some and ostentatious wealth for others resulted in civil

disorder. While the price of bread is usually taken as a crucial economic indicator, in Israel cottage cheese proved to be catalyst, not for riot, but unprecedented economic direct action. Cottage cheese has always been a staple of the Israeli diet but its symbolism goes further than that. Its history mirrors a lot that has changed in Israel. In the public mind cottage cheese remains associated with the first-generation pioneering Kibbutz farmers who marketed their cheese cooperatively through a government-controlled pricing system. The removal of price controls in 2006 and the subsequent sale of the enterprise (Tnuva) to a London-based private equity firm looking for a quick profit resulted in rapid above inflation price rises (Levinson 2011). These changes in marketing and sale are representative of the enormous structural changes in the Israeli economy that have marked the country's journey from socialist welfare to liberal free market. But on 9 June 2011 Yitzhak Elrov, a young orthodox resident of Bnei Barak, launched a Facebook campaign. There was a surprising and very rapid response with over 100,000 Facebook supporters. With wide support among the press, Elrov generated a successful economic boycott that targeted the company and supermarkets stocking the product. Social media and traditional media combined to amplify the protest. The company's UK owners tried to tough it out but were soon forced to reduce prices, as were the retailers. The structural problem went beyond Tnuva to the Israeli dairy products market itself, which had always benefited from a near monopoly sustained by import taxes. This put the Netanyahu government firmly in the frame and the campaign notched up further successes when the government, succumbing to the pressure, pledged to reduce import duties on dairy products. The trajectory from Facebook protest to wider public engagement and clear economic and political demands, resulting in a climb down by big business and the Netanyahu government, was both rapid and unprecedented.

In July 2011, about a month after the start of the cottage cheese protest 25-year-old Israeli video editor Daphne Leef, who had to move from her apartment, used texts and Facebook to publicize her anger at the high Tel Aviv rents. She and her journalist friend Stav Shafir found that rents had doubled during the five years since Leef had last looked for an apartment near her work. Their protest took the form of pitching a tent in Habima Square on Rothschild Boulevard in the affluent section of Tel Aviv. It might have ended there had her Facebook group not multiplied exponentially, attracting hundreds and then several thousands of supporters. Young people from around the country joined her in what rapidly became a large tent city. Over the next four months tents, marches and almost weekly rallies appeared across the country, united by a cry that 'the People Demand Social Justice'. The landmark event was on 3 September 2011 with between 300,000 and 400,000 people marching in Tel Aviv alone. But the protests tailed off towards the end of 2011 with only small protests taking place in the early part of 2012.

Although high Tel Aviv rents were a central theme of the protests, as participation widened there was a shift from the big city concerns of metropolitan Tel Aviv to include the agendas of protest groups from around the country. The protest has rippled out from the centre to the periphery, picking up local issues along the way. This led to a more inclusive general framing of the protest in terms of social justice. These broad-based demands that people be put before the economy attracted wide support but generated few practical proposals. This was very much a civil society movement that distrusted political parties and professional politicians. The Israeli National Student Union became involved at an early stage, with its chair Itzik Shmuli becoming one of the recognized leaders of the protest. Another prominent group was the Dror Israel

movement associated with bygone Labor Zionist ideals. The involvement of groups of all political complexions inevitably produced mixed messages, with anarchist groups sharing an uneasy space with religious settlers advocating the settlement of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) as the solution to the affordable housing problem. On the other hand, there were 'stroller marches' demanding support for families and trade union organizations, teachers and young professionals promoting the rights of their members, and marches by the minority Palestinian citizens of Israel. Meanwhile the anarchists were prone to set about the settlers, and economists and sociologists added a scholarly dimension to street debates.

Although this was a predominantly leftist protest community the leaders were careful to distance themselves from Labor political figures. While the protesters largely embraced the economic concerns of Israel's minority Arab population, social justice for the Palestinians of the occupied territories was conspicuous by its absence from the diverse list of concerns. This in itself was a striking departure from the discourse of the Israeli left, which has for so long been defined in terms of its demand for a meaningful engagement with the Palestinians (Jones 2010). The consciousness of Israel's voters was still seared by the terrible memories of the Palestinian campaign of suicide bombing that accompanied the last gasps of Labor's Oslo years. With the second Intifada still blighting left-wing politics in Israel, the tent protesters sought to construct a political agenda that demanded social justice decoupled from the conflict with the Palestinians. Avoiding the Palestinian issue was an essential step in the construction of an inclusive coalition of interests across the political spectrum, which would empower the demands for social justice. As Uri Gordon has argued, this amounted to a deliberate policy of self-censorship (Gordon 2012: 352–353). Economic technocrats rather than security practitioners were drafted in to give substance to the popular demands for change. If Israeli protests differed from the protests of its regional neighbours, it was not an anti-capitalist protest in the mould of the demonstrations sweeping Europe and New York. Rather, this was a demand that the Netanyahu government soften its policies in the areas of social welfare, housing, education, employment and taxation. In short, this generation demanded the social provision and opportunities available to previous generations. Indeed, this yearning for a recent golden age before the communitarian values had been extinguished by the individualism of economic liberalism, apparently unconnected with the parties of the Knesset, led many to look fondly on the protesters as an embodiment of a bygone socialist Zionism unpolluted by the rhetoric of the occupation. Amos Oz, writing in Haaretz, noted:

> The heart-warming sights of the tent cities spreading through Israel's cities, of the doctors marching for their patients, of the demonstrations and rallies are in themselves a delightful revival of mutual fraternity and commitment. … It is profoundly moving to see protest veterans of all generations, who for years were a voice calling in the wilderness, spending time in the tents of the youngsters who are wisely leading the new protest.
>
> *(Oz 2011)*

The economic route to social justice

Israel had missed out in the 1960s. Youth culture and protest were a European and US phenomenon, with the Israeli government meeting little resistance in 1964 when it

banned the Beatles from entering the country. The nearest Israel came to youth protest unconnected with peace and security was the Black Panther protests of the 1970s. In truth, these were small in number but there was real anger over the very real social injustice of discriminatory practices and social deprivation among the oriental Mizrahi community that formed the bulk of Israel's working class. The cottage cheese protest was a world apart. The wide publicity given to the cottage cheese protest arose from and reinforced Israeli concerns over the rising cost of living. This concern was shared by, but went well beyond, the young renters of Tel Aviv apartments. This is counter-intuitive given the success of the Israeli economy, which had largely avoided the global economic slowdown and the banking crisis. As a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 2010, Israel is recognized as having a fully developed economy. The country's economic growth had been enviable throughout the global economic crisis, with enormous economic success in the hi-tech and bio-tech sectors (OECD 2011). The annual growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of 4 per cent in 2008, 0.8 per cent in 2009, 4.8 per cent in 2010 and 4.7 per cent in 2011 had been well above the OECD average (World Bank 2012). With healthy growth and falling unemployment, Israel looked well placed to avoid the social unrest sweeping the region. But the cottage cheese protest had been successful because of the serious concerns of a growing proportion of Israeli society squeezed by rising prices, low salaries and a taxation system that seemed to be targeting middle-income groups (Horovitz 2011). Economists at the influential Taub Centre for Social Policies in Israel had alarmed ministers in 2010 with an analysis of structural problems that questioned whether Israel's economic miracle was, in fact, sustainable. The troubling economic picture showed an alarming gap between rich and poor that was being held in check by burgeoning welfare support. Dan Ben-David reported that:

> This phenomenon of rising poverty in gross incomes combined with much smaller poverty increases in net income … reflects two types of burden that have been rising steadily since the 1970s. One is a very heavy social burden. While only seven percent of Israeli families were dependent on government assistance to remain above the poverty line in 1979, 12 percent required assistance in 2008 to stay above the poverty line. This growing dependence on public assistance to prevent increases in net income poverty leads to rising frustration and resentment as well. The other burden is economic. Gradually increasing transfer payments become necessary, not for reducing poverty rates, but for preventing the increase in gross income poverty from translating into net income poverty. In the long run, this situation is unsustainable – and signs of this have become visible in recent years.
>
> Levels of income inequality and poverty in Israel are among the highest in the West. As long as the government does not adopt a comprehensive and systemic policy to reduce inequality and poverty at their source – that is, in gross incomes – it will have no choice but to keep deploying an increasingly larger social safety net in order to help more and more families avoid falling below the poverty line. This involves ever growing budgets that will become increasingly difficult to finance.
>
> *(Ben-David 2010: 45)*

The system relied on the middle class to finance the welfare payments. This burden was being carried at the same time as the budget for health, education and housing was being cut and the top 5 per cent of earners saw rapid increases in their wealth. In short,

the overburdened middle classes were being squeezed. This suggests an answer to the otherwise perplexing question of why the protests were such a middle-class affair. The mass protest movements across the Middle East and North Africa may have had a middle-class leadership but they relied on the disadvantaged masses for any chance of success. The Israeli experience was quite different, with the vast bulk of the protesters coming from the young employed middle classes. Michael Shalev has analysed the economic pressures on this section of the Israeli population at the time of the protests (Shalev 2012a, 2012b). His research focuses on young (25- to 34-year-olds), educated Israeli-born Jews living in the centre of the country who were at the forefront of the protests. The findings reveal until 2004 that this group prospered in real terms and relative to the rest of the population. Since 2004 the absolute and relative incomes of the group declined as the cost of living (particularly housing and food costs) rose rapidly. Comparisons between Israel and Western OECD countries show favourable growth and reductions in unemployment but lower wages and a higher cost of living. Taub Centre analysis of OECD and Israeli data shows higher food and housing prices in Israel. At the same time there is a widening gap between rich and poor and deterioration in education and welfare services. Meanwhile, military expenditure was consuming a substantial share of available recourses, amounting to 6.5 per cent GDP in 2010. This represents a very different Israel to that of earlier generations.

The increasing difficulty of this group to achieve their expected standard of living gave rise to the generalized demands across the political spectrum, expressed in terms of social justice. Demands covered the spectrum of housing costs, education, fairer salary for health and welfare workers, control of the cost of food, and fairer tax structures. There was also a call for fairer burden-sharing. While it is easy to understand burden-sharing in terms of higher taxation of the rich, the term has a particular meaning in Israel. Israel is not a theocracy and sees itself in Western secular terms; but there is a minority ultra-religious Jewish Haredi community whose privileged position within Israeli society causes considerable social friction. It is not that they are wealthy. The Haredi community are some of the poorest in Israel. Rather, their exemption from military service rooted in full-time religious study leads to welfare dependency, which is ultimately funded by the increasingly resentful middle class. The result is a middle class serving in the military while funding welfare and the financial burden of military expenditure. Discontent over the failure of the government to address these issues and the power of the religious political parties to defend the privileges of the Haredi community was a recurrent theme of the protesters. This fed into a broader critique of Israeli democracy that saw religious and sectional interests exerting disproportionate power within Israel's coalition system.

Although the protesters focused on socio-economic issues within Israel itself, there was no escape from Israel's dominant security discourse. There was a strong current of criticism of the size of the military budget, which many saw as a consequence of excessive military influence over government policy. Nevertheless, the protests were not demanding the fall of the government. The Arab protests across the region were also rooted in economic distress and injustice, but the Israeli protesters were not calling for the fall of the government. As William Gamson has observed, the influence of the Arab Spring was most potent in awakening the Israeli protesters to the possibility of change and an increased sense of agency (Gamson 2011: 465). There was a belief that protest could bring about change; in reality, as Zev Sternall writing in Haaretz pointed out, this meant engaging with the sordid business of politics and politicians (Sternell 2011).

Engaging with the political establishment

During the protests, attempts by the political parties to engage with the protesters were discouraged by Daphne Leef and her friends. There was a distrust of politics and a fear of contagion. Politicians were not allowed to speak at the rallies. For Leef, politicians and politics were the problem not the solution. In her view there should be less politics, not more (interview with Leef by author, 2012). The protests were about direct democracy or 'non-political politics' (Ram and Filc 2012: 4–5). They saw themselves as outside the political establishment. But as the protests expanded there was recognition that there needed to be a coordinated political engagement with professional politics if the government was to be persuaded to change course. Leef and her friends soon found themselves among leaders of established community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the academy and think-tanks from across Israel's vibrant civil society who were keen to formulate a coherent agenda and to engage with the politicians. While the diffuse nature of organizations and informal leadership resulted in several agendas for change, they could agree on a demand for social justice that spanned welfare provision, housing, taxation structure, investment in infrastructure, medical provision, military spending and religious privileges. Ideologically, it was a call for a rebalancing of liberal economic policy to increase the role of government in defending social equality.

On 8 August 2011 the Netanyahu government responded with the establishment of the Trajtenberg Committee on Socioeconomic Change. There was to be a rapid consultation and report within a month. The committee was tasked to address five issues, which can be summarized as burden-sharing, taxation, social services, economic competition and housing prices. The recommendations amounted to a comprehensive programme of economic and social reform that included extending free schooling to three-year-olds, a commitment to building social housing, lowering the age of free schooling, a more progressive taxation system, increased corporation tax, more spending on public services, subsidized student travel, tackling monopolies, and limitations on the defence budget (Trajtenburg Committee on Socioeconomic Change 2011). Trajtenburg also set out to change the Haredi culture of avoidance of both military service and paid employment by cutting their state benefits. While the Netanyahu government pledged to implement the recommendations, there was a mixed reception from the protest groups. But overall there was surprise with the breadth of the committee's approach and Netanyahu's response. In parallel with Trajtenberg, the protesters had set up their own committee with their own economic experts led by two professors, Aviya Spivak and Yossi Yona, whose recommendations challenged Trajtenberg's by demanding greater reform constructed around a Keynsian analysis (Hellman 2011). Meanwhile, Leef's hasty condemnation of Trajtenberg was out of step with public sentiment and she found her personal support melting away in reaction to her condemnation. Trajtenberg had demonstrated good intentions and the government seemed to be committed to change, albeit less radical than most of the protesters would have liked.

As the protests came to an end the reaction within the coalition limited the changes. While the education change was relatively uncontroversial, the religious party Shas blocked implementation of the welfare changes designed to get the Haredi (ultra-orthodox Jews) working and serving in the army. The deteriorating security situation on Israel's borders with Egypt and Syria, rockets from Gaza and deteriorating relations with Iran enabled Defence Minister Barak to successfully oppose defence cuts. The partial implementation of the committee proposals has led many to see the protests as

a failure and the government response to be more symbolic than actual. Anat Lapidot-Firilla acknowledges the power of the religious parties and the dominance of the national security discourse but criticizes the protesters for their failure to address the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the anti-democratic drift within the Knesset, which ensured that the call for social justice remained utopian (Lapidot-Firilla 2012: 99–100). But the criticism is harsh. This was a protest with a limited objective. It demanded the arrest of Israel's relentless progress towards a US-style liberal individualist socio-economic model. There was no call for the return to Israel's socialist beginnings. Rather, the preference was for a European style of economic liberalism that maintains welfare and social provision and imposes limits on income inequality. Separating the economic demands from the resolution of the Palestinian–Israel conflict may seem like the creation of a selfish agenda but in the context of Israeli politics it was a radical departure based on a coldly realistic analysis of the possible. The problem was less to do with the agenda than with the embedded power of the religious and military sections of Israeli society that were well positioned to block major reform.

The aftermath of the protests

In the run-up to the January 2013 Israeli elections, the expectation had been that the key election issue would be Israel's deteriorating relations with Iran and a possible Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. In fact, the big surprise was that the election focused on socio-economic issues. The parties had been wooing the protest spokespersons from the early days of the protest. Many had expected the leaders of the protest movement to create a new party in the run-up to the elections, but this did not happen. Instead, Daphne Leef and many of her friends maintained their distance or returned to their civil society projects. Others made the transition from non-political politics to conventional politics. Activists Eldad Yaniv and Rani Blair took the route of forming Eretz Hadasha (A New Country), an unconventional political party that relied on social media to target the murkier links between politicians and big business. They succeeded in generating a lot of interest but few votes. The developing links between the protesters and Israel's veteran Labor party were to be of greater significance.

Although the protesters had avoided political labels, they were clearly of the left and Labor regarded itself as the protester's natural political home. The fact that the protest had detached its agenda from the conflict with the Palestinians suited Labor's new leader Shelly Yachimovich down to the ground. Without former leader Ehud Barak, Yachimovich had engineered a swing to the right in security terms. This involved a self-censorship on Palestinian issues and a concentration on a secular socio-economic agenda that ticked most of the protesters' boxes. Consequently, it came as no surprise when protest leaders Stav Shaffir and Itzik Shmuli were revealed as Labor party candidates for the Knesset. Others included journalists and activists Merav Michaeli and Micky Rosenthal who had been supportive of the protests. Yachimovich announced that the objective of her economic programme was to 'present a new, alternative approach that, unlike the policies of the last decade, would focus on how to rehabilitate the middle class and allow young people and society's disenfranchised tiers to make a decent living' (Lis 2012). Labor had succeeded in reinventing itself, ultimately winning 15 seats as the third largest party in the Knesset. Shaffir and Shmuli had swopped non-political politics for real politics. But the new agenda also appealed to a middle class who would never have thought to protest. They were looking for representatives who

were untainted by the old parties but also had a clearer association with the working middle class rather than the leftist students. Enter glamorous TV personality Yair Lapid and his new party Yesh Atid (There is a Future). Campaigning under the slogan of 'where is the money' and a secular middle-class agenda Lapid took votes from the centre right and the uncommitted voters to race to second spot in the Knesset with 19 seats. This was the real outcome of the Tent Protests in creating a secular middle-class agenda divorced from the peace process that attracted new politicians and new voters alike.

The Tent protests in Israel were a youthful, secular middle-class affair that created a new political agenda of social justice. It brought new politicians to the Knesset and created a powerful centre to what had previously been an overwhelmingly right-wing Knesset. The Netanyahu government was still returned to power as the largest party, but significantly weakened. In the aftermath, the real challenge is not to Netanyahu so much as the religious parties, whose stranglehold over Israel's coalition governments has reinforced the social and economic privileging of their communities. As the new members of the Knesset were inducted in a glittering event, over 1000 protesters stood outside, intent on reminding the new politicians of their commitment to change and pledging to take to the streets again should their agenda be discarded. At the time of writing, Netanyahu is trying to square the circle of a coalition of the secular centre and the religious right. This is not a recipe for political change and the political legacy of Israel's 2011 Tent Protests remains in doubt.

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Part VIII

The Arab Spring in a Global Context

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Revolutions in North Africa

A View from the South of the Continent

Shamil Jeppie

Introduction

The historic events in North Africa since December 2010 have affected, in multiple ways, the countries sharing common borders across the Sahara Desert and even countries further to the south. Among the countries of the Sahara and Sahel that have not directly had sustained uprisings but were and are influenced by the 'Arab Spring' are Mali and Sudan. The *coup d'état* in Mali in late March 2012 was led by middle-ranking officers critical of the government's inability to deal with an armed insurgency by the Tuaregs in the northern parts of the country. The Tuareg insurgents eventually declared independence for the country's entire north-eastern region known as the Azawad. The insurgents were apparently emboldened by well-equipped and trained Tuareg fighters who had fled Libya after the uprising and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing of that country and the eventual killing of Colonel Gaddafi in October 2011. Malian soldiers in distant northern towns such as Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao simply fled from their posts when the rebels approached. The *coup d'état*, the subsequent withdrawal of the military and the installation of a caretaker president who was then attacked in his office, and the occupation of the key northern towns by different factions of the rebels – including a militant Wahhabi grouping called Ansar al-Din – represented a wholly unstable situation in Mali. This is the most outstanding case of the unintended consequences and external impact of the so-called Arab Spring on the continent. In January 2013 the French landed in Mali to recover Malian territory taken by the rebels.

The Arab Spring was watched with great interest throughout the continent. Rulers and ruled alike kept an eye on the dramatic developments in Tunis and Maydan al-Tahrir, with rulers fearing similarly threatening events that could unseat them and various sections of the citizenry keenly interested to adapt some of the lessons of protest in their own countries. Thus, in Zimbabwe there was a ban on people communicating about the events in Egypt. There were protests from June 2011 in Senegal against the presidential re-election campaign of Abdullahi Wade. The 80-year-old had received a High Court judgement allowing him to run for a third term. He was eventually beaten in the run-off election by Macky Sall.

The Arabic-speaking ruling elite in northern Sudan remained unaffected until late June 2012, although there were attempts during 2011 to stage protest meetings. The Sudanese were preoccupied with other significant developments: the breakup of the Sudan and birth of South Sudan in July 2011 and soon after a border war been the two states. In late June 2012, however, increasing numbers of protesters took regularly to the streets to protest the government austerity measures and the rising cost of living. The Bashir government has promised to crack down hard on these protests. They are once again invoking the language of 'Islamic sharia' and a '100 per cent Islamic constitution' in an attempt to restore their faltering legitimacy.

There are thus multiple instances of the influence and impact of the 'Arab Spring' far beyond the borders of the countries where Arabic is the dominant language. Writing from the southern end of the continent, I want to first offer a reading of the events of the northern parts of the continent and place them in larger and deeper historical context. I hope to introduce some considerations regarding the understanding of these events as 'revolutions' that I believe are not often enough raised, admittedly because the events are still in the making and actors are too deeply involved in keeping the process of protest and revolt alive, while commentators are mostly concerned with keeping up with them. In the second part of this chapter I will try to make the case for a comparative reading of these developments with a specific period and experience in the history of Southern Africa (circa 1975–1994), an exciting but also very violent period that saw the last of the settler-colonial regimes of the region win majority rule.

Intifadah and *thawra* begin in Africa

While a large political science literature is devoted to authoritarianism in the Arab world until the Arab Spring, the literature on social movements there was almost wholly concerned with Islamist organizations. Yet, there is a pattern of mobilization, protest and periodic resurgence of movements against the authoritarian state. This present turn of radical challenges to the state could be linked to that of the 1980s, which reminds us of a longer recent tradition of sustained protest that in certain cases has resulted in changes in government. In March 1985 an uprising spread through Khartoum, capital of the Republic of Sudan, while the country's president, Ja'afar Numayri, was on a trip to the US. It was also his exit from power. The popular uprising against his rule lasted only a few weeks before his party apparatus, security services and supporters had to make way for an interim military authority. By April 1986 a new civilian government was in power. This was a major achievement for the Sudanese who had lived with the authoritarian and capricious regime of Numayri since 1969. His rule began in the name of socialism with support from the well-organized Sudanese Communist Party; it ended after his turn to *Sharia* punishment, the so-called 'September laws' – with support from the well-organized Sudanese Muslim Brothers – and an ally the West in the troubled Horn of Africa. The popular *intifadah* against the Numayri regime is among the many heroic uprisings of the Sudanese. The Sudanese uprising is also a reminder of the longstanding capabilities of peoples in the region to rise up against repressive and unpopular governments.

Two years later and thousands of kilometres to the north-east of Khartoum, in December 1987, Palestinian youth who knew only Israeli military occupation since 1967 began an uprising that would continue for years. It would give rise to the Oslo Accords, another round of uprisings (the 'second *intifadah*' of 2000) and the elaboration of

new forms of repression. But the 1987 uprising introduced the term *intifadah* into the vocabulary of the region and the world. '*Intifadah*' was a specific Palestinian phenomenon for many across the world after this. Arab regimes even fostered celebrations of that *intifadah* while they repressed any space for contestation and uprisings internally.

Yet, there were skirmishes and radical contestation across the region. *Intifadah* came to define rebellion and uprisings against the state. It generally was used in cases where the power imbalance was huge and the issues very clear. However, it was not always used when protests became more sustained uprisings or military insurrections.

Throughout the 1980s and into the new millennium, the states of North Africa and the surrounding region ('Middle East') came to face opponents with militaristic tactics and capacities. It began with the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat in October 1981 during a military parade by army officers liked to the 'Islamic Group' and 'Islamic Jihad'. With this assassination there was a major state crackdown and an ongoing armed opposition engaged the state's military across Egypt. After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan many of the Arab fighters who went there came back and fought their states in a version of 'permanent revolution'. Nobody used *intifadah* for this. It was *irhab* or terrorism. The state used this threat of *irhab* to muzzle opposition and crack down on any potential *intifadahs*. The state even managed to win over organized sections of the secular left in the fight against this terror in the name of religion. Thus, the last major *intifadah* in Egypt were the so-called bread riots of 1977 that shook the Sadat government. Resistance to the state remained mostly dispersed, sporadic and unorganized.

In North Africa in the 1990s Algeria was far more dangerous than Egypt. The latter had a low-intensity war between the state and Islamist groupings but nothing compared with the experience in Algeria. The large-scale armed conflict between the Algerian military and Islamist militants quickly became a civil war in the 1990s. The cause of the conflict was the cancellation of a second round of elections in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) performed confidently. The FIS proved to be a major challenge to the ruling party and there was a possibility that these parties would win the elections of 1991. Consequently, they were cancelled, which in turn led leading member of these parties either fleeing or turning to take up arms. Between 1992 and 1998 a civil war plagued the entire country. Tens of thousands were killed mostly at the hands of groups such as the Armed Islamic Group and the state's paramilitary forces. The Algerian state has always spoken of its fight against *irhab* (terror). Tens of thousands of Algerians died in the brutal civil war. With memories of the repression and civil war of the 1990s still fresh, the attempts at *intifadah* in Algeria were half-hearted.

What has happened in the region since December 2010 is described among the actors there as a revolution (*thawra*). This is especially the case in Egypt. It is not necessary to narrate here the chronology of events since the immolation of Mohamed Bouazzi in Tunis, the fleeing of Bin Ali and the impact of these events upon other states.

In Tunisia the overthrow of the ruler took about one month. Within about a year it had a new government. Tunisia is among the smallest of the countries of the region – in geographical extent and in population size. Since independence in 1956 it was ruled by an elite that grew increasingly out of touch with its population in terms of culture, language and wealth. The state and the elite were oriented towards the West and France, in particular. The fear of *irhab* was used by the state to stifle opposition and dissent. However, the uprising against the Bin Ali dictatorship was non-violent and, in

fact, largely limited to seeing the removal of the man, his wife and the elite around him. To what extent it was a *thawra* is another matter, which we will explore in a moment.

Egypt has a long affection for the use of the term *thawra.* In popular speech and media *intifadah* is far too limited and timid to describe major events in modern Egyptian history. So even a *coup d'état* is described as a revolution (*thawra*) and here is a list of the modern Egyptian revolutions: 'Urabi's in 1882, Nationalist in 1919, a *coup d'état* to end about a century and a half of monarchy in 1952, and finally the events of 2011. In Egypt they are sometimes more specific and a revolution is seen not so much as a process, and is therefore assigned a period of a year or a few years, but rather is given a month and day. So we have the 'Revolution of January 25', referring to the date Mubarak left office for the resort town of Sharm al-Sheikh.

So far I have paid some attention to a few Arabic words. This brings me to the role of communication in the recent events in the region. Language specialists inside the region have bemoaned the decline in standards of Arabic usage across the region. Some foreign specialists have noted the major dialectical differences across the Arabic-speaking world and that the differences are, in fact, growing. In other words, there is a steady breakup of the Arabic linguistic community – the basis of Arab nation-building and nationalism. However, the speed at which news of events spread through *Al Jazeera* and other region-wide media points to a lively persistence of the linguistic ties that bind the region. The dramatic events in Tunis were immediately taken up in Cairo, then in Tripoli, and Manama, and San'a and Damascus. There is thus a basis for invoking the signifier 'Arab' for the events in the region. Some of the slogans are the same; admittedly these are slogans, demands expressed in simple terms such 'The people want the fall of the system' or 'Dignity' or 'Go (Leave)'. It appears then that the elements of an Arab/ic identity that transcends the fragile nation-states (products of 20th-century imperial power) remain attractive and powerful. The new communication media – mobile phone, email, Facebook and Twitter – were undoubtedly important but their significance tends to be overestimated. They were tools and in their absence other instruments of communication would have been found to spread information. I would not want to dismiss them but it is simplistic to emphasize the role of information and communications technology (ICT). As important was the fact that there was a symbolic space – Tahrir Square, Liberation Square – where the multitude convened and which was, in fact, occupied and continues to draw protesters.

There was a deep resentment of the regimes that had led to sustained and frequent acts of resistance throughout Egypt for at least three to four years before the events of 2011. Egypt was actually on the brink for some time. Many critical intellectuals and activists were aware of what was happening in the small towns in the Nile Delta and industrial towns outside Cairo; but were also aware of the vast and ruthless state security apparatus ready to apply ever more repression. The 6 April movement emerged as a group of young people to mobilize support for the labour movement and, in particular, for a minimum wage. The young men and women – from middle-class families of Muslim and Coptic faiths – were unprepared for what they were about to witness in 2011 but nevertheless played a catalytic role.

What were the conditions in Egypt on the eve of the *intifadah* of 2011? Dissatisfaction with the Mubarak regime was growing over the previous decade. Using the cover of the 'war on terror', the regime was able to tighten the screws on opposition even further. Mubarak presented Egypt to the West as a bulwark against extremist terrorism, safe for investment, and a moderate leader keen on democracy. Thus Obama chose Cairo to

address the Muslim world about a new key in relations between the West and Islam. As long as the regime kept the peace with Israel, the annual aid of US$3 billion would come in (largely to the military). Mubarak, in fact, bent over backwards in relations with Israel – far beyond any pervious Egyptian ruler and possibly as much as the Jordanians. Thus the imprisonment of Palestinians in Gaza was also the work of the Egyptian security and military.

Mubarak and the obedient men around him grew ever more distant from their populace, the country, the region, the continent. His party always won elections by huge margins, opponents were imprisoned and disappeared, and the security apparatus and military were in control of large parts of the economy and operations of government. Living standards and income were in decline yet a small elite around the Mubarak and the National Democratic Party (NDP) were enriching themselves. Forty per cent of Egyptians live on US$1 to $2 per day. Unemployment and underemployment are huge. There was no minimum wage legislation. The official trade union federation was filled with NDP members and completely opposed to worker interests. The education system is in total disarray with most children on completion of primary school still functionally illiterate. Higher education expanded rapidly under Mubarak with Cairo having about 1 million students at its three state universities. During the Mubarak years, university graduates without jobs for many years after graduation was a standard feature of the town. Many went to work in the Gulf, if lucky. Corruption was a way of life. Mubarak was rolling back whatever remained of the popular measures to attempt to redistribute wealth introduced by Nasr.

It is clear that Mubarak was, in fact, attempting to reintroduce monarchy with himself as the founder of a new dynasty and thus his son, Gamal, was being groomed to take over from him. This hereditary transfer of power was a pattern for Arab states even without monarchies (e.g., Libya and Syria). The history of monarchy is very recent in the region (e.g., the dynasties of Jordan and Saudi Arabia are both 20th-century inventions). Only Morocco has a dynasty with temporal depth; the Alawites go back to 1665. Thus the 'Arab Spring' there never questioned monarchy but demanded a genuine constitutional monarchy.

Egypt is the largest state in the region. It is in many ways and in many matters a leader in the Arab world. But the country that started it all, Tunisia, has many similar elements that caused the initial rebellion.

Libya and Syria had social policies that sought to address the social and economic problems of the majority. Gross inequalities were, indeed, addressed there and social indicators for health, mortality and education (including for women) were positive. However, the regimes were determined to hold onto power and eliminate opposition, making both hugely unpopular. Both used radical and populist rhetoric as a way to increase its popularity; this worked more for certain audiences abroad than internally. But Gaddafi was not overthrown in a revolution. Not to underplay the role of the rebels, it was a NATO campaign against Gaddafi's regime that brought him down. The struggle for power is far from over in Libya. For geo-political reasons, Syria is given different treatment. The regime has been able to hold onto power through manipulating the violence, and the opposition is seriously divided. The Syrians will still suffer for many months, if not years, to come. The regime still shows itself to be unified and at least Russia, among the major powers, is still sympathetic to it. The militarization of the conflict in Syria (and Libya) did not happen in Egypt where it was a genuine mass movement with a wide range of political organizations jostling among each other and

giving some leadership. Egypt's oldest, indeed the region's oldest and largest, Islamic movement, the *Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, entered Tahrir Square rather haltingly but through its well-developed networks was able to emerge with a, if not the, leading position. It is widely believed that the *Ikhwan* in Syria would be the beneficiaries of any regime change there.

In Egypt the military's response has been to act or pretend to be an arbiter or middle man. The military will seek to maintain this position even after the presidential elections. The military establishment has too much to lose in any other arrangement. Are there sympathizers with or members of the *Ikhwan* among the military's top echelons? This is a possibility. Egypt's 'revolution' of 1952 was the work of officers. The *Ikhwan*'s associates in the Sudanese military led the coup of 1989 that overthrew the civilian government elected after the *intifadah* of 1985.

That Mubarak's last prime minister was allowed to run in the presidential election at all is curious. A revolution that allows an *ancien* regime figure to contest the election is indicative of the power of the *ancien* regime. That the candidate, Ahmad Shafiq, could win enough votes to contest the run-off election reflects the strength of support for some kind of return to the status quo ante. The remnants of Mubarak's now-dissolved party and the old regime's bureaucracies also provided support for Shafiq's campaign. But it also reflects the nature and leadership of the 'revolutionary' or oppositional forces, their divergence and plurality.

This perhaps speaks of the way in which the events of the 18 months unfolded. There was a wellspring of popular unrest and dissent, which was very largely unorganized. The organized political forces of radical bent were rather distant from this environment. The repressive state had been successful in co-opting some elements of 'the Left' in the name of the 'war on terror' and against 'radical Islam'. Even the best organized movement, the *Ikhwan*, was unprepared for the launching of the momentous events of January 2011. There was thus an organic quality to the unfolding of the *intifadah* that became a revolution. Perhaps the Egyptians can rightly use that term for the genuine human changes that occurred during 2011. Grand structures did not change, and may not change for some time. However, there was a tremendous energy and dignity in the ability to speak up, to speak back, to move around and move freely, to take possession of public spaces and to walk tall. This was not the work of radical Islam or terror but of organic, impulsive movement. It was movement against the arrogance of Mubarak and his like; it still remains to be seen whether it will be movement forward.

In that sense it was a revolution; perhaps not *thawra* (revolution) in any classical sense (French, Russian) and more like the events of 1848. But even the revolutions of 1848, which overthrew the conservative orders of vast parts of Europe in the end, only permitted limited victories by the end of the year and when the 1850s began. As Arno Mayer put it, it saw 'persistence of the old regime'. More dangerously, however, we may already have had the start of a counter-revolution with the financial backing of Saudi Arabia.

We shall only be able to say with hindsight the extent to which 2011 was a revolution and what they achieved. But a whole range of human activities and ideas are being changed and influenced within Egypt and within other states and across the region. Old fashioned nationalism and pan-Arabism may not be revived but here is the basis for regaining sovereignty, and in a much fuller sense.

Since the launch of the uprisings in Tunisia in December 2010 the term *thawra* has been used to describe these events. Are they really revolutions? Does the removal of a

ruler, his cabinet and businessmen close to him constitute a revolution? Most of the rest of the structure of the states – and their supporters and supporting institutions – that have experienced these revolutions in recent months remained and remains in place. One thinks of the media in Tunisia and the judiciary in Egypt. One thinks of the place of the military in all the states which hold onto their privileges; and the generals in Egypt have declared that they will remain above any civilian authority or oversight. In effect, Egypt is experiencing a conservative *coup d'état* out of revolutionary conditions.

Yet, we have to admit that there have been major changes and shifts in power relations in the way in which ordinary people have taken their individual and collective agency to new heights. Fear has been transcended, public spaces repossessed as common spaces to gather and speak back to repressive states.

On the whole, the region, the Arab world, is undergoing a transformation. We do not know where this transformation is really leading but the status quo has been shaken at its core and is changing. On the one hand, there are mass movements for change and for continuing a path of revolution; on the other, there are strong currents to halt the process. They fear further changes. These are the powerful regional forces allied to imperialism and they are a 'counter-revolution'.

1848: An Arab version?

Thinking of contemporary events in comparative historical terms opens many possibilities for seeing the present in a clearer light (or it can mislead). It is possible to look at the events in North Africa and the Middle East through the lens of the events in Europe during the period from 1848. These events also lasted about a year and more and also had a 'knock-on' effect spreading from France to Germany to various parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The events were meant in some way to complete the work that had begun with the French Revolution about 60 years earlier. By the end of the sustained revolts of 1848 there were some limited political reforms as the most conservative politicians fled, but the dominant classes held onto power. I shall not use this comparison on this occasion, although it is a possible comparable historical process to think with.

Instead, I want to use an example from the South, from one part of Africa, to think about another part of the continent and the 'Middle East'. We could compare the unfolding events in North Africa and the Middle East with the period between 1975 and 1980 in Southern Africa.

Insights from revolution in Southern Africa

By the early 1970s, most of the North African states were already celebrating a decade of independence, while at the other end of the continent the struggle against colonialism was still in progress. In 1970, settler rule in Southern Africa looked like it would be in place for another century. The closest comparable case of settler-colonialism in North Africa was Algeria under the French (1830s–1962). The Algerian struggle against the French was of considerable significance to Southern African liberation movements. Indeed, Nelson Mandela travelled secretly to an Algerian guerrilla training camp, where he met Ahmad Ben Bella, and received elementary military training right at the close of the war against France in 1962.

The liberation movements were making progress in their armed struggles against the colonial order. This was the case in South Africa and Namibia (then called South West

Africa), which was ruled by South Africa since the end of World War I. It was the same in Angola and Mozambique, two of the region's Portuguese colonies, and Rhodesia, which was a British colony where the white settler population had unilaterally declared independence in 1965.

While armed liberation struggles were in progress against white minority rule in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia and South Africa, a number of states in the region had earned their independence in the years since the wave of decolonization in the late 1950s and early 1960s: Tanzania (1961), Zambia (1964), Malawi (1964), Botswana (1966), and the small enclave Kingdoms of Lesotho (1966) and Swaziland (1968). It is not necessary to go into the details of what kind of colonial arrangements they were subjected to by the British (colony, protectorate, etc.) and the complicated constitutional arrangements in the years immediately before the transfer of power. British colonial agreements at the formal level can give the impression that there was power-sharing between the representatives of London and the indigenous authorities. In the post-World War II period when it appeared that decolonization would be inevitable, the British engaged with political movements to prepare the colonies gradually for independence. Britain in many ways was successful in managing the decolonization process to suit its political and economic interests. By the mid-1960s they were all independent.

One effect of independence was that as sovereign states the executive in these countries could make their own decisions, such as who to host on its soil or to recognize politically. Independent Zambia and Tanzania would thus come to play an important role in offering bases to resistance movements such as the African National Congress of South Africa and the Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) fighting the Portuguese in Mozambique. Indeed, Frelimo was founded in Tanzania in 1962.

The region's colonial landscape, however, was altered decisively not through any unique or coordinated action on the side of the liberation movements. They were motivated by a common purpose and supported each other whenever necessary. But their unity of purpose did not produce the significant factor that propelled them to a new level of struggle that would lead to independence. Dramatic political change in the distant *metropole* was of crucial significance. This was entirely unpredictable. Politics in Lisbon was about to enter a new phase in the early 1970s. The long dictatorship in Portugal – *Estado Novo*, which began in 1933 – was overthrown in the so-called 'carnation revolution' in 1974. The complex forces that brought this change about require an explanation, but it is too detailed to elaborate here. This change, however, led to the almost immediate end of Portugal's African empire.

The liberation movements in the two southern African Portuguese colonies, Angola and Mozambique, had fought a brutal guerrilla war through the 1960s and finally achieved independence a year after the overthrow of the dictatorship in Lisbon. The year 1975, which saw independence for the Portuguese colonies, was a turning point for the region. If the dictatorship in Portugal had not been overthrown then the liberation movements in the colonies would have had a much longer, bloodier fight. Portugal was the last European colonial power and the poorest to have colonies in Africa. The whole of Southern Africa would change with the break at the weakest link in the colonial system.

This was the era of the Cold War and national liberation movements were viewed in the West as part of a global communist project. Everything had to be done to prevent genuine national liberation. Angola had a number of competing liberation movements and the US managed to use this competition to destabilize the country immediately on

independence. The US purpose was to frustrate the chances of the Communist bloc from having an ally in Southern Africa. In Angola the US and later South Africa would join forces with *Unita* in the south-eastern part of the country. In Mozambique *Frelimo* would shortly face similar destabilization from a grouping called *Renamo*, which was supported by the Rhodesian and South African governments. But the liberation of these states had profound implications for the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

In South Africa the historic victories against Portuguese colonialism were viewed with fear by the white minority but celebrated by the black population. Black students held rallies in various South African cities to celebrate the liberation of Angola and Mozambique. But the real emergence of youth onto the political landscape in South Africa was the uprising across the country from June 1976 that began in the sprawling townships known as Soweto. From here protests spread and students organized and fought police and security forces. If 1975 was a major turning point for the region and created a space for the armed wing of the liberation struggle in South Africa, then the events that started in Soweto in June 1976 represent the internal turning point. Since the massacre at Sharpeville and the subsequent banning of the major political movements, such as the African National Congress in 1961, protest inside South Africa was minimal. The South African liberation movements had started their armed struggle in the early 1960s but to little effect; but with the liberation of Angola and Mozambique they were able to have military camps closer to home. After Soweto thousands of youth left the country to join the armed struggle.

In 1979–1980 the white minority in Rhodesia finally gave in to the forces of liberation and Zimbabwe was born. Only South-West Africa and South Africa remained in white minority hands. The SWAPO (South-West African Peoples Organization) had conducted a guerrilla war against the South African Defence Force from Angola since the 1960s. In pursuit of the SWAPO guerrillas, the SADF entered Angola in 1975 in an undeclared war which brought thousands of young white conscripts to fight in a so-called 'border war'. The SADF had already engaged in skirmishes across the border since the mid 1960s and the mid 1970s saw a larger military engagement, which grew larger over the following decade. This locked South Africa into an undeclared foreign territory where they supported a faction among the Angolans to forestall independence in South-West Africa and to contain the Angola 'communist' regime. But eventually in 1989 Namibia (SWA) won its independence.

Between the time of the liberation of the Portuguese colonies (1975), the Soweto uprising (1976), and the liberation of Zimbabwe (1980), the South African state gradually came to conclude that there had to be some reform of the apartheid system. The racists remained committed to the apartheid system and saw the need to reform aspects of the system. Sections of the capitalist class also realized the need to 'adapt or die' if capitalism were to survive.

On the one hand, they pursued a campaign of counter-insurgency and military superiority against the newly liberated frontline states. They fought a long 'border war' with Angola and supported movements to overthrow the governments in Angola and Mozambique. The South African military would, very much like the Israelis, cross international borders and bomb neighbouring states that supported the liberation movements.

Internally, the state embarked on its 'reform' of some apartheid laws and began complicated programmes to make the oppressed population believe that the system was

improving. This strategy, of course, did not work. During the 1980s the resistance to apartheid became even more extensive and pressure built up on the white minority even from the 'international community' through campaigns such as the Boycott and Divestment campaigns.

The regional situation – freedom for the frontline states – and the Soweto uprising defined the period of 1975 to 1980. These revolutions in Angola and Mozambique and the events of Soweto did not bring the apartheid state down but constitute a major historic moment and break. The state and capital knew that from then on there was no going back to the usual system of racial capitalism that had been in place for decades. By 1989 the state was talking to Nelson Mandela in prison about his release, the unbanning of banned political movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), and the eventual start of negotiations. This story led to the first democratic elections in 1994 and is now well known.

The 'Arab Spring' began where it was least expected a change would emerge, Tunisia, in December 2010. It spread to Egypt and throughout North Africa – except Algeria, where it may still come – and elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world. As of first half of 2013, despite the elections in Tunisia and Egypt, it remains in progress, often with outbreaks of violence. It has had its peaceful and its very violent phases. This chain of events over a sustained period could be compared with the concatenation of events in Southern Africa, which this chapter offered as a possibility for comparative reflection. There are many ways of comparing the events that constitute the Arab Spring and the approach of this chapter has been to place a region, Southern Africa, not easily conceived as a likely region, to compare with the Arab-speaking parts of Africa and the Middle East. This is therefore very much experimental and exploratory; as one scholar recently argued: 'Comparables cannot be constructed without experimentation' (Detienne 2008: xiv). The plea of this chapter is for us to begin to take regions of the South seriously in comparative thinking. Southern African histories beyond the nation-state offer good grounds to begin to think about events in the north of the continent.

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The European Union and Democracy Promotion

Readjusting to the Arab Spring

Tobias Schumacher

Introduction: The European Union and the Arab Spring

The outbreak in 2011 of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) impacted strongly on the European Union (EU) and its relations with the countries in this region. While the southern Mediterranean, due to its geographical proximity and its legacy of colonial rule, has always ranked quite highly on the EU's foreign policy agenda, the recent upheavals in almost all Arab Mediterranean societies have ultimately made the southern neighbourhood the EU's key foreign policy priority. For the first time ever, the EU felt compelled to explicitly call upon its longstanding authoritarian partners to respect the democratic aspirations of their peoples. For years it had systematically avoided such public announcements as a consequence of its close and rather complex relations with Arab Mediterranean rulers and its predominant obsession with short-term stability. The seemingly contagious spillover effect of Tunisia's democratization into neighbouring societies, however, made the EU and the governments of its then 27 member states gradually aware that the 'democracy promotion landscape' (Burnell 2011: 4) in their southern neighbourhood was changing rapidly and they had to adjust to new actors and new dynamics. This lesson-drawing brought results at the European Commission ('the Commission' from here on) through its Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). For the first time in 18 years of institutionalized Euro-Mediterranean relations, it has engaged in an unprecedented display of self-criticism, acknowledging that the EU's democracy promotion efforts in the southern Mediterranean had by and large failed (Füle 2011). Only some months later, in the wake of the first free and fair elections in Tunisia, yet a third novelty in Euro-Mediterranean relations presented itself. Confronted with the convincing victory of Tunisia's Al-Nahdha Party in the parliamentary elections of October 2011, the Commission was now aware that 'through democratic contests of power, Islamists, along with other democrats, are transforming the Arab Spring from an amorphous moral tumult to an institutionalised democratic process' (Sadiki 2011). In most cases the EU abandoned its longstanding policy of non-engagement with Islamist actors, and

acknowledged them as a legitimate political force and new political interlocutors (Ashton and Füle 2011a; Behr 2013).

Responding to these developments, this chapter provides an overview of the EU's response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring and Arab uprisings and discusses whether the EU's newfound rhetoric is matched by substantial changes in its democracy promotion *policies* and democracy promotion *commitment* towards the countries of the southern Mediterranean during the period of 2011 to 2013. It argues that the EU was quick in engaging in a declaratory approach and presenting a new neighbourhood strategy with the publication, on 8 March 2011, of a joint communication under the promising title 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean' – that is, less than two months after the fall of Tunisian President Bin Ali. Nevertheless, neither this approach nor this strategy, nor the subsequently adopted 'New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood', with which the latter converged, has made EU democracy promotion policies in its southern neighbourhood more effective. This does not mean that, in issue-areas that do not relate directly to the nature of the partner country's political system, the process of policy convergence (underpinning the ENP since its inception in 2003) is also necessarily affected in a negative way. As has been argued elsewhere, the selection and adoption of sets of rules and regulations can take place within trans-governmental functional cooperation, thereby allowing the EU to promote democratization *indirectly* 'through the "back door" of joint problem-solving' (Freyburg et al 2009) – and it can also occur for other reasons than mere engagement on the part of the EU (Barbé et al 2009). What this means, however, is that the EU's *direct* democracy promotion efforts in the southern Mediterranean in the context of the Arab Spring and Arab uprisings continue to perpetuate the structural weaknesses and contradictions of past policy approaches.

Responding to the uprisings: The limits of EU external action

In the early days and weeks of the Arab Spring, instead of letting the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS) make use of its prerogatives, the EU was more of a passive bystander than a proactive force. It ignored all existing communication and cooperation channels, such as the bilateral association councils, to exert pressure on its authoritarian partners. Nor did it use the local EU delegations in southern Mediterranean countries to engage visibly in 'overt diffusion' (Manners 2002: 245) of its democratic values, norms and principles. This wait-and-see strategy – which also revealed the absence of any foresight and contingency planning in the EEAS, the Commission and the Council – reflected first and foremost the concerns on the part of both the EU and its member states' governments that the sudden display of popular discontent with authoritarian rule may affect their security and economic interests.

The negative impression that this created in Arab Mediterranean societies, most prominently in Libya and Egypt where distrust in the EU is most developed (TNS Opinion 2012a, 2012b), was substantiated by two factors. Firstly, on numerous occasions – through its HR/VP (High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission), the Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, and the President of the European Council – the EU issued statements that no longer corresponded to the political realities on the ground when they were finally released. One such example is the statement by Commissioner Füle and HR/VP Ashton on 14 January 2011, calling for a national dialogue in Tunisia, although it was already clear that the revolutionary dynamics had advanced to the point

that political pacts between the regime and the opposition were no longer a viable and realistic option (Ashton and Füle 2011b). Another display of the EU's rather 'delusional' reasoning occurred when, in the middle of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprising in early 2011, as well as in the wake of the violent removal of pro-Morsi demonstrators from public spaces in August 2013, EU bodies repeatedly called upon the national authorities and security forces in both countries to protect the demonstrators and respect their democratic aspirations. Such pleas ignored the fact that these institutions were not only precisely the target of public protest in that they embodied discredited regimes, but were also responsible for the escalation of the violence in the first place. Second, the EU was inconsistent in its declarations: many of its agents made statements that contradicted one another. This was the case, for example, when in early 2011 EU High Representative Catherine Ashton opposed European Council President Hermann van Rompuy, who declared that the objective of military intervention in Libya was regime change.[1] Similarly, shortly after the outbreak of the 25 January Revolution in Egypt, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel publicly declared their conviction that a democratic transition led by President Mubarak was possible, whereas British Prime Minister David Cameron reprimanded Catherine Ashton at the European Council summit in early February 2011, saying that she was too soft on 'state-sponsored violence' against Egyptian protesters.[2]

Unsurprisingly, this practice impacted strongly upon the external perception of the EU as a crisis manager and a potential democracy promoter in the emerging transitions in the south. The process of 'informational diffusion' (Manners 2002: 244), one of the ways through which the EU is believed to transmit its norms and thus prepare the ground for rule transfers, turned into 'informational confusion' at quite an early stage in the Arab Spring. This is exemplified by the French foreign minister's public offer to provide the Tunisian security forces with expertise on crowd control and the French government's authorization of a shipment of tear gas grenades just a few days before Bin Ali was ousted. Similarly, Ashton's statement on Egypt on 10 February 2011, in which she reminded the Egyptian authorities that 'full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential' (Ashton 2011a), was no less problematic, as she qualified her words only two weeks later by stating that the EU 'wishes to support what is for Egypt to lead' (Ashton 2011b). Two years later, and in response to Egyptian President Morsi's (temporal) adoption of a presidential decree which was supposed to put him above judicial control, Ashton stressed the need to have 'strategic patience' (Pinfari 2013: 463) with Egypt, whereas the European Parliament (EP), first through a Dutch MEP and in March 2013 even through a resolution, called for the suspension of any budgetary support to Egypt 'if no major progress is made regarding respect for human rights and freedoms, democratic governance and the rule of law' (European Parliament 2013). Even more emblematic of the EU's difficulties to transmit its norms through informational diffusion was its response to the removal of President Morsi by the Egyptian military on 3 July 2013. Although Ashton called upon all parties to return to the democratic process and expressed her 'deep concern' (Ashton 2013), she neither condemned the intervention nor called it a coup. This stands in stark contrast to the reactions of some EU member states' governments, which, while stopping short of calling the military takeover a *coup d'état*, considered it a 'major setback for democracy in Egypt' (Guido Westerwelle), a 'dangerous precedent' (William Hague) or 'very disturbing' (Carl Bildt).[3]

In fact, these examples illustrate that the entering-into-force of the Lisbon Treaty has not contributed to a more balanced relationship neither between the new EEAS and

the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) nor between the neighbourhood policy and EU democracy promotion policies. Although some regard the newly established presence of at least one third of the EU member states' diplomats in the EEAS as favouring a reduction in friction between EU institutions and member states' governments (Quille 2010: 74), the rather divergent handling of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings by those governments proved that vertical intra-institutional inconsistency is still strongly affecting EU foreign policy formulation and implementation. As regards the former, it may indeed be argued that the adoption of the 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean', as much as the 'New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood', just shortly after the outbreak of the Arab Spring points to improved capabilities on the part of the EU to react swiftly in times of crisis. In fact, both Ashton and Füle repeatedly stressed this point throughout 2011 and never tired of declaring that the partnership and subsequently the 'New Response' represent the EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring. Yet, such an interpretation is misleading as the revision of the ENP was already decided in the second half of 2010. At that time, the EU and the regime of then Tunisian President Bin Ali were in the final phase of bilateral negotiations for Tunisia to be awarded 'advanced status'. In other words, the actual reformulation of the ENP may have been accelerated by the outbreak of the Arab Spring, though its revision was, in reality, a relatively time-consuming process that took months rather than weeks. The result was that the 'new' ENP, not least against the backdrop of existing inconsistencies, reads more like a blueprint for an assistance programme concentrating on financial, economic and humanitarian aid than a coherent and clearly defined strategy to promote democracy during times of political transition. In parts, the inter-institutional imbalances between the EEAS, the Commission and the Council secretariat, particularly evident as far as the increased marginalisation of crisis management structures and the coordination of strategy matters and their financial implementation are concerned (Koenig 2012: 19), were implicitly acknowledged by Ashton in mid 2011. The occasion was when she proved to be instrumental in the appointment of a Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean (EUSR) and – upon the suggestion of the latter – the establishment of bilateral task forces with each Mediterranean partner country, destined to coordinate the different EU and financial institutions' involvement in implementing the 'new' ENP.[4] The regular presence of the EUSR in the region contributed somewhat to improved 'overt diffusion' of the EU's values, norms and principles, and it was due to his efforts that he, together with the HR/VP, was the only external actor that was accepted by the Egyptian military and the Muslim Brotherhood to (temporarily and unsuccessfully) mediate between the two sides following the removal of pro-Morsi camps in Cairo in the Summer of 2013 (Pinfari 2013: 465). However, in spite of repeated human rights violations by the Egyptian security forces and, though less visibly, the Algerian, Moroccan and Jordanian authorities, the EU refrained from invoking existing conditionality clauses,[5] opted against more assertively transferring the six norms that constitute the EU as a normative power, and thus substantiated notions that the EU is likely to continue to compromise on its own normative foreign policy objectives.

The EU and civil war in Libya and Syria: European indecision

In contrast, the EU's response to the human rights infringements and the systematic and brutal repression in Syria and Libya that eventually led to a civil war in both

countries is different. While the EU also froze the assets of some Egyptian and Tunisian regime members in early 2011, wider-ranging restrictive measures characterize the EU's approach towards both countries (e.g. arms embargos, asset freezes, travel bans and trade sanctions, including an import ban on hydrocarbon products, banking and financial services, and telecommunications monitoring equipment). These are combined with a much more outspoken declaratory policy. By mid-2013, 25 rounds of sanctions were enacted against Syria and, following the massacre of civilians in Houla in late May 2012, Syrian diplomats were expelled by various EU member states, such as Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and The Netherlands.[6] As far as post-Gaddafi Libya is concerned, the EU lifted certain asset freezes and eased arms restrictions in September 2011, more than a month before the civil war was officially declared to be over, though numerous liquid Libyan assets and investments are still frozen. Although the EU's response to the civil war in Libya and the growing repression in Syria was more outspoken and seemingly more determined, EU foreign policy-making suffered, in both cases, even more visibly from the problem of vertical and horizontal inconsistency.

From the moment the Arab Spring arrived in Syria in March 2011, it took the Foreign Affairs Council more than four weeks to adopt its first conclusions as a result of the differing interpretations of the depth and severity of the crisis among EU member states. These differences are reflected in the conclusions, which, in tone and substance, were a copy of the statements made in the context of the Tunisian, Egyptian and even Bahraini and Yemeni uprisings (Schumacher 2012b). Apparently resorting to a kind of template, the EU 'deplored the many deaths resulting from ongoing violence, strongly condemned the use of force by the security forces against peaceful demonstrators, and urged the authorities to exercise restraint' (Council of the European Union 2011). Furthermore, by calling 'on the Syrian authorities to investigate the deaths of protesters and to bring those responsible to account through a fair and transparent process' (Council of the European Union 2011), the EU fostered the notion that the perpetrators were to be found outside rather than within the regime. It took yet another four weeks – this time due to objections by the Estonian and Cypriot governments – until EU member states' governments could agree on the imposition of a first set of restrictive measures (Council of the European Union 2011). The EU then slipped back into the role of a passive observer that merely engaged in declaratory rhetoric. Only in late August 2011, in response to the massive deterioration of the domestic situation in Syria and the sharp criticism vented by the EP,[7] and just after the adoption of another round of restrictive measures, did the EU – through its members France, Germany, the UK and Portugal – become somewhat more active by taking the issue to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Since then, once it eventually overcame protracted internal disputes and extended its sanctions to include the economic sector as well, EU crisis management formulation and action has been dominated by intergovernmental initiatives by some of its member states at the expense of a more prominent role for the EEAS and the HR/VP. While none of these initiatives have, even rhetorically, linked up with the EU's normative objective of external democracy promotion and the diffusion of democratic norms, values and principles, they have helped the EU to play at least a certain political role in the Syrian crisis (Gowan 2012). But they have not yet had any sustainable effect on the EU's key objectives in the country, namely to end the bloodshed and convince the Syrian regime of the need to initiate a peaceful transition. Also, within the EU, the predominance of uncoordinated intergovernmental action over collective efforts continues to generate friction. On 29 May 2012, when several EU member states, including

Germany and France, expelled their Syrian ambassadors, French President Hollande remarked publicly, and without prior consultation with other EU leaders, that a military intervention can no longer be ruled out.[8] Just a few months later, in November 2012, it was France again that defied a common EU position when it unilaterally recognized the Syrian National Council (SNC), previously formed in Doha, 'as the sole representative of the Syrian people, and as the future government of a democratic Syria bringing an end to Bashar Assad's regime',[9] thus forcing the EU to follow suit just a few days later. While Italy, the second EU member state that recognized the SNC, adopted the same wording, the EU, however, mainly due to internal disagreements over the legitimacy and representativeness of the SNC, recognized the latter only as 'legitimate representatives of the aspirations of the Syrian people'.[10] Had France's and Italy's unilateral advances already sparked a controversy among EU foreign ministers, things went from bad to worse in late May 2013 when French foreign minister Laurent Fabius and his British counterpart William Hague at an EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels vetoed the extension of the EU arms embargo. While this led the meeting to descend in mutual recrimination, with the majority of member states arguing against the lifting of the embargo out of fear that such a measure would lead to a further escalation of the conflict, all 27 did eventually assent in order to preserve at least the semblance of a unified position. That this approach was not sustainable came to the fore in the wake of a chemical attack on a suburb outside Damascus on 21 August 2013, resulting in hundreds of casualties. Catherine Ashton called the attack a 'crime against humanity' and demanded in a rather blunt fashion a 'clear and strong response',[11] whereas European Council president Van Rompuy, echoing Commission President Barroso, opposed any military action.[12] While this was in line with the position of the majority of EU member states' governments, France was quick to put the blame on the Syrian regime and worked towards the creation of an international, non-EU coalition determined 'to penalise the use of chemical weapons by Assad's regime and to dissuade [it] with a forceful and firm response',[13] according to French Prime Minister Ayrault. This disunity became also visible at the G-20 Summit in St Petersburg in early September 2013 when Germany refused to join France, the UK, Italy and Spain to sign a US-sponsored declaration which called for a strong (i.e. military) response, just to acknowledge 24 hours later at an EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Vilnius that 'some consequences will have to be drawn'.[14] Regardless of the fact that due to the subsequent changes in the position of the US, any military response has eventually become rather unlikely, it is developments such as these that have consistently undermined the EU's claim that the 'New Response for a Changing Neighbourhood' is *the* strategic response to the Arab Spring.

This also became visible during the Libyan civil war, during which the EU effectively failed to comply with its self-imposed postulate that the 'new' ENP 'should be a policy of the Union with the Member States aligning their own bilateral efforts in support of its overall political objectives' (European Commission and High Representative 2011a: 1). On 25 February 2011, only ten days after the first wave of riots had broken out, the EU member states' governments displayed a certain sense of activism when they decided to discuss the situation in Libya at a European Council summit meeting. However, they were unable to cast aside individual foreign and external trade policy interests in Libya, most notably those of France, Italy and Germany, for the sake of coherence and internal unity (Koenig 2012). Not least due to the hesitation of Italy and Malta, both of which were struggling to cope with an uncontrolled inflow of Tunisian

refugees, a French-supported German–Finnish proposal for the adoption of immediate and wide-ranging sanctions was rejected in favour of a merely informal agreement that needed further legal specification.[15] The member states' governments were still unable to go beyond what Menon calls the 'logic of leaderlessness' (Menon 2008), even after the National Transitional Council (NTC) was established on 27 February 2011 and the Arab League, on 12 March 2011, had officially called for the UNSC to immediately impose a no-fly zone on Libyan military aviation, thus responding to Ashton's call that the approval of the League was crucial for any further EU involvement.[16] While they were quick to comply with UNSC Resolution 1970, the governments were deeply divided over how to respond to the establishment of the NTC – hence, France's unilateral recognition of it on 10 March 2011, the same day an extraordinary informal Foreign Affairs Council meeting was supposed to find a common position on this matter. The Italian and Spanish foreign ministers both argued that recognition must 'be the result of agreement among all of the countries of the European Union',[17] and the British foreign minister stressed that the UK's policy is to recognize states and not groups within states,[18] in response to Ashton's remark that the French government had every right to recognize the NTC.[19] These statements underline the degree to which intra- and inter-institutional inconsistences were at play. Also on 10 March, as if this had not been enough, the EP adopted a resolution on the southern neighbourhood and Libya, in which it called upon the HR/VP to establish official relations with the NTC, and thus sided with the French initiative. However, the resolution is also noteworthy for another reason: to date, it remains the first official EU document adopted during the early days of the Arab Spring where an EU institution explicitly links the credibility of the EU's policies and their impact upon transition processes in the MENA region to the pursuit of a cohesive and value-based common foreign policy and to a revision of the EU's democracy and human rights promotion policies. It goes beyond the intra-Council divergences, the Council's rather narrow stability-oriented focus and the aid-dominated thinking of the Commission and the EEAS. By emphasizing the need 'to create an implementation mechanism for the human rights clause in all agreements with third countries' (European Parliament 2011: bt.pt. 21), it positioned itself amid the Arab Spring as the only EU institution that upheld the conceptual link between the potential EU transfers of rules, norms, values and principles and the existing and possibly emerging (legal) tools in the framework of the 'new' ENP.

The EU joined the Contact Group on Libya, participated in a number of multilateral events (Pinfari 2012: 40) before and after the fall of the Gaddafi regime, contributed more than 80 million Euros in humanitarian assistance, and is engaged in a post-war assistance and reconstruction programme amounting to 30 million Euros. Since 22 May 2013 it is in the process of setting up the CSDP 'EUBAM Libya – EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission Libya', the formal objectives of which, namely to 'support the Libyan authorities to develop capacity for enhancing the security of Libya's land, sea and air borders in the short term and to develop a broader IBM strategy in the longer term' (Council of the European Union 2013), seem to contradict the informal objectives, as set out in an internal EU paper, dated 18 April 2013.[20] Yet, at no point – in spite of a UN mandate, explicit support from the Arab League, and US reluctance to engage itself (Biscop 2011) – did it manage to act upon its normative foreign policy objectives and take the UN-sanctioned 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) seriously (Peral 2011). Instead, in 2011 it left the task of enforcing UNSC 1973 to France (whose air force is said to have accounted for more than one third of all NATO

air strikes), the US and eventually NATO, with the participation of 11 EU member states. In this vein, Germany, which was keen to make up for its abstention in the vote on UNSC Resolution 1973, and France, which wanted to counter US statements that 'Europe was not pulling its weight in Libya' (Nethery 2011: 11), also made an effort to engage the EU collectively at the CSDP level, but it did not bear fruit. Although the Foreign Affairs Council was able to hammer out an agreement among all EU member states' governments on 1 April 2011 to adopt the so-called EUFOR Libya operation, the mission was ill conceived and inconsistent with other multilateral efforts. By concentrating on a contribution 'to the safe movement and evacuation of displaced persons' and aiming to 'support with specific capabilities, humanitarian agencies in their activities',[21] the EU blatantly underestimated the actual and potential war dynamics in Libya and hence their repercussions for the EU battlegroups possibly involved, as well as the widespread suspicion of humanitarian actors on the ground, who feared that their neutrality may be endangered (Gowan 2011). In addition, the Council linked the deployment of EUFOR Libya to a request by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Due to its mandate as a UN body dealing exclusively with civilian aid operations, it could not but reject the offer. While it seems an exaggeration to argue that 'by making an offer that the UN simply had to refuse, the EU looked good but took no risks' (Gowan 2011), it cannot be denied that the manner in which EU member states' governments dominated the shaping and formulation of the mission's design – thereby outplaying the EEAS and the HR/VP and hoping to please their domestic constituencies – revealed 'the lack of clear planning and, possibly, the lack of diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis other major multilateral actors' (Pinfari 2012: 42–43).

The 'new' ENP as the EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring

In light of the differing cooperation behaviour and reform-mindedness of the southern Mediterranean partners throughout the last two decades, the Arab Spring provided the EU with a perfect opportunity to take this experience into account and present a revised approach that would allow it to respond flexibly and on a case-specific basis to these varying degrees of cooperation, reform and, thus, progress towards democracy.[22] The 'New Response' (and hence the revised ENP), however, does not comply with these requirements, as it is essentially a remake of the original neighbourhood policy of 2003, which is widely regarded as unsuccessful in promoting and thereby diffusing democratic rules, norms, values and principles. It puts the so-called 'Three Ms' at its core – *money* in the form of increased financial assistance through various assistance programmes, *markets* as a synonym for improved access for southern Mediterranean export goods to the EU's single market, and *mobility* as a synonym for the EU's offer to develop circular and temporary migration schemes in conjunction with new border management regimes in the context of mobility partnerships. In addition, it focuses on promoting and supporting democratic transformation processes, supposedly leading to 'deep democracy' (European Commission and High Representative 2011a: 2), establishing or reforming efficient institutions, strengthening basic laws and human rights, anchoring good governance, reforming the judiciary, combating corruption, and supporting socio-economic development and these countries' integration into the global economic system. In addition, the EU member states' governments approved an increase in the European Investment Bank's lending capacities, an extension of the mandate of the

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the southern neighbourhood, and the initiation of so-called people partnerships in the wider framework of a new civil society facility. The guiding principle underpinning and, according to the 'new' ENP itself, determining the extent to which these sectors will flourish, is the 'more-for-more' paradigm, supposedly linking ever-increasing assistance, and thus rewards, to the implementation of reforms in southern Mediterranean countries. This 'transference diffusion' (Manners 2002: 245) goes hand in hand with an emphatic reference to 'less-for-less', which is supposed to indicate to reform-averse regimes that the EU will restructure or even reduce support when reform is delayed, impeded or aborted.

Undoubtedly, the increased emphasis on the involvement and strengthening of civil society in the EU's future democracy promotion repertoire, and the determination to revitalize the dormant principle of negative conditionality account for some of the criticism uttered in recent years. Also, attributing greater importance to the issue of differentiation (Tömmel 2013) seems to show that at least the Commission has understood that for EU democracy promotion policies to be more effective, they cannot rely mainly on inter-governmentally designed, top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches to governance or network modes of governance (Youngs 2009). Nonetheless, apart from the noteworthy fact that throughout the Arab Spring and Arab uprisings, the EU on no occasion applied the principle of negative conditionality to any of the authoritarian regimes whose association agreements recognized it,[23] the 'new' ENP still stands in the tradition of bilateral action plans: characteristically, it uses important terms and concepts such as democratization, transition and democratic transformation in the same inter-changeable and ill-defined manner as concepts such as democracy, rule of law, governance reform and the need to strengthen human and civil rights (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011), and it does not define what it means by 'deep democracy'. Another five conceptual shortcomings stand out.

First, the EU still assumes that governments in the southern Mediterranean are ready and willing to embark on a path of reform accompanied or even initiated by outside forces. It then assumes that Arab and/or North African regimes are beguiled by the putative rewards for political and economic reforms – that is, a vague offer of gradual integration into the EU single market – more than they fear the multifaceted costs that would arise from adaptation to and adoption of the *acquis communautaire*. To date, in spite of sector-specific cooperation in politically less sensitive issue-areas – for example, with Morocco in the field of the transference of regulatory standards and environmental legislation for aviation (Freyburg et al 2009: 923) – this assumption has proved wrong, as not a single regime in the southern Mediterranean has felt compelled to implement and maintain a sustainable process of political liberalization as a *result* of external, ENP-related incentives.

This relates directly to the meaning of 'more for more' and 'less for less' and to the fact that, *second*, the 'new' ENP does not provide the EU's neighbours with an explicitly formulated, strategic long-term goal or a detailed roadmap for achieving it. Whether 'more for more' can really have a leveraging effect and inspire the reform desired by the Commission and the HR/VP is dependent on the prospects offered to neighbouring states. Despite recent political developments in the region, the EU has refrained from defining this oft-cited conclusion of the EU–European commitment either for itself or its governmental and non-governmental partners. Neither the 'New Response' of 25 May 2011 nor Article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty is useful in this respect. While the former fails to define the degree to which the 'more for more' principle prevails over the

principle of tailoring an approach according to the policy sector in question, Article 8, which constitutionalizes neighbouring countries and the associated ENP, merely speaks of the EU's aim of developing a 'special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterized by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation'. Aside from the standardized phrasing of this paragraph and the fact that 'neighbouring countries' remains undefined as a geographical term, the language used makes it clear that 'special relationships' could potentially incorporate all issue-areas and so achieve great depth. Yet, the references to 'close relations' and 'great depth' are not sufficient to give a definite meaning to the offer of 'more for more' as they do not set out the cooperation and integration prospects available to the agents of reform or the reforms to be implemented in return.

Third, despite the EU's increasing efforts and a more consistent discourse (Gillespie 2013: 131) throughout the Arab Spring and Arab uprisings to promote its rules, norms, values and principles through 'overt diffusion', the revised ENP cannot contribute to improving their 'informational diffusion'. It is marked by generalizations, all too often underpinned by a tendentious and unjustified transfer of the Tunisian revolutionary path to other countries in the region, which are still overwhelmingly characterized by authoritarian structures. And even to the extent that the 'new' ENP acknowledges the continued existence of authoritarian regimes by bringing the negative conditionality principle back into its democracy promotion rhetoric, it does so by merely alluding to 'other political measures' in response to potential non-compliance, without specifying them.

On that basis, *fourth*, the logic of differentiation, emphasized so strongly in the 'new' ENP, has not proved effective since the Arab Spring, nor was it, in fact, previously under the original ENP of 2003. The 'new' ENP fails to consider the political, economic, socio-economic, cultural and historic specificities and unique development trajectories in each neighbouring country or to carry out a policy to promote external democracy that is customized and tailored both to individual requirements and national, regional and local conditions. Rather, it continues to rely on the same tools and incentive programmes, regardless of whether they are attractive to or adequate for the recipient country. This applies, for example, to the new offer of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs): by focusing mainly on service sector liberalization, public procurement, and investment protection, and by ignoring developmental considerations and the liberalization of agricultural trade, these pacts are bound to benefit mainly the EU, its member states and thus European businesses. Moreover, they are not exclusive to southern Mediterranean neighbours, of which Morocco has already engaged in two rounds of negotiations, but were also offered to Georgia and Moldova, as well as to Armenia and Ukraine under the EU's Eastern Partnership. It also applies to the agreements signed in recent years, at least by individual EU member states' governments and southern Mediterranean partners, on the readmission of illegal immigrants. Although, over the years, both types of agreement (i.e. asymmetric free trade pacts and readmission agreements) have proved cost-intensive for the relevant neighbouring countries and have, in fact, generated negative micro- and socio-economic consequences, the EU sets up this approach as a model in its revised ENP. It extols it as a central component of the 'more for more' ideal and so effectively invalidates the principle of differentiation which was supposed to rely on the specificity of each case and promote targeted use.

Fifth, the fact that neither the Commission and EEAS nor the Council seem to be fully aware of the complexity of current liberalization and transition processes, whose forms vary greatly from country to country, is reflected in the revised ENP in that it fails to devote a single word to the changed internal power structures in, for example, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Libya. Admittedly, free and fair parliamentary elections in the first three only took place in late 2011 (i.e. after the EU's adoption of the 'New Response'). In light of the fact that the revolts were particularly targeted at ruling parties that had been in power for decades and the success of Islamic parties became clear early on, such an omission is inexplicable. It is problematic not so much because Islamic movements now represent the governing majority in two out of the four states but because the associated long-simmering conflict between secular and religious currents in the southern Mediterranean area is now visible even to external observers such as the EU and, indeed, a lasting solution to this issue is the central condition for political consolidation.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that, in pursuit of its normative objectives to promote its rules, norms, values and principles in the southern Mediterranean, the EU operated on four levels to respond to the Arab Spring. On the first level, it resorted to a declaratory policy that, at times, was marked by contradictions and a lack of awareness of the true political dynamics in each partner country, thus reflecting the intra- and inter-institutional inconsistencies and divergences in interests. This went hand in hand with increased efforts to promote its norms through informational diffusion. The adoption of a revised ENP was at the centre of this approach, but it contained numerous structural flaws on key issues: the principle of differentiation, the simultaneous use of positive and negative conditionality, and its in-built ignorance of the newly emerging power structures in the southern Mediterranean.

On the second level, it limited its democracy promotion policies to the mere provision of humanitarian assistance and financial aid, both of which were not to be directly conditional upon progress in the areas outlined by the 'new' ENP. For example, on the basis of the assessment of a locally deployed ECHO humanitarian team, the EU had provided 158 million euros for humanitarian and civil protection funding to Libya by February 2012.[24] Earlier, in 2011, in the case of Tunisia, the EU decided to amend the country's National Indicative Programme and increase financial aid for 2011–2013 from 240 million to 400 million euros and, in November 2013, it adopted an assistance package of 476 million euros to foster development and cooperation with almost all Arab southern Mediterranean countries, including reform-reluctant Algeria and Egypt, yet again ruled by the military.[25]

On the third level, the EU continued to pursue its policy of disseminating norms and rules diffusion below the radar of media attention, within the framework of transgovernmental functional cooperation. This was notable in its relationship with Morocco and Jordan, whose monarchic regimes were not exposed to the same public pressure as their secular counterparts in other parts of the Mashreq and Maghreb. It was similarly conspicuous in the run-up to both the parliamentary elections in Tunisia in October 2011, during which the EU provided multifaceted technical assistance and expertise to the Tunisian National Commission for Constitutional Reforms and Elections, and the parliamentary elections in Morocco in November 2011. Besides these efforts, which

touch upon the polity level, the EU has engaged in promoting norms of democratic governance (Freyburg et al 2009: 917), in particular in the trade sector. Yet, by resorting to free trade mechanisms, this time in the form of DCFTAs, it has opted for a policy tool that, due to its asymmetric character and its in-built hubs-and-spokes logic, is bound to reduce the longstanding horizontal incoherence that has hampered the simultaneous conduct of democracy promotion and external trade policies in the Euro-Mediterranean in recent years.

On the fourth level, the EU resorted to restrictive measures and conducted a policy of sanctions. Despite their rather assertive characteristics, they have not led to the fall of Syrian President Bashar and they contributed only indirectly, if at all, to the regime change in Libya. It is also questionable whether this approach helped to generate opportunities for a potential transfer of EU values, norms and principles in the near future. This is simply because restricted measures turned out to be the lowest common denominator that EU governments could agree on and the path that led to their adoption, as well as the termination of the arms embargo on Syria, revealed how far they disagree in their analysis of EU actions *vis-à-vis* the Syrian regime and, most of all, the consequences that this or any engagement by the international community may have on the domestic and regional situation. Against this backdrop, it is no surprise that, with the exception of the embarrassing failure of the EUFOR Libya mission and the creation of the EUBAM Libya mission, the CFSP itself was never evoked and the potential room for manoeuvre claimed by the 'new' ENP with its less-for-less principle was never properly applied to the southern Mediterranean countries whose agreements already contained conditionality clauses.

Under these circumstances, it is rather unlikely that the Arab Spring, or rather what is left of it, will have a truly lasting impact upon the relational narrative of the broader EU–Mediterranean framework itself. Throughout the Arab Spring and Arab uprisings, apart from its partial recourse to restrictive measures and its one-dimensional focus on the informational diffusion of EU norms, the EU ignored the obligation in Article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty to practise a value-based conditionality in all its neighbourly relations. Accordingly, considering that the evidently undifferentiated application of a 'less for less' approach is mainly destined to impact negatively upon the 'welfare' policy field, which is already underdeveloped in all neighbouring countries, it is worth contemplating the option of partially detaching the principle of 'less for less' from the 'rule' policy area and polity-related democracy promotion, instead, concentrating parts of EU support on promoting the economic and social sectors that continue to be most affected by existing structural deficiencies in Mediterranean partner countries.

Notes

1 See http://www.theparliament.com/latest-news/article/newsarticle/barroso-leaps-to-defence-of-eu-foreign-chief, accessed 20 December 2013.
2 See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8303929/Egypt-crisis-David-Cameron-reprimands-Baroness-Ashton-at-EU-summit.html, accessed 20 December 2013.
3 See http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/europe/6650-european-responses-to-the-military-led-removal-of-morsi, accessed 13 January 2014.
4 The first Task Force meeting EU-Tunisia was held on 28–29 November 2011 in Tunis; the first EU-Jordan Task Force meeting was held on 22 February 2012 in Amman; and the first EU-Egypt Task Force meeting took place on 13–14 November 2012 in Cairo.
5 During the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 21 August 2013, EU foreign ministers agreed to suspend only export licences to Egypt of any equipment which might be used for internal

repression. See council conclusions on Egypt, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 21 August 2013.

6 See http://www.neurope.eu/article/countries-expel-syrian-diplomats, accessed 20 December 2013.

7 See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20110526STO20294/html/Syrian-uprising-a-spring-not-in-bloom, accessed 16 December 2013.

8 See http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/french-president-leaves-open-possibility-of-military-intervention-in-syria-a-835906.html, accessed 10 December 2013.

9 See http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/french-president-leaves-open-possibility-of-military-intervention-in-syria-a-835906.html, accessed 20 January 2014.

10 Council conclusions on Syria, 3199th Foreign Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 19 November 2012.

11 Speech by HRVP Catherine Ashton on Syria at the European Parliament, 13/688, 11 September 2013.

12 See http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/EU-sides-with-Russias-Putin-urges-against-US-military-solution-in-Syria-325343, accessed 20 January 2014.

13 See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23928871, accessed 20 January 2014.

14 See http://www.theguardian.com/world/german-elections-blog-2013/2013/sep/09/merkel-unlikely-allies-syria, accessed 10 December 2014.

15 See http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/libya-politics.8q6, accessed 9 January 2014.

16 See http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE7296XF20110310, accessed 18 January 2014.

17 See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12699183, accessed 20 January 2014.

18 See http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE7296XF20110310, accessed 20 December 2013. In fact, one day after William Hague made that statement, the UK followed suit and recognized the Libyan NTC.

19 Ibid.

20 According to this document, the main purpose of EUBAM Libya is to build up the *operational* level of Libya's Border Guards and Naval Coast Guards, many of whom, according to the EU Observer, are composed of 'groups of irregular fighters, lacking basic military skills, are illiterate or even have a criminal past'. See http://euobserver.com/foreign/122134. See also http://euobserver.com/justice/121766, http://euobserver.com/foreign/122134, and http://euobserver.com/foreign/121986.

21 See http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/eufor-libya?lang=en. See also Council Decision 2011/210/CFSP of 1 April 2011 on a European Union military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in response to the crisis situation in Libya (EUFOR Libya), accessed 20 December 2013.

22 Parts of this section draw on a previous study by the author entitled 'New Neighbours, Old Formulas? The ENP One Year after the Start of the Arab Spring', in A. Ghali, I. Hegazy, S. Kawakibi, E. Kienle, E. Manea, S. Saadawi, T. Schumacher and J. Völkel (eds). 2012. *The Arab Spring: One Year After. Transformation Dynamics, Prospects for Democratization and the Future of Arab-European Cooperation*. Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, pp87–104.

23 The only exception is, as stated further above, the decision by the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 August 2013 to suspend export licences for weapons that can be used by Egyptian authorities for domestic repression.

24 See http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/libya_en.pdf.

25 See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1136_en.htm.

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The Nordic Countries and the Arab Spring

From 'Nordic Internationalism' to 'Nordic Interventionism'?

Timo Behr

Introduction

The Nordic countries have long been considered model international powers.[1] During the Cold War, they have been credited with developing a moralistic foreign policy that stresses international interdependence and solidarity with the Third World, but safeguards principles of national sovereignty and non-interference (Mouritzen 1995; Dahl 2006; Browning 2007). Their role as bridge-builders and peace-makers and their rejection of the use of force in international affairs have won them worldwide acclaim (Ingebritsen 2002). Similarly, the 'Nordic model' of socio-economic development, which emphasizes social compromise, inclusiveness, sustainability and a strong welfare state, has been widely hailed as a success, allowing Nordic countries to continuously claim top spots in United Nations league tables for human development, innovation and competitiveness (Midttun and Witoszek 2011; Wooldridge 2013). As a result, policy-makers far and wide have sought to emulate the Nordic example, while researchers have sought to unveil the recipe for its success.

However, the end of bipolar confrontation and the more recent transition towards a multipolar global order have brought new pressures to bear on the Nordic model. Longstanding differences among Nordic countries have been reinforced (Möller and Bjereld 2010), while the Nordics' own 'exceptionalism' has become blurred due to their membership in the European Union and the advent of a liberal world order (Browning 2007). The emergence of right-wing Nordic parties, the adjustment of the Nordic welfare model and the adoption of a more muscular interventionism have also diminished the positive image of Nordic countries in parts of the world. Incidents such as the 2005 Danish cartoon crisis and the 2013 Swedish riots have given rise to widespread speculations that Nordic exceptionalism is at an end (Lawler 2005; Browning 2007). With the Cold War model of Nordic internationalism increasingly under strain, the Arab Spring provides an interesting test case for the changing international identity and appeal of the Nordic model beyond the Eurocentric world.

While Nordic countries have been strong supporters of political and economic reforms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region prior to the 2011 uprisings and have been among the first Western countries to endorse popular protests, the ongoing regional transformations provide a challenge to their post-Cold War interpretation of international affairs and normative power. This chapter analyses the foreign policies of Nordic countries towards the ongoing transitions in the Arab world by placing them within the changing context of Nordic Internationalism. It argues that Nordic countries have increasingly tended towards a more muscular and value-laden 'Nordic interventionism' which differs from Cold War 'Nordic internationalism' that emphasized dialogue, compromise and non-interference. This has meant that the appeal of Nordic countries as models of development and international mediators has slackened in favour of other regional actors. Moreover, this new Nordic value-entrepreneurship is increasingly at odds with the prickly attitudes displayed by young Arab democracies.

Nordic internationalism in perspective

The foreign policies of Nordic countries today remain to a large extent beholden to the images and practices of the so-called 'Nordic internationalism' that they developed during the Cold War era. Based on their peripheral geo-strategic position, history of neutrality, late industrialization, and robust social democratic institutions, the Nordics experimented with their own brand of foreign policy in the post-War era that took on a strong normative dimension (Ingebritsen 2002). This meant that during the 1950s and 1960s successive Nordic countries gradually shed their 'small state identity' in favour of a more proactive approach. Instead of yielding to the confrontational logic of the Cold War, the Nordics advocated a policy based on international compromise, multilateralism and peaceful interaction (Lawler 2005). Although significant differences remained among various Nordic actors, all subscribed to a similar logic and approach to international affairs. This Cold War Nordic internationalism reached its zenith under Sweden's Prime Minister Olof Palme during the 1970s and 1980s, when it shared certain traits with more radical forms of Third Worldism, but has remained a permanent feature of Nordic policies thereafter. Overall, it has been defined by three broad and interrelated trends.

First, Nordic countries developed a strong sense of international solidarity that sought to extend basic principles of the Nordic welfare state to the rest of the world. Solidarity with the Third World and assistance to the poor was framed as a shared moral obligation, deriving from a mixture of social democratic and local customs and traditions (Stråth 2004). This meant that Nordic countries acted as activists for Third World issues in international affairs and, in particular, at the United Nations. They also attributed high levels of overseas development assistance (ODA) to the Third World and were the first to reach the UN mandated target of distributing 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to ODA. Nordics also led the way in developing best practices in development cooperation and rejected the principle of 'tied aid' (Selbervik 2006). International solidarity also meant that Nordic countries acted as outspoken critics of human rights abuses and made a substantial contribution to conflict settlement and mediation, with Nordic countries providing around 25 per cent of UN peacekeepers during the Cold War. Finally, some Nordic countries adopted liberal asylum policies as another show of support for the poor and prosecuted, even though significant national differences remained in this area.

The development of international solidarity been heavily influenced by the region's social customs and norms. Thus, according to Annika Bergman, the Nordic acceptance of a 'moral duty across borders' is a consequence of the region's non-hierarchical and egalitarian traditions (Bergman 2007: 81). At the same time, Nordic norms of gender equality, consensus-seeking, minority protection and environmentalism, among others, have deeply shaped the expression of Nordic solidarity. This has meant that Nordic countries have spearheaded the international development of environmental norms and climate change issues, advocated women and minority rights in their development policies and at the UN, and placed a premium on compromise and negotiations in international crisis management.[3] Nordic internationalism, in other words, became imbued with a strong sense of moral mission aimed at the dissemination of 'Nordic values' on a global scale.

Second, Nordic countries have sought to overcome the Cold War 'security dilemma' by embracing international interdependence and promoting the development of a rule-based and cooperative international system. This has meant that Nordic countries have been strong proponents of international law and have promoted multilateral solutions through the UN system to address international issues. This implied a strict adherence to UN principles, and support for international institutions and regimes. Central to this tradition during the Cold War was also an anti-militarist and non-interventionist position in international affairs. Thus, Olof Palme characterized Swedish foreign policy by stating that 'we have taken a stand for national freedom and independence … . As a small state we have as our goal a world in which the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention are fully respected' (Trägårdh 2002: 153). This meant that Sweden fiercely denounced the interventionism of the great powers and took a particularly strong position during the Vietnam War.

The Nordic's policy of non-alignment has been both a cause and a consequence of this approach. International neutrality and non-alignment had been a well-honed policy in both Sweden and Denmark well before the Cold War (Kekkonen 1970; Malmborg 2001). Non-alignment and pacifism, however, did not mean the same thing to all Nordic countries. While Denmark and Norway are founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Finland and Sweden maintained considerable defensive forces and industries during the Cold War. Nevertheless, Nordic countries largely scorned international interventions with the exception of UN-sanctioned peacekeeping missions. Instead, the Nordic countries endorsed mediation and bridge-building as a way of resolving international conflicts and promoting peaceful interaction among countries (Wigell 2013). In the words of Finland's long-time President Urho Kekkonen, this meant that: 'We see ourselves as physicians rather than judges; it is not for us to pass judgment nor to condemn, it is rather to diagnose and to try to cure' (Kekkonen 1970: 94).

Third, based on this rejection of military means in international affairs, Nordic countries promoted a range of policies that sought to actively encourage peaceful change in the international system. This meant that in addition to their sponsorship of international development cooperation, Nordic countries have sought to function as bridge-builders to overcome East–West as well as North–South differences. To this end, Finland sponsored the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) in the mid 1970s, while other Nordic countries actively sought to promote a North–South dialogue. Nordic countries also became champions of nuclear disarmament and leading advocates for international treaties on arms control.[4] The development of state-sponsored peace

research institutions such as SIPRI, PRIO, TAPRI and COPRI was another element of this strategy. Finally, Nordic countries institutionalized peaceful relations among themselves by building common Nordic institutions and presenting joint positions and initiatives in international organizations and at the UN.[5]

Based on these various initiatives, Nordic countries have been commonly depicted as idealist norm-entrepreneurs in international affairs (Ingebritsen 2002), whose policies are shaped by a moralistic conception of international society. Others have raised doubts about the idealism behind Nordic policies by pointing to the self-serving behaviour and flawed implementation of the Nordic model (Browning 2007). Thus, Sweden's 'neutrality' did not exclude secret military cooperation with the United States. Similarly, human rights abuses in the Soviet Union rarely evoked the same vociferous response than those levelled by Sweden against the US over the Vietnam War, and Nordic defence industries pursued international export markets, just as Nordic countries were advocating for international actions on arms controls. Despite these inconsistencies, Nordic countries managed to establish a strong international brand for themselves by advocating a progressive and sometimes radical outlook on foreign affairs that set them apart from the major superpowers.

During the Cold War, Nordic policies in the Middle East largely reflected the ideals of Nordic internationalism. In the early Cold War period, Nordic countries sought a peaceful solution to the Suez crisis and the Anglo-American intervention in the Levant, but ultimately had to defer to their Western allies. Nordic countries were also sympathetic to the decolonization movements and critical of France's war in Algeria. When it comes to the Arab–Israeli conflict, Norway and Denmark's strong sympathy for Israel initially prevented them from taking some role in the conflict and led to OAPEC sanctions against Denmark during the October War (Waage 2005).

Sweden, on the other hand, expressed greater sympathies with the Palestinian cause from early on, partly due to the assassination of the Swedish UN mediator Folk Bernadette by Jewish terrorist in 1948. With the onset of détente, this allowed Sweden to play a greater role as a mediator in the Middle East process (Abadi 2001). Thus Swedish diplomat Gunnar Jarring headed UN efforts to find a peaceful settlement after the Six Day War. Later Olof Palme became the first Western leader to meet with Yassir Arafat in 1974 and allowed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to open an office in Stockholm. Towards the end of the Cold War, Palme's former foreign minister, Sten Andersson, played a crucial role mediating between the PLO and the US. A shift in Norwegian public opinion and policies in the 1970s also enabled greater Norwegian engagement in the Middle East conflict in the late 1980s.

With Nordic development cooperation largely focused on underdeveloped countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East was not a major beneficiary of Nordic 'international solidarity', the one exception, perhaps, being the Palestinian Territories, with Sweden again ranking as one of the largest donors to UNRWA. However, starting with the UNTSO mission in 1948, Nordic countries became major contributors to successive UN peacekeeping missions in the region, including to Gaza, Lebanon and the Sinai Peninsula. Rotating thousands of armed forces to the region throughout the Cold War also increased Nordic sensitivities to Middle Eastern issues and created a legacy of cooperation. However, despite these various initiatives, the Middle East – with the exception of the Arab–Israeli conflict – remained peripheral to Nordic interests and attention during the Cold War, with most attention focused on the least developed countries.

From peace-builders to democracy promoters

With the end of the Cold War, the Nordic countries experienced growing pressures to adjust their foreign policies to a changing international and domestic context. The end of the bipolar order and US dominance in the immediate post-war years moderated the radical Nordic internationalism of the 1970s and 1980s. In Sweden, the election of a conservative government under Carl Bildt in 1991 initiated a reorientation of Swedish foreign policy towards the Baltic region and away from the Third World. Other Nordic countries followed suit as liberal and conservative parties rose in electoral prominence. The accession of Sweden and Finland to the EU and the development of an increasingly more integrated European foreign policy throughout the late 1990s and 2000s further decreased the distinctiveness of the Nordic model (Laatikainen 2003). Nordic foreign policy initiatives were increasingly couched within EU policies and institutions and Nordic ideas of a 'normative power Europe' replaced the Cold War image of the Nordic 'moral superpowers' (Dahl 2006). At home, the gradual adjustment of the Nordic welfare state model, as well as heated debates over immigration and Islam, created new pressures and fuelled a more security-centred approach (Björklund and Andersen 2008).

Despite these various challenges and changes, the Nordic brand has preserved some of its core tenets. International solidarity remains a hallmark of Norden, with Nordic countries still boosting some of the highest official development assistance (ODA) levels in the world, allowing for continued branding as 'humanitarian great powers' (Græger 2005: 415). Nevertheless, Nordic ODA has declined from earlier peak levels, while the Nordic model in development cooperation is being challenged by the new 'Beijing Consensus', with a focus on resources for infrastructure swaps. Heated debates about immigration and Islam also forced a change to the hitherto more liberal asylum policies of Nordic countries. This was reinforced by the EU membership of Nordic countries, necessitating greater European cooperation and harmonization on migration issues, as well as justice and home affairs.

While some of these changes dampened the level of solidarity that had been a hallmark of Nordic Internationalism, bridge-building and the spread of 'Nordic values' remained a core element of Nordic foreign policy. Thus, the evolving Nordic partnership with the newly independent Baltic countries was frequently framed in terms of 'Nordic teachers' and 'Baltic students' (Bergman 2004b). Similarly, Nordic development assistance continued to espouse self-styled Nordic values, such as gender equality and social compromise, while Nordic countries remained strong international supporters for human rights. In the case of Denmark, the US-led war on terror was framed in civilizational terms, with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen depicting the enemies of Western liberal freedoms as 'the forces of darkness'. But to other Nordic countries the deepening of Western–Muslim hostilities after 11 September 2001 provided an incentive to promote great cross-cultural dialogue, spawning numerous interfaith dialogues, such as the Swedish Euro-Islam project.

Nordic support for multilateralism and international law has remained strong throughout the post-Cold War era, but Nordic countries gradually adjusted their policies concerning the use of force and non-interference. The adoption of more intrusive international norms, centred on human security and the responsibility to protect, has widened the ethical obligations of Nordic countries and led to the gradual internationalization of their armed forces. This has turned Nordic armed forces into

cosmopolitan minded militaries with solidarist duties across borders (Bergman 2004a). However, Nordic countries have differed over the implementation of these more expansive norms. While Denmark and Norway have been more prone to contribute to high-end military interventions, Sweden and Finland have maintained a focus on peacekeeping and have promoted civilian aspects of crisis management. Denmark alone joined the US-led invasion of Iraq (Pedersen 2012).

At the same time, conflict mediation and 'peace diplomacy' have remained core issue areas for Nordic countries following the Cold War. Thus, Norway has played a key role in mediating conflicts in the Middle East, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, while Finland's Martti Athisaari became a central figure in the conflicts in Kosovo, Aceh and Namibia.[6] Peace mediation and crisis management remain key issue areas for Nordic foreign policy as demonstrated among others by the recent establishment of a Nordic mediation network and Nordic advocacy for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security'. In addition to the Nordic Cold War focus on nuclear disarmament and arms control, Nordic countries have also played an active role at the UN in advocating for multilateral action on climate change, sustainable development and environmental causes. Even though Nordic contributions to UN peacekeeping have visibly declined, the UN remains the cornerstone for Nordic policies on international crisis management and conflict resolution.

In the Middle East, the Nordics' Cold War focus on mediation was gradually complemented with support for political and economic reforms and the dissemination of 'Nordic values'. During the early post-Cold War era much of the Nordic focus remained on mediation, given the success of the 'Oslo backchannel' (Waage 2002). However, with the US increasingly dominating the Middle East peace process, the space for independent Nordic action narrowed. Moreover, with Sweden and Finland joining Denmark as EU members in 1995, most of their efforts were now channelled through the EU framework, such as Denmark's advocacy of the Middle East roadmap and Sweden's leadership on East Jerusalem.[7] The launching of the EU's Barcelona Process in 1995 introduced Nordic countries to a new set of issues and provided an incentive to widen their engagement with the Arab world. In particular, Sweden used this opportunity to carve out a niche for itself (Schumacher 2001).

Sweden's attempt to launch a Euro-Islam dialogue in 1994 in order to counter Huntington's apocalyptical vision of civilizational conflict led to several international conferences with Arab partners, resulting in the adoption of the so-called 'Stockholm Conclusions' in 1998. Providing a broad vision for an inter-cultural dialogue with the Arab world, the Stockholm Conclusions served as the basis for the eventual opening of the Alexandria Institute to foster cultural dialogue. Other Nordic countries established similar cultural institutions in the region around the same time.[8] Nordic countries also took a leading role in discussions on the third basket of the EU's Barcelona process by promoting stronger EU support for Mediterranean civil society and by emphasizing traditional Nordic issues such as women's and minority rights. Human rights and cultural dialogue remained a prominent theme. Denmark facilitated the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network in Copenhagen in 1996, while Sweden cooperated with Spain to re-launch the third basket of the Barcelona Process and establish the Anna Lindh Foundation in Alexandria (Johansson-Nogués 2006).

During the 2000s, democracy promotion became an increasingly central focus for Nordic engagement in the Middle East. Already during the negotiations for the EU's Common Strategy for the Mediterranean in 2000, Nordic countries sought to include a

stronger focus on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In the aftermath of 9/11, Denmark and the UK worked together to launch the Strategic Partnership Initiative for the Mediterranean and Middle East, which emphasized political and economic reforms, but failed to gather speed due to the objection of among others France and Spain. Denmark and Sweden also pushed strongly to provide more autonomy for the newly established European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 2005, but were again defeated by intra-European objections. On a bilateral level, Denmark established its own 'Danish–Arab Partnership Programme' following the Iraq intervention. Overall, Nordic countries therefore became leading advocates for democratic change in the region.

However, the Nordic's focus on promoting Middle East reforms was somewhat blemished by the 2005 Danish cartoon crisis and the rising tide of anti-immigrant populism across the Nordic region that found its tragic climax during the Utøya attacks of 2011. These events appeared to demonstrate the limitations of Nordic tolerance and underlined the difficulty of mixing 'Nordic values' and Islam. Indeed, Nordic countries, like their European counterparts, remained somewhat uncomfortable with Islamist actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Nordic countries also remained notably silent over the victory of Hamas during the 2006 Palestinian elections and conceded to the wider EU focus on containing 'Political Islam' (Behr 2013). In particular, Denmark, which had strongly sided with George W. Bush's 'freedom agenda', espoused an at times antagonistic attitude towards Islamist actors. Nevertheless, at the eve of the Arab Spring, Nordic countries remained among the most outspoken proponents of political reforms in the Arab world.

Arab Spring and responsibility to protect

Given the longstanding emphasis by Nordic countries on participatory democracy and human rights, Nordic governments broadly welcomed and supported the popular mass protests across the Arab world in early 2011. In the view of Nordic officials at the time, these protests reflected widespread popular dissatisfaction with autocratic and corrupt governments and deteriorating socio-economic conditions across the MENA region. Some parallels to the recent 'colour revolutions' in Eastern Europe and the post-Cold War democratic transitions of the Baltic States seemed evident. In particular, the large representation of women and youth in the Arab Spring protests was noted as positive across the Nordic region. Nordic countries were also upbeat about the potential of popular protests to lead to democratic governance and dismissed warnings that political change would empower radicals and fuel conflict. Based on this largely positive view and acting in line with their moral foreign policy precepts, Nordic countries were among the first to recognize the legitimate rights of the protesters in Tunisia and Egypt and to urge for a peaceful transition to democracy.

Inside the EU, the backing provided by Nordic countries for the Arab Spring protesters initially contrasted with the reluctance of some other European countries, such as France, to tolerate bottom-up change in this strategically important region. These divergences prevented EU member states from expressing a clear common position during the Tunisian revolution, with Nordic officials openly criticising their southern European counterparts for preventing greater support for democratic change (EUObserver 2011). Following the fall of the Bin Ali regime and the spreading of popular protests across the region, intra-European differences diminished, as all countries

accepted the inevitability of change. However divisions remained between Nordic countries and the EU's Mediterranean member states concerning the future direction of EU policies. Thus, the Nordic countries support a letter by German Foreign Minister Westerwelle demanding greater use of aid conditionality and the opening of EU markets, including in agriculture, to support democratic transition across the region (Behr 2012). This contrasted with the view of southern European countries, demanding a shift of EU funding from the EU's eastern neighbourhood to the southern neighbourhood to support economic development and change (French Foreign Ministry 2011).

Despite these divisions, European differences over popular protests in Egypt remained marginal. More contentious was the situation in Libya. Here most Nordic countries backed a more interventionist approach, by siding with France and the UK in supporting a NATO-led no-fly zone on the basis of the 'responsibility to protect' principle and in order to shore up the legitimacy of the UN. Moreover, Denmark, Norway and non-NATO member Sweden contributed substantial military assets to 'Operation Unified Protector'. Denmark and Norway, alone conducted 21 per cent of NATO strike sorties during the Libya Operation, demonstrating a new commitment to use force in support of the mission goals (Nordenman 2013).[9] Sweden, who participated in its first air-deployment since the 1960s, limited its involvement to surveillance and resupply flights. Contrary to the contentious Iraq War, the Libya intervention did not evoke much domestic opposition in the Nordic countries; only Finland declined to participate, citing the potential of a stalemate and civilian casualties.

This new Nordic interventionism appears to break with the Cold War tradition of anti-militarism and non-intervention by endorsing a muscular cosmopolitan liberalism in defence of human security. However, regardless of their participation in the NATO no-fly zone, Nordic countries showed themselves less willing to put boots on the ground. Thus, when EU member states discussed the potential of deploying one of the EU Battlegroups to protect humanitarian shipments to the Libyan city of Misurata in April 2011, Sweden and Finland both objected to the concept of operations (CONOPS). With soldiers of both countries slated to be deployed to Libya as part of the Nordic Battlegroup on stand-by at the time, both countries appeared squeamish about the military costs and political consequences. While EUFOR Libya eventually failed due to objections by OCHA, the reluctance of Nordic countries to participate in the EU mission was symbolic. In contrast to the Cold War, Nordic countries appeared more reluctant to back humanitarian support missions while favouring military interventionism under a NATO umbrella.

However, the extent to which Libya signalled a change in policy, rather than an exception to the rule, remains to be seen. So far, Nordic reactions to the Syrian civil war have been notably more cautious. Nordic countries continue to favour a political solution of the crisis and have remained sceptical of the prospects of outside intervention. Instead, they have focused on providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and have backed the 2012 United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), which was commanded by Norwegian General Robert Mood. Some Nordic countries have also signalled a preliminary readiness to consider participating in a UN peacekeeping mission following a political settlement.[10] Contrary to Libya, Nordic countries have been unwilling to concede to French and British pressure. Finland and Sweden have both opposed Franco-British attempts to lift the EU arms embargo in spring 2013 to supply rebels with weapons. In other words, the Nordic reaction in Syria has been more in line with traditional Nordic principles of peace mediation, arms control and

peacekeeping. To some extent this also reflects a changed public image of the Arab Spring.

Two years after the overthrow of autocratic governments in Tunisia and Egypt, Nordic countries have become increasingly sceptical about the prospects of democratic transitions. In early 2013, Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt voiced concern that despite enormous progress, it is 'the tragedies and the challenges that dominate' the post-Arab Spring period (Bildt 2013:5). Similarly, the Finnish Prime Minister's Office expressed concern that 'the democracy movement in North Africa and the Middle East may cause a long period of uncertainty and instability' and that 'the rivalry between moderates and radicals may intensify and could result in a reversion of civil liberties and women's rights' (Finnish Prime Minister's Office 2013). The image of the Syria crisis among Nordic public officials is that of a 'bloody civil war' that has little prospects of being resolved and needs to be contained. Incidents of violence against women, restrictions of civil liberties and continuing political uncertainty in post-revolutionary countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, in particular, have doused Nordic optimism about a quick transition. Instead, Nordic countries now expect a long, drawn-out and difficult transition in the region. Given this more negative image of regional events in the Nordic countries, the policy focus has shifted from backing quick regime transitions, as during the Libya crisis, to facilitating democratic transitions through aid and assistance.

Transitional aid and democracy promotion

In line with their Cold War legacy of international solidarity and their focus on international poverty reduction, Nordic countries have traditionally focused most of their development assistance on sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. However, both Denmark and Sweden have for some time sought to develop a greater development cooperation footprint in North Africa and the Middle East, with a particular focus on democracy promotion. This has meant that both countries explicitly supported the promotion of democracy and human rights as part of their development cooperation strategies in the region prior to the Arab Spring. Following the Arab Spring protests, all Nordic countries have re-emphasized this focus on democracy promotion in their foreign policy and have increased the overall amount of development assistance available to the region.

Danish support for the region has been channelled through the so-called 'Danish Arab Partnership Programme' since 2003. Subsequently renamed the 'Partnership for Dialogue and Reform' (DPR), this initiative was developed in the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2003 Iraq War and explicitly sought to back the Bush administration's 'freedom agenda' in the Middle East. Its three priority areas – fundamental freedoms and good governance; development of a knowledge-based society; and promotion of gender equality – mash with the overall principle of Denmark's development cooperation strategy that 'poverty must be fought with human rights and economic growth' (DANIDA 2012: 3). Within this framework, Danish assistance has initially focused on Jordan, Morocco and Yemen, providing around DKK 100 million (13.4 million euros) annually, much of which channelled through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since the 2005 cartoon crisis and more recently the Arab Spring, the emphasis of the programme shifted slightly towards promoting dialogue, while additional funding was made available to Tunisia and Egypt. Today, funding under the DPR increased to

DKK 275 million (37 million euros) annually with much slated for civil society projects and democracy support.

Sweden, similarly, has specifically targeted democracy support measures prior to the Arab Spring. Thus, the 'Swedish strategy for development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa 2010–15' focuses on three specific issue areas: democratic governance and human right; sustainable use of transboundary water resources; and regional economic integration. The overall goal of the strategy is to promote 'stronger democracy and greater respect for human rights; and sustainable development that improves conditions for peace, stability and freedom in the region' (Foreign Ministry 2010). To this purpose, Sweden has earmarked SEK 650 million (75 million euros) over the programme period with a particular focus on supporting civil society, independent media and the development of legal and institutional frameworks. With the events of the Arab Spring, a particular focus for development cooperation was placed on Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Syria, with Sweden making an additional SEK 200 million (23 million euros) available in assistance. Unlike Denmark, Sweden has also engaged Islamist actors as part of its civil society outreach prior to the uprisings.

Norway has been the most generous bilateral donor to MENA countries, but has tended to focus its development engagement heavily on the Levant. A particular focus was placed on Lebanon and Iraq, while North African countries only peripherally figured in Norwegian development programmes prior to 2011. However, Norway's main priority in the region, by far, remains Palestine, receiving NOK 628 million (83.3 million euros) in 2012 alone, more than the rest of the region together. Similar to Sweden and Denmark, civil society and women's rights have been important focus areas for Norway in the region. Finland, finally, remains a relatively marginal player in terms of developments spending, while doubling its spending in recent years.

Overall, Nordic countries have been strong supporters of a human rights based approaches to development and have emphasized the need for reform, even before the Arab Spring. Most Nordic countries also share a common set of priorities in their development cooperation policies that are reflective of their own values. These include a particular emphasis on strengthening civil society, women's rights and minority rights, as well as an emphasis on education, social empowerment and the environment. In the post-Arab Spring era, these traditional priority areas have become further highlighted. This meant that a large share of the increase in bilateral funding from Nordic countries has benefitted civil society groups, including women and youth organizations (Behr and Siitonen 2013). Within the more contentious and heated environment of the post-Arab Spring era some of this funding has been received with suspicion from Arab governments.

Nordic countries have also adjusted their development cooperation in the region in two other regards. First, those Nordic countries that have previously objected to engaging with Islamist actors have largely dropped this reluctance, acknowledging that

Table 44.1 Bilateral assistance to MENA, excluding Palestine (current € million)

	Sweden	*Denmark*	*Norway*	*Finland*
2011	€26.8 (est.)	€13.4 (est.)	€50.1 (est.)	€3.8
2012	€26.8 (est.)	€16.8 (est.)	€64.8 (est.)	€6.9
2013	n/a	€37.0 (est.)	n/a	€6.8

these now represent part of the political scene. Second, Nordic countries have more explicitly toiled with the idea of applying conditionality in their funding towards the region. This suggests that further funding decisions may depend on the progress of transition countries in particular areas, such as gender equality, an approach that Nordics have also vocally advocated within the framework of the EU.

Given the scale of Nordic development funding it is unlikely to make more than a marginal contribution to the Arab transitions. However, Nordic countries might have a more positive role to play as democratic role models. Although the 'Nordic model' is a strained concept that holds few easy-to-translate recipes for the complex transition processes playing out in the Middle East, it can provide a positive image, both by establishing a standard and by demonstrating the value of social compromise, inclusiveness, balanced growth, environmental sustainability and gender equality. There are also particular areas of Nordic 'best practice' that might provide some concrete guidance for MENA countries. These include in particular areas such as collective bargaining, vocational training and innovation, as well as equal opportunity policies in various areas. Nordic pressure and advocacy of more contested issues, such as women's rights and minority rights, could also prove essential in order to prevent a roll-back in these sensitive areas during the current transitions.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring has provided a new conceptual challenge for the foreign policies of the Nordic countries. On the one hand, it has reinforced a long-running trend towards greater interventionism and norms entrepreneurship in Nordic foreign policy. As a result, Nordic countries have largely parted with the state-centric view that has been a hallmark of Nordic internationalism during the Cold War and adopted a new focus on human security and the responsibility to protect. On the other hand, the Arab Spring has also shown the growing limits of Nordic norms entrepreneurship, with some of the transition governments notably less receptive to Nordic values than was the case with the secular nationalist regimes they replaced. Inevitably, this has pushed Nordic countries even further towards prioritizing civil society engagement in their foreign and development policies. Here, however, they are increasingly encountering illiberal actors, which do not share Nordic views about free speech and gender equality. Given the increasingly value-laden policies of Nordic countries, partly informed by domestic developments, this might pose a challenge to the Nordic model.

For Arab transition countries, the Nordic group of European countries can serve as a standard and role model during the development of their own democratic institutions and practices. While many Nordic experiences are not easily transferable, some Nordic countries share a similar history of civil war and occupation than many MENA countries. Within a limited number of areas, Nordic best practices might also provide more concrete models for development, especially in areas such as education, training and collective bargaining. Nordic transitional assistance, although limited, could play a significant role in some of these niche areas. However, the area in which Nordic countries can perhaps play one of the most important roles in supporting the Arab transitions is by influencing the international discourse on democracy and change in the region, both at the UN and within the European Union. Here Nordic countries have been among the most consistent in emphasizing the need for political change and acting as facilitators for more progressive international positions. With Nordic countries having been among

the first to support the Arab uprisings in January 2011, it is a worrying sign that two years later, they are increasingly adopting a negative outlook of the Arab Spring.

Notes

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1 This chapter refers to the Nordic countries as Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, but excludes Iceland – usually also included in the Nordic group – due to its limited size and more Atlantic orientation.
2 Apart from the CSCE, examples include the Brundtland Commission of the 1980s, led by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, which introduced the term 'sustainable development'.
3 This included advocacy for a Nordic nuclear-free zone during the Cold War.
4 This included the creation of the Nordic Council in 1952 and the lifting of border controls in 1954.
5 One exception was the Fogh Rasmussen government in Denmark, which sought to close down the Danish Human Rights Centre and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (COPRI), which had been critical of its policies.
6 Denmark played a key role in facilitating the Middle East Roadmap for Peace during its 2002 EU Presidency, while Sweden took a strong position on the status of East Jerusalem during its EU Presidency in 2009.
7 The Finnish Institute in the Middle East, located in Damascus, was founded in 1994, while the Danish Institute in Damascus opened in 2000. Both aim at fostering cultural dialogue and exchange.
8 See http://www.acus.org/natosource/national-composition-nato-strike-sorties-libya.
9 Finnish Foreign Minister Tuomioja commented in November 2011 that Nordic countries should not turn down request for participation in a UN mission. See YLE. 2012. 'Tuomioja: Finland asked for peacekeeping in Syria', 10 November, http://yle.fi/uutiset/tuomioja_finland_asked_for_peacekeeping_in_syria/6371575.

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45

From Spain to Egypt

Lessons from An 'Unfinished' Transition

Ivan Molina Allende and Sabine Hattinger

> You can never have a revolution in order to establish a democracy. You must have a democracy in order to have a revolution.
>
> G. K. Chesterton 1955: 63

Global crisis and global unrest

The new global cycle of protest stands in direct connection with the global economic crisis. The profound structural crisis of capitalism is the concretion of a 'single crisis of financialised capitalism' (Aglietta 2012: 15) that responds to the highly unstable dynamics related to the financial deregulation and internationalization of capital initiated in the 1970s. The transformation, and weakening, of the social and redistributive role of the states contributed to the growing dependency on international capital and the changing of its functions in the global economy. This turned them into 'competition state[s] … centrally aligned towards ensuring the optimal conditions for the valorisation of capital' (Hirsch 2002). The particular accumulation regime was characterized by dynamics of expansion of corporate power related to the tendencies of 'financialisation', global outsourcing of production and delocalization. All of this brought together an even bigger competitive pressure on labour rents worldwide through a particular international division of labour, lowering the social, economic and environmental regulative standards, and progressively dismantling the contention barriers to the forces of capital. While the crisis of over-accumulation and profit is the underlying motor of aggressive neoliberal politics, the disintegration of broad layers of society is the actual consequence. While this process was, or is, happening much slowly in the global North, it is affecting the global South with much more celerity and violence.

The expressions of unrest of the Arab Spring seem to be 'inextricably tied to broader questions of capitalism in the Middle East' (Hanieh 2011). In the particular case of Egypt, this occurs as wholesale privatisation since the 1970s ('*infitah*') and International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment plans in 1990–1991. These plans, and an agrarian reform to re-establish a landowner caste, made the economy highly

dependent on foreign investments and capital, and also considerably dependent on exports to the European Union. The consequence was the subjugation and domination of the population through debt. The economic impact in Egypt was that 'year-on-year growth rates of merchandise exports to the EU dropped from 33 per cent in 2008 to 15 per cent by July 2009' (World Bank, cited in Hanieh 2011). '*Bread, freedom and social justice*' was the dignified outcry for the urgent improvement of living conditions. In the case of Egypt, labour movement unrest preceded the rupture point that the incidents of 25 January implied. In Egypt, 'between 2004–10 … 3,000 labour actions took' place, centred mostly in the 'textile and clothing sectors' but also expanding to other sectors (Maher 2011); during the '2007 world food crisis … massive bread riots' also took place (Maher 2011), as well as movements in solidarity with Palestine and Iraq, for the independence of the judiciary in 2006, and so on (Beinin 2013). Thus, labour movements played an important role in the expansion of social conflict and in the latter overwhelming force of the uprisings. Alliances generated between these and urban youth sectors and other sectors of society were also crucial. All of this contributed to the spontaneous collective assumption of protagonist conditions and later the entrance of the masses into the political scene.

The dynamics of the Spanish transition

Before focusing on the dynamics of the transition in Spain it is important to point out the economic and political situation in the last phase of Franco's dictatorship. When the global crisis in the 1970s was hitting Spain, the first peak of popular unrest was taking place. While during the boom in the 1960s the regime could integrate larger sections of society, with the downturn, disenchantment grew. Franco died in November 1975 having previously personally appointed his successor, Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón, in a moment of deep global and structural economic crisis as well as a visible crisis of domination of the dictatorship. A climate of important social conflict due to a growing labour movement (Table 45.1 provides an idea of the unrest) spread throughout society, generating a climate of exhaustion with the prevailing order. The regime's brutal repression and the presence of both anti-Francoist and extreme-right armed groups left between 600 and 800 dead. Responsible for this death toll (in decreasing order) were the ETA, the repressive bodies of the state, state terrorism, GRAPO and other left groups, and far-right wing groups (Wilhelim 2012: 8). The repression was a symptom of the loss of social hegemony, as the whole process was impregnated with fear and an

Table 45.1 Evolution of labour conflict in Spain

Year	*Number of conflicts*	*Affected workers*	*Lost hours*
1966	179	36,977	1,478,080
1967	567	198,740	1,887,693
1968	351	130,742	1,925,278
1969	491	205,325	4,476,727
1970	1595	460,902	8,738,916
1971	616	222,846	6,877,543
1972	835	277,806	4,692,925
1973	931	357,523	8,649,265

always present menace of a military coup trying to perpetuate 'Francoism without Franco'.

The Spanish process has been defined as a 'pacted transition' between the regime elites and the leadership of the democratic opposition, or a 'transition through transaction' (Linz 1990: 21), but 'under the pressure of society' (Linz and Stepan 1996: 88). The whole process was carried out within the Francoist legal frame and closely supervised by the army. There are three main analysis poles in study approaches to the Spanish transition. The first pole shows the predominant manoeuvres of a certain elite – linked to the Opus Dei, and with an important influence within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church – well positioned within the elite bureaucracy of the Francoist state, taking the leading role and assuming the political direction of the Francoist government during those years (Villoria Mendieta 2001).

The second pole focuses on the causality of the popular unrest, and the demonstration of force by the autonomous labour movement during the 1960s and first half of the 1970s as the main element that eroded the basis of the regime (López Petit 2008). The growing perception by the people of the regime's low effectiveness in solving the social problems and in satisfying the democratic and economic demands contributed to the growing support to the striking labour movement, and the social expansion of these conflicts beyond the factory and university walls. This deepened even further the crisis of legitimacy of the regime, and forced the first liberalization moves.

The third pole focuses on the hidden role of the other European powers and especially of the US, looking to safeguard favourable positions in order to maintain geostrategic privileges (military bases were justified because of the Cold War, as well as for launching operations in the Middle East) within the Spanish state, with a key role of the intelligence services (Grimaldos 2006). And at the same time, there were moves to eliminate the possibility of the PCE (Communist Party of Spain) from becoming the main left opposition force in the new democratic game, also in the context of Cold War.

From a combination of the three poles of analysis it is also important to focus on the interplay and the unleashed dynamics in the struggle for hegemony. While such forces began already in the 1960s, the process was not fully consummated until the beginning of the 1980s. In parallel, the increasingly autonomous working class movement was growing and appeared again as a powerful actor in the political arena, even overflowing the capacity of the trade union bureaucracies to control the strong class confrontation. The sum of the political activation of different layers of society, and the tension and power struggles between fractions of the regime, lead to a situation where coercion could no longer re-stabilize the Francoist system.

Common dynamics in the games of transition

In no way whatsoever can we affirm that the outcome of both processes (Spain and Egypt) ought to be the same, as 'objective factors constitute at most constraints to that which is possible under a concrete historical situation but do not determine the outcome of such situations' (Przeworski 1986: 48). While acknowledging differences in the socio-political, economic, historical, cultural and geo-strategical contexts, the analysis of the political outcomes of the Spanish process, connected to strategies and other dynamics to re-stabilize hegemony, are of significant interest in relation to the degree of continuity versus rupture with previous state structures in Egypt since the 25 January

revolution. This, indeed, was a complex process with a delicate equilibrium between 'enthropy and dirigisme, between social initiative and conciliation between the elites' (Criado de Diego 2012: 70).

The overwhelming demonstration of force by the Egyptian people led to the fall of Mubarak in 2011. The relative promptness of its destitution shows the existing differing, and sometimes antagonistic, interests within the ruling party and within the regime as expressions of the different fractions of the bourgeoisie, as well as their awareness of the risk of overthrowing the state apparatus of the Mubarak regime. The presence of different power groups and internal divisions was also present in the Spanish case: the *bunker* represented the more intransigent and reactionary fraction of the regime, not willing to give any concessions and reluctant to give away centralized control over society and economy. The reformists, more connected to the fraction of the transnational capital, willing to insert the country in the nascent neoliberal order, had assumed that some degree of liberalization in political terms was necessary in order to deactivate the popular unrest. After the first failed attempts between 1975 and 1976 of unsubstantial political liberalization by the Arias Navarro government – as the main figure of the *bunker* – the reformists lead by Suárez were appointed to government and assumed the role of reconstructing the lost hegemony. The strong popular rejection towards any attempt of superficial reforms of the regime in order to ensure its survival forced a more realistic approach based on negotiation with the democratic opposition and the acceptance of political and socio-economic concessions. Although different fractions of the Spanish bourgeoisie had different approaches on how to handle the situation of unrest, they shared he objective of redefining the governance system to ensure the continuity of the main features of the state, and the continuation of the elite bureaucracy in key positions within its apparatus.

The role that the armies play, in both countries in their respective processes, also seem to be coincident. Both appear to hold a status making them a sort of 'state within the state'. The Spanish army was historically supported by a military ideology which portrayed themselves as the 'trustees and guarantors of permanent essences and values, imprecisely defined and … in reality … of supra-political nature' (Muñoz Alonso 1986: 26), reserving the right to intervene in the process at any moment. The concretion of this status was even more obvious in the Egyptian case, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed the legislative power on 14 June 2012 in order 'to adopt an additional constitutional declaration that saves the army from any interference by the civilians and limit the power of the future president' (Gresh 2012). Its refusal to lose control of its guardianship role was again visualized at the beginning of July 2013 through the *coup d'état*, and once again confirmed by El-Sisi's call for army immunity in the new constitution (Fahmy 2013). The permanent privileged US financial support to the army, in order for it to maintain regional geo-strategic stability, as well as the control of the SCAF over key sectors of the economy are some of the reasons behind this.

Both historical cases are also characterized by two common phenomena: the reorganization of the labour movement and its increasing strength and the contagion of its combativeness to other sectors and social groups as a determining factor that open political opportunities with differing revolutionary potential. The strong public presence of women in the protests vindicating their rights as political subjects also expresses the articulation between the social and economic demands and claims for expansion of civil and political rights.

In this context of strong class confrontation – and subsequent polarisation – a few elements appear in both cases to be relevant, and connected in different degrees. All of these elements respond to the elites' interest in reducing political unrest and deactivating eventual revolutionary processes in maturation.

A central present element is the necessary dissociation and separation of the political state from the political community – that mobilized, organized and active groups from civil society represent – during the processes of transition. This implies a clear privatization of the political sphere (Wood 1995). The elaboration of liberal constitutions reflect this in detail. In Spain, this task was entrusted to a 'Wisdom Committee' designated by the political class that came out of the 1977 elections, which occurs under fierce repression and from within the Francoist state apparatus. The first draft was presented to a referendum without any previous public debate or the slightest citizen participation. Meanwhile, the leadership of the democratic opposition – the PSOE (Social-Democrat) and the PCE – issued a call for 'pragmatism' within the popular movements in order to downgrade their demands of rupture with the existing socio-economic order. Hence, the rules and terms of the pact are delimited and prefixed in advance by the favourable position of power of the reformists and the permanent pressure of the *bunker*; as well as by the attempt of the bureaucracies of the democratic opposition and the trade unions to favour a beneficial exit position in the new political board game. A particular sort of rationality is then imposed and assumed by the later as 'historical responsibility'. In a similar way, in Egypt the SCAF 'opted to schedule a referendum where voters were asked to approve designated amendments to the old constitution … which operates as the basic law for the transitional period' (Ayoub 2011). The forced separation between the self-appointed representatives and the mobilized popular movements, both in Spain and Egypt, appear to be necessary in order to seal a top-down pact excluding the participation of the masses in the political process. Therefore, while 'the presidential elections were "procedurally correct", formal democracy did not necessarily represent the will of the people', and in the case of Egypt, 'certainly not the will of the revolution' (Matthies-Boon and y De Smet 2013). In many cases, the creation of political figures or actors (mostly presented within strongly hierarchical structures), and other political strategies, capable of becoming a cohesive element for the opposition, appear with the intention of simplifying the potential diversity and deactivating the more revolutionary and 'rupture-ist' approaches.

Connected to this, a specific objective is the attempt to co-opt or neutralize the masses in the process. In Spain, calls by the democratic opposition for the popular movements to renounce some of their more 'rupture-ist' requests *for the sake of democracy* eliminated any discussion over the nature and characteristics of the expected democracy. The regime's crack-down thus focused on the more autonomous movements that did not accept the representational forms offered to them, in occasion with the compliance of the bureaucracy of oppositional political parties and trade unions. The different negotiating moves intended to mark a new beginning as the political and penal responsibilities and collusion with Francoist crimes were erased from the equation, thus sealing impunity and imposing a law of silence, which ignored the previous legitimate republican order interrupted by the illegal military uprising, and following Civil War and dictatorship. The mutual recognition between the negotiating actors, as equally legitimated to become democratic actors in the post-transition institutions, eliminated any possibility of transitional justice. This made Spain the only one, among the southern European countries immersed in transition processes, where no purge of the state was

possible (Fishman 1990: 430). All of this lies at the core of the political '*desencanto*' (disenchantment) during the 1980s in Spain, as a process of massive withdrawal from politics produced a mix of defeat, resignation and powerlessness. This situation resulted in the deactivation of popular movements, through co-optation by the party apparatuses. The consequence was, among others, the annulment of the neighbourhood movement that had been the most relevant agent for social articulation during the later Francoism and the transition years. The parties became public organs of managing economic interests, and condemned politics to a progressive fadeout and to the simple administration of the existing reality, eliminating the analysis of power relations and naturalizing social inequalities. The *desencanto* was somehow the expression of the impossibility of a re-foundation and modernization of the state that would have transformed the economic structures and broken with privileges inherited from the regime. The temporary economic concessions, and improvements in living standards, related to the entry of Spain in the European Union in 1986 prevented this disenchantment from taking any radical political form. The labour and social conflicts were thus channelled through social dialogue and institutionalization of mechanisms of governance in a growing individualization of the social forms and growing attack on labour.

Overall, during transition processes, regressions in democratic terms can be temporary in order to gain some time over the unrest of mass movements, or permanent in order to restore the old order. In both cases, extreme polarization of society is used by the regimes and its elites to project dichotomous traps ('you are with democracy or against it', 'authoritarian order or chaos') and pushes wider layers of the population to choose sides. These generally imply the necessary portraying of a functional enemy, through the demonization of political opponents and the construction of a discourse intertwined with foreign conspiracies and plots against the national interest. It is likely to be connected to the imposition of a state of siege created by (intentionally fuelled or not) violence and terrorism. One strategy is to project a saviour's figure – during moments of political instability, fear and incertitude (e.g. during times of shortages in basic supplies).

The role played by the King of Spain during the attempted – and still opaque – military *coup d'état* on 23 February 1981 is easily explained. The establishment of his figure as the ultimate guarantor for the stability of the country and against military tutorship – although not a civilian himself (under any sort of democratic control or accountability) but actually the head of the military – functioned as a legitimating factor of the nascent constitutional order and political system.

In Egypt, as SCAF realized that the repressive strategies of the Morsi government (although strongly aligned with the neoliberal agenda) would not stop the trend towards increasing self-organization and combative-ness of popular movements (independent trade unions, civil society platforms and movements), SCAF assumed the role of completely disrupting the political board-game and tried to abort the revolutionary momentum. Hence the propaganda machine has been activated in order to reorganize the extreme social polarization in functional terms to the economic interests of SCAF and the reorganizing elites, since this 'current divide … weakens the revolutionary movement' (Matthies-Boon and y De Smet 2013). This led to a call of 'unity in the ranks' against 'violence and terrorism', while co-opting and interpreting the will of the people (without these having voice in it). This was concreted in the new conflict frame shaped by the military coup of July 2013. Successful labelling and criminalization of the

MB and its supporters was then followed by persecution and merciless repression. The process has been put again under its tutelary role and the transition is driven through the negotiation with the liberal, and with the support of part of the secular and left opposition to the MB (e.g., Communist Party of Egypt) – which was, in relative terms, successfully integrated in the new game imposed by the SCAF – in what appears to be a regression considering the objectives behind the revolution.

Under these circumstances, the most problematic fundamental debates are thus eliminated from the process. In situations in which the process of transition is quite advanced, a political practice of 'accomplished facts' offers a two-option scenario: either to accept the closed electoral products advanced through suffrage or to be excluded from the democratic game.

Crisis of the 1978 regime and actual crisis of representation

The foundational act through the approval of a liberal constitution that enshrined the 'free enterprise in the context of a market economy' and the 'defence of productivity' proclaimed and underpinned 'the capitalist system of production, distribution and consumption' (Errejón 2013). Thus, the consolidation of a set of institutions and of democracy understood as a technique of government and as a series of rules and norms ensured the logics of valorization and accumulation of capital and subtracted the economic sphere from democratic control. The approval of organic laws in the parliamentary realm was a *de facto* modification and particular restrictive interpretations of the essence of the constitutional text, functional to these same logics. The recent modification of Article 135 of the constitution in September 2011 – without any public consultation or debate – in order to ensure the priority paying back debt to investors is just the logical consequence of that form of governance.

What appears to be in crisis right now is a particular conception of the electoral machines of the political parties as 'capture apparatus' that 'intend to reduce, simplify and configure … the sociopolitical map in order to control it and to speak in its name' (Galcerán 2013). The establishment of a formal democracy, emptied of its social content, allows – according to Foucault et al (2004) – the people (citizens) to be reduced to the category of population that needs to be administered and managed as a passive object from a 'governmentality' point of view. This logic is characterized by the exclusive appropriation of the constituent power by the constituted structures, without further requirements of popular approval or legitimisation. The consensus over the professionalization of politics and the monopolization of democracy by the party's machineries is currently under scrutiny through the growing rejection to the elite's technocratic hijack on politics. A particular conception of representation understood as substitution (García del Campo 2011) reduces citizens to passive spectators of the parliamentary game, and turns elections into post-political rituals emptied of democratic significance and accountability. This is thus in conflict with the will to decide and the pretension to exercise sovereign power that is visualized by the diverse array of social movements against austerity.

As a response, the occupation of the Squares in May 2011 unleashed an unexpected democratic open-air experiment. The recuperation of public spaces, as spaces for conflict and the multiplication of these logics to other sectors in struggle, made of the 15-million-strong *Indignados* movement a 'natural and local anchorage of a model of "movement of movements" ready to retaliate against the different attacks (foreclosures, privatisation

of common goods and services, criminalisation of the movement itself, etc …) under a common articulating logic' (Fernández et al 2012: 26) based on the integral practice of democracy, articulated through a collective de-legitimization of anti-democratic power. The decentralization to the neighbourhoods spread new logics of self-organization and permanent mobilization to other spaces and contributed to the opening of spaces for a reconsideration of the 'commons'. Hence, the 15M movement marks the start of the gestation of a heterogeneous and participative mass movement. It represents the bifurcation point in which the crisis of legitimacy of the 1978 regime is rapidly eroded, and its routine normality seriously altered, opening opportunity and fissures in the social hegemony. Thus, *terrains* become areas to fight social and political struggles, and civil disobedience is collectively assumed.

Global democratic revolutions and emerging political subjects in Spain and Egypt

While the social conflict in Egypt had already peaked in 2007 with a clear leading role of the working class movement, the first mass mobilizations in the Spanish state started with the urban youth in the first half of 2011. The crisis of representation previously mentioned was concreted in slogans such as 'they do not represent us' and 'they call it democracy, and it is not'. The growing acute character of the systemic contradictions led to the appearance of a youth with few future prospects that inserts itself in a 'global and precarious generation' (Glasius and Pleyers 2013: 552) which experiences the crisis as a constant in their lives in the form of increasing inequalities, rising labour flexibility, insecurity and mass structural unemployment. The contribution of new 'technopolitical subjectivities' that bear 'emancipatory, collaborative, positive and propositive' realities (SuNotissima and Axebra 2012: 29) contributed to create global resonance phenomena. The strategic use of information communication technologies (ICTs) and the complementation of physical spaces of politicization and organization in the Squares, with virtual logics of articulation at a national and international level, generated global 'hybrid spaces' (Antebi and Sánchez 2012: 69), fusing the physical spaces with the virtual networks. The interconnectivity of those spaces allowed for the multiplication of signs of international solidarity. A banner in Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona reflected the border-less communion: *Plaça Catalunya = Tahrir Square*. Another banner on an Occupy demonstration in New York on 5 October 2011 stated 'Arab Spring, European Summer, American fall … '. These expressions depicted a mutual identification of those different movements in a single thrust, willing to overcome the differences, and perhaps the unlimited and uncontainable character of the revolts. They also broke with the dominant connotation of a finite – and geographically limited – seasonal process; instead, the process spread to and was rooted in other regional and social contexts.

Both in Spain and in Egypt, the people in the squares and the newly mobilized political subjects expressed a determination to conform themselves as the new legitimate source of sovereignty and to re-socialize the scattered individualized problems while proposing democratic solutions.

The definition and identification of the common problems and its roots contributed to the creation of new 'collective action frames', which functioned mostly as 'innovative amplifications and extensions of, or antidotes to, existing ideologies or components of them' (Benford and Snow 2000: 613), being those frames 'not merely aggregations of

individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiating shared meaning' (Gamson 1992: 111) through the squares' and assembly's practice.

The take of the squares, both in Spain and Egypt, represent the attempt of re-appropriation of politics by altering the established order to address the collective problematic without mediation. The recreation of cities within the central city squares altered the dominant urban planning directed at the valorisation of capital and to mass consumerism, rendering the surveillance useless. The multiple expressions of the power of the people began to dissipate the fear and increased the signs of mutual support and cooperative cohabitation: *the joy of being together*. A culture of resistance was being spread again through flows of affection and creativity that encouraged a generation of counter-hegemonic discourses and practices. The materialization of new collective imaginaries and new narratives openly questioned the dominant interpretation of the crisis, provoked fractures in the cultural and social habits, and generated disruptions in the reproduction of the dominant hegemonic ideology. This, ultimately, reset and reconfigured the existing political field into new cognitive coordinates and spaces of sociability for the 'democratisation in the production of sense' (Moreno-Caballud 2013: 121).

These ruptures continue to influence political practices and contribute to an increasing perception of democracy as an absolute, living and permanently open process of public experimentation that becomes harder to contain, centralize, be captured by representational forms or individually appropriated.

The changes described generate public disruptions in urban geographies as a response to the multiplication of experiences of public and popular political empowerment. The June 2013 mobilizations, led by the Tamarod movement against Morsi, represent 'the intervention of the gigantic mass movement that launched the new wave of the Egyptian revolution' (Statement by the Revolutionary Socialists 2013). The counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* in July 2013 in Egypt was the response to revert these dynamics by interrupting the opened mass-movement momentum, and by closing again those public spaces in which class conflicts were taking place. Drifting the axis of the conflict to a secular State versus radical Islamism conflict, the Algerian experience remained a precedent, in which criminalisation and demonization create a public enemy that is functional to the repressive strategies and that becomes broader and soon targets labour organizations.

Which democracy? Conclusions and reflections

The actual expansion of market forces and the tendency to authoritarian technocratic rule comes with an increasing crack-down on extra-parliamentary public forms of democracy. This has as a consequence the incapacity of the ruling classes to reach consensuses through the prevailing governance mechanisms due to a rising consciousness of the antagonistic interests in play in the actual class conflict. Despite the tendency of the ruling classes to consider socio-political problems as exclusive problems of public order, and to handle them under a repressive 'securitization' and 'militarization' strategy, global unrest is not deactivated. In fact, it continues to fuel the confrontation. The situation collides with the vindication of politics and democracy in its full extent and revolutionary significance. In moments of a weakening of hegemony, the gap between the political caste and the people appears to grow and the fragile regimes can only be sustained through the increased use of coercion and force. The traditional terrains for disputes are changing, and the public spaces re-politicized through the rise in

consciousness and collective learning processes for the 'formation of popular will' (Errejón 2011: 122). The new political subjects reclaim the right to decide and to conform themselves as the ultimate sources of sovereign legitimacy. In this sense two antagonistic and incompatible conceptions of democracy appear in both political scenarios of crisis, as the bifurcation takes place when 'constituent power does not rely upon the constituted order or sovereign power for its existence' (Wall 2012: 19). As Wood points out, 'all political practice that is turned into a commodity stops being accessible to the democratic power' (Wood 2006: 396); and this is precisely what transition processes to formal democracies, or to authoritarian post-democratic technocratic regimes (as the actual context in Southern Europe) try to implement. The division of economic and political action arenas that characterize liberal democracies must be shielded – in the face of growing rejection and unrest – in order to 'transform certain essential political issues – struggles over domination and exploitation … into distinctively "economic" issues' (Wood 1995: 20). The particular understanding of constituent power as 'the political will whose force or authority are in conditions to take the global decision over the existence of the political unity as a whole' (Schmitt cited in Kervégan 2005: 71) is the biggest obstacle that an orderly Western type of transition faces. Thus, a constituent power is a 'power to model the state' (Lawson 1992: 47), which conceives of the necessity of modifying the rigid institutionalization that impedes a permanent effective citizenship. This is something that decaying regimes cannot succumb to if they want to perpetuate the prevailing power structures and balance of power to their favour. This is what seems to be happening since the military coup in Egypt in July 2013, and in the actual authoritarian escape of the Spanish government under the order of the financial institutions.

The Spanish transition was able, during three decades, to deactivate the aspirations of democratic transformation because of increasing living standards and concessions in moments of worldwide neoliberal offensive in the 1980s. The bubble economy of the Spanish capitalism appears to have pushed the non-satisfied democratic demands further in time until the next (actual) systemic crisis. Since the structural crisis of global capitalism and the fragility of the US hegemony are destabilizing the world system even further, the weak regimes of the South will have to govern without being able to integrate large sectors of society and will face increasing social conflict.

However, neither the people in Spain nor in Egypt have appeared to renounce the aspirations of social and economic justice and civil liberties that were at the core of the 2011 uprisings and protests. Furthermore, it is questionable if the attempts to drift the focus of the conflict towards an Islamist/secular axis in the Arab countries will be enough to deactivate the revolutionary claims for a radical transformation of the social order. Therefore, the questions that remain include the following: considering that the 'Third Way' finds itself exhausted, portraying a 'defensive reformism, without margin for reforms' (Pastor 2013), which form will the socio-political and economic concessions take (if they do)? Which degree of assimilation and incorporation of part of the democratic opposition in these transition processes will take place? Will it even be possible to follow an 'orderly transition' in order to install stable liberal representative democracies and to revert the revolutionary processes without addressing the structural material conditions behind the unrest? Will the democratization and revolutionary processes in the Arab world be able to implement liberal constitutional regimes? Will those revert its actual dismantlement in the global North and, in particular, in the European periphery? And at what cost?

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European Union Democracy Promotion in Tunisia

Raoudha Ben Othman

During his 2003 visit to Tunis, President Chirac declared that 'the first human right is the right to eat and from this point of view, Tunisia is far ahead of other countries in the region'. The Tunisian uprising has largely surprised the Western journalists, policy-makers and academics. Tunisia has long been described as a stable and secure country and Bin Ali appeared to be a key regional ally in the battles both to defeat terrorism and to promote liberalizing economic reforms. But while it is too early to write the history of this still-unfolding event, we can certainly explain how so many Tunisians ended up in the street starting from 17 December 2010. The wave of dissent that took shape first in Sidi Bouzid and then quickly in other Tunisian towns, to reach the capital on 28 December, was basically over the rights to employment, liberty and dignity. The uprising came about because of the frustration Tunisians felt at the growing corruption, high unemployment, especially among university graduates, and disparities in regional development. All have been moved by an essential call for dignity that might appeal differently to different actors, from economic dignity (the direct economic causes of the revolts) to moral political dignity (a desperate plea from the middle classes for some 'voice' in their destiny). Shortly after the overthrow of Bin Ali, on 25 January 2011, Egyptian masses gathered in the streets of Cairo and many other Egyptian cities, repeating the same slogans of the Tunisian revolution and asking Hosni Mubarak to leave. This started a wave of dissent that touched other Arab countries such as Yemen, Libya and Syria and convinced the Jordanian and Moroccan monarchies to initiate reform. This has been termed the Arab Spring.

Significantly, none of the critical developments that took place in Tunisia and culminated in the Arab Spring appears to have been substantially affected by the European Union (EU) democracy promotion efforts. On the contrary, the Arab Spring has highlighted once more the European Union's failure to bring about democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa through its Mediterranean democracy promotion policy. The EU has been promoting democracy in the region for over two decades and justifying such a choice on the grounds that democracy is, in the long run, the best antidote to challenging security issues such as conflict, immigration or terrorism. The EU foreign policy discourse is replete with calls for maintaining security in the

Mediterranean region. In 2006, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner (2006) stated that 'stability in the Mediterranean is vital for our security and prosperity as well as that of our Mediterranean friends and neighbours'. The EU has launched multilateral policy initiatives, such as the European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighbouring Policy (ENP), to help create 'shared prosperity' and more jobs for all the countries of the Mediterranean. Yet persistent and gross disparities in wealth and high unemployment were among the grievances that triggered the Arab revolts. And, while declaring its commitment to promoting human rights and democracy, by its actions the EU has favoured regimes and practices that ultimately proved intolerable to a broad stratum of Arab society.

Has Tunisia benefited from its partnership with the EU when it comes to democracy promotion and political reform? Could the EU, in general, and France, in particular, use the political leverage it has on Bin Ali regime to promote democracy in Tunisia? How does the Arab Spring influence the EU democracy promotion policies? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by reviewing the history of the EU promotion of democracy in Tunisia. In doing so, the chapter hopes to offer policy-makers and scholars a new path forward for democracy promotion in Tunisia, one that combines the lessons of the past with the opportunities of the future as proclaimed by Tunisian revolutionaries' aspirations and demands.

EU democracy promotion in Tunisia

Most analyses of EU democracy promotion in Tunisia tend to date it with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) commonly known as the Barcelona process. The roots of the EU–Tunisian multilateral relations, though, extend to the late 1950s when the European countries first began to put the building blocks of the Common Market together. Tunisia has signed association agreements with the EEC in 1959, 1965 and 1967 (Bicchi 2007).

The Barcelona Declaration clearly states the EU aims to promote peace, democracy, human rights, cooperation and development in the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean. To pursue this goal, the Union developed three main areas, namely the political/security basket, economic basket, and cultural/social basket. As a result of EU enlargement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the EU introduced the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with the aim of creating a 'ring of friends'. Both the ENP Strategy Paper (European Commission 2004) and the ENP country-specific action plan to Tunisia stress the necessity to establish democracy and the rule of law. Tunisia has received an annual average of 85 million euros in MEDA[1] aid funds. The National Indicative Programme for Tunisia has devoted another 300 million euros per annum to fund the 'priority areas'. Economic liberalization has received the largest financial funding (127 million euros) followed by educational reform programmes (65million euros) and cooperation on energy and environmental issues (43 million euros). Only 30 million euros per annum was side-lined for democracy-related issues.

In the Association Agreement the EU concluded with Tunisia in 1998, references to democracy, as a shared value, are a few. The preamble states the consideration by all parties of the 'proximity and interdependence which historic links and values have established' between the Community, its member states and Tunisia. Article 2 refers to the respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights which 'shall inspire the domestic

and international policies of the parties'. Whereas this clause explicitly engages Tunisia in promoting political pluralism, it was vague and tentative compared to the detailed and exhaustive chapters concerning the economic liberalizations. Moreover, though the Barcelona declaration specifically asks the signatories to engage in democracy promotion and the respect of the human rights, it left each country free 'to choose and freely develop its own political, socio-cultural, economic and judicial system' (Youngs 2008a, 2008b).

When Bin Ali came to power in a bloodless coup in 1987, ousting his predecessor President Bourguiba, he promised the Tunisians democratization, national reconciliation and a short presidency. During the early years of his rule, he legalized a few political parties (except the Islamic one) and started a promising process towards a multiparty system, elections, the rule of law and the pursuit and respect of human rights (Alexander 1997; Murphy 1997; Durac and Cavartota 2009; Sadiki 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Shortly after, he turned parties in oppositions into loyal ones, appointed his allies in human rights leagues and excluded hard-line political opponents from political participation and opposition. Despite an appearance of pluralism, the result was an uncompetitive electoral system in which the few legal opposition parties were co-opted by the regime and had no impact upon the legislative process.

The Tunisian regime has developed a number of survival strategies axed mainly on exclusion of all possible dissidents. It developed a façade democracy (Sadiki 2002c; Boubekeur 2009) where only loyal opposition parties were granted seats in the parliament, developed an electoral system that largely favoured the RCD, the ruling party, streamlined the press, banned Islamic parties and prosecuted their members. Such a regime could not possibly initiate any real political reform and thus was unlikely to ask and benefit from the EU plans to support and diffuse democracy.

The Bin Ali regime has operated a zero-risk strategy in dealing with the opposition. All candidatures to any state-paid position were severely screened to eliminate any 'infiltration' of non-partisans. If any Tunisian was listed a political opponent, the entire family was penalized and obstructed from accessing governmental jobs or being promoted to decision-making positions. This regime has succeeded in dividing the country into a majority of 'loyals' and a minority of dissidents. However, the 'loyals' group contained a large number of 'silents' who were not typically pro-regime but who bought the regime major argument that political freedom, participation and dialogue are not as important for development as security and stability are. Whether through coercion or persuasion, this regime has succeeded in silencing the biggest majority of Tunisians and turned political participation and opposition into a game that only a handful of loyal followers were allowed to play.

The EU has rarely condemned Bin Ali for outlawing opposition parties or for locking up their leaders. The EU's relationship with Tunisia emphasizes, at least on paper, close cooperation on democratic reform, economic modernization, social reform and migration issues. However, when, in 2005, on the occasion of Tunisia hosting the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), the European parliament issued a critical resolution on the situation of human rights in Tunisia, the Tunisian government was quick to respond, threatening to sever diplomatic relations with a number of unspecified countries should their representatives continue to meet with Tunisian opposition and human rights activists. This has not stopped European aid to flow either in 2005 or in the following years. Tunisia has remained EU's longest established and most European-focused neighbour. Daguzan (2002: 138) remarks that Bin Ali was perceived by the

French government to be the wall against Islamism and the man capable of modernizing Habib Bourguiba's regime. Up to the very end of his regime, Bin Ali received praise from France for his regime as a model of economic reforms and stability. He brandished the threat of Islamist extremism to rally external support for his anti-terrorist strategy or at least obtain a blind eye towards his human rights violations records.

EU dedication to democracy promotion

Democracy promotion had its first roots in the ideas of President Woodrow Wilson, who declared that '[t]he world must be made safe for democracy' (Wilson, 1917, quoted in Huber 2008: 43). Democracy promotion has, however, gained importance in foreign policies and to international donors, politicians and academics. International democracy promotion rests on a number of key concepts. First it is believed that democracy promotes peace within regions and worldwide. Second, it is widely assumed that increased economic ties and development would lead to cohesion and stability. The democracy promotion debate saw sizeable development after 9/11 and has been marked by the US leadership. President Bush, for instance, partly explained the US attack on Iraq as an operation to promote democracy. Unlike the US military power, the European Union often sees itself as a 'civilian' power, a force for good in the world. Prior to the 1990s, the EU has concerned itself with trade relations, then gradually became interested in promoting democracy as the best antidote to violence, war and terrorism. The EU also considers democracy as part of its own identity and intends to 'uphold and promote its values and interests' in its relations with the wider world. The EU, Youngs (2002: 2) explains, 'has sought to establish itself as an influential actor in the domain of democracy promotion and by the middle of the 1990s'. Today, all agreements with third countries contain clauses concerning democracy issues, including the possible application of suspension or sanctions.

The EU has developed a number of internal and external democracy promotion policies, namely political conditionality, economic and judicial liberalization and reform, and the engagement of the Tunisian civil society for the role it can play to 'help uphold human rights and contribute to democracy building and good governance, playing an important role in checking government excesses' (European Commission 2011b).

As external democracy promotion strategies, both the EMP and the ENP use conditionality as their leverage model. Freyburg et al (2007) explains that democratic conditionality is a type of intergovernmental bargaining in which an external actor, the EU, offers certain incentives to a third country in order to make it comply with the imposed requirements for democratic development. The government of the target state makes a decision on whether or not to comply on the basis of cost-benefit calculations – that is, whether the promised rewards outweigh expected adoption costs. Positive conditionality, a range of incentives in the form of enhanced cooperation or contractual relations dependent on the progress of political reforms, has been long welcomed by the Tunisian government as a token of compliance to EU norms. However, though Tunisia is an ideal country to use negative conditionality as it literally depends on the EU for imports and exports, the EU has never tried to use the economic leverage to pressurize the Tunisian regime for political reforms. The EU recognizes that in Tunisia 'progress on political aspects such as freedom of expression or association has been very slow' (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument 2007: 2). Simply, the EU was reluctant to risk destabilizing its relation with Tunisia, an international partner, over an

issue such as democracy and 'to maintain stability through the status quo, rather than risking the unpredictable outcomes that come with political reform' (Powel 2009: 57). Paciello (2011: 6) further claims that 'the EU played a key role in maintaining Bin Ali's regime in power' despite its rhetorical support for democracy. The EU simply prioritized economic reform and ensured cooperation on geostrategic issues and domestic European interests (e.g., terrorism and illegal migration).

The second model of external democracy promotion focuses on socio-economic development. It maintains that democratization is a multi-step process in which socio-economic development leads to societal pluralism and the emergence of a strong middle class that, in turn, demands political participation and accountability of the government. As has been mentioned earlier, the economic basket in the EMP has received the lion's share of the EU financial assistance to Tunisia. To argue that support for liberalizing the economic sector and bringing it to the EU standards and norms has even slightly enhanced the Tunisians' demands for political liberalization is far from being plausible. The argument in the 1990s was that market liberalization, thus reducing the grip of authoritarian states on economy, is the key to democratization. The Bin Ali regime has privatized the state-owned sector to create a new group of people who uses the state advantages to their benefit and at the detriment of middle and lower class. Crony capitalism and widespread corruption prevailed and challenged the declared aims of the Barcelona process of more prosperity and jobs in the region.

The third model of external democracy promotion aims at empowering civil society of the partner states. Very little cooperation between the Tunisian civil society and the EU happened during the last two decades. At the start, the EU was very reluctant to engage societies and contented itself with intergovernmental transactions. When the EU started engaging civil society, it was very difficult for the Tunisian associations, who were not controlled by the government, to engage in any fruitful cooperation. Civil society organizations that wanted to cooperate with the EU were constantly harassed by the government.

Apparently, all of the EU programs in Tunisia have failed in promoting democracy and convincing Bin Ali to loosen his grip on liberties, on political participation and opposition. What is remarkable is that the gap between the EU-declared aims and practices is so big that it is almost impossible to fill it in with just pouring more money and elaborating a beautiful discourse about the Arab Spring and democracy. In a number of interviews[2] I have carried with Tunisian young activists on their conceptions of democracy and democratic transition, they often blamed Europe and the West in general for thinking that Tunisians are not fit for democracy; think that the EU should apologize to the Tunisians for standing with the dictator and not with the people; and demand an equal treatment in mobility. Another plea for dignity?

The EU response to the Arab Spring

Praising the demonstrators in Tunisia 'where the will of the people proved more powerful than the writ of a dictator', Barack Obama expressed support for the 'democratic aspirations of all people' in his State of the Union Address.

At the G-8 Deauville Summit in May 2011, President Sarkozy said that 'multilateral development banks could provide over 14 billion euros, including 3.5 billion euros from the EIB, for Egypt and Tunisia for 2011–13 in support of suitable reform efforts'. He has also announced that G-8 members could increase this effort up to 28 billion euros.

Europe's first unitary reaction was to hold an extraordinary EU summit on March 2011 and issued a policy document 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity' which contained a number of key concepts in European foreign policy such as a balance between economic and political reform.

After zigzagging between first supporting the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt and then the uprising against Gaddafi, the EU acknowledged that its prior status quo policies were mistaken. This led to a reshaping of EU policy doctrine towards the region with several elements: stronger political conditionality and differentiation between states of the region under the slogan 'more for more', new tools for democracy promotion (a Civil Society Facility and a European Endowment for democracy), and emphasis on the three Ms – more Money, more Market access and more Mobility.

One of the outstanding features of Euro–Mediterranean relations was the gap between the creation of broad frameworks and plentiful initiatives and their non-implementation, leaving much of the substance of politics to bilateral relations between individual countries. It is quite legitimate to question whether the 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity' and subsequent policies will be just be another initiative that is beautifully worded but not implemented.

The real question is whether the EU response to the Arab Spring indicates a shift in EU thinking about its relations with Tunisia. This new policy seems to be more the case of 'old wine in new bottles' than to mark a real shift in EU thinking. Apart from sustaining a beautiful discourse about democracy, the EU still considers that countries that would deserve support are those that try hard to reform their institutions to approximate the European standards and norms. Although the EU official discourse is careful to include any disrespect of Islam, the fear of Islamists gaining power through the ballot system is still there. Moreover, the EU seems to be unable to consider the countries of the south shore of the Mediterranean as equal partners and seems to expect the same docile and lenient relations it used to sustain with the Tunisian autocratic regime. Unless the EU shows real signs of treating their partners as equal, it is unlikely that Tunisians would really benefit from any EU support to build a sustainable democracy in the region.

The EU needs to develop an accurate and thorough understanding of the Tunisian political scene as it is (not as it should be) and as it has been evolving since the uprising including all political actors and not content itself with listening to long-established friends. Such an understanding will lay solid grounds for ongoing and future political dialogue with Tunisian counterparts on the optimum ways, quantity and specially quality of EU support to the Tunisian democratic transitions. It is also vital for the success of this democratic transition that the EU doesn't stand in favour of any political group and thus cause an unnecessary and dangerous bias.

EU calls for reform were never aggressive enough with the old regime to result in any real or sustainable change. There has been this fear of the EU that any strong initiative might be perceived as new colonialism and so resisted even more than softer ways to persuade the Tunisian government to initiate any meaningful reform. Perhaps it is time for the EU to rethink its democracy promotion policies from the outside and capitalize on the opportunities of the Arab Spring for change from within. If efforts to promote democracy have been hesitant thus far, the Tunisian popular uprising provides a critical opportunity to restore EU credibility.

The diplomatic challenges of democracy promotion in Tunisia over the last two decades have resulted in an impotent strategy aimed more towards enhancing the state's efficiency and coherence than in challenging the status quo. Fortunately, with the Bin

Ali regime now replaced by what appears to be a more democratic order, democracy promotion will no longer be faced with the choice of either challenging the regime or working with it. Democracy promoters should now be free to seek and support legitimate grassroots actors.

The credibility of any democracy-assistance strategy rests ultimately with how well it supports local demands and reflects local aspirations. The bravery and tenacity shown by protesters throughout Tunisia indicates a desire for substantive democratic reform. As such, efforts to construct a sustainable democracy must be guided by Tunisians in close coordination with the EU and the Tunisian government.

Recommendations are as follows:

1 Future EU–Mediterranean policies should try to put the people of the region and not the rulers centre stage. Old policies often sacrificed the interests of the people for the sake of European geo-political and geo-economic interests.
2 New challenges in the field of democracy promotion need novel and adaptive policies. The EU has to strike a balance between non-interfering with the Arab Spring domestic political struggles and meddling in domestic politics. The EU has to avoid siding with domestic political forces, especially in light of fears of political Islam taking over.
3 Previous economic cooperation frameworks need to be mutually assessed and new just and sustainable development policies need to be co-constructed. It is no longer possible to treat the southern side of the Mediterranean as mere consumers of policies and plans devised and delivered by the North. Acting more in line with partnership than patronage and living up to its ethical plight is by far the most significant leverage the EU possesses towards the region.
4 Devise a small-grant programme that could be more placed to deliver rapid assistance in response to shifting needs and changes of political circumstances.

In other words, the EU has the opportunity to make amends for past failures by offering prompt and generous help that Tunisia needs and deserves. Above all, this will serve European interests in helping to consolidate a more stable and pluralistic southern neighbourhood. The EU should not start where it usually does: teaching and preaching. This time a humbler approach is needed. The EU should offer advice where it is asked for, financial assistance and trade where it is able, and also some quick eye-catching measures, across all sectors, to show that it stands with Tunisia's move towards democracy. Europe has an interest in supporting Tunisia in becoming an established democracy that could serve as a model in a turbulent but still predominantly authoritarian region. The time to act is now.

Notes

1 The MEDA programme is the main financial instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. MEDA comes from MEsures D'Accompagnement ('accompanying measures'). The programme's regional dimension deals with problems common to Mediterranean partners and emphasises the partners' complementary nature.
2 Ben Othman, R. 2013. '"You Can Revolt but You Can't Rule": Tunisian Young People's Conceptions of Democracy and Democratic Transition', CISD 2nd International Conference, March 2013.

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The Arab Spring through Russian 'Eyes'

Karina Fayzullina

Introduction

> As the practice shows, nothing good comes of revolutions.
>
> Sergey Lavrov, foreign minister of Russia, 2013a

The Russian government is not willing to pit its strength against revolutionary changes in any Arab state, for the private life of each nation is inviolable. Nevertheless, almost invariably, the Russian popular media refuses to describe the Arab Spring affirmatively as an awakening of societies. The term itself is rarely used without inverted commas, and most of the times picked up to accentuate the figurativeness of use or to emphasize the negative short-term effect the revolutions have had on societies.

On the other hand, the intellectual part of the Russian community holds the opposite view. The majority of scholars agree that the Arab Spring is a positive multidimensional process which emerged as an outburst of public indignation caused by social, political, economic and cultural problems accumulated in the Middle Eastern region throughout the decades (e.g. see Naumkin and Popov 2012). But the appraisals by both analysts and the government do not idealize or extol, for in the near future the communities of the region will go through an uneven period of transition (interview with Marina Sapronova, 10 April 2013). The accomplishment of an initial stage of revolutions only means the beginning of a profound perennial reboot of the social mechanisms.

Prior to the analysis of specific cases, a few remarks should be made on present-day Russian foreign policy. Russian specialists agree that the roots of the drive, referred to as the Arab Spring, are deeper than the rise of national self-consciousness or the search for self-identification; rather, it grows out of paramount necessity for a change in the world. The notorious *End of the History* never came. It turned out by virtue of infamous causes that a single superpower is unable to provide the whole world with a solid economic and ideological foundation. In Russia's case the model of behaviour, dictated by the fall of Soviet Empire, is also played out. Russia alongside the rest of the world is in need of a new worldview. This is clearly depicted in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (2013) as the following:

> Rapid acceleration of global processes and growing new trends in global development require new approaches and a new vision of priorities, taking into account Russia's increased responsibility for setting the international agenda and shaping the system of international relations.

On the global scale, international systems of governmental affairs have been transforming over the last three decades. The changes have been generated on the periphery of the world as both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. The Arab Spring became a catalyst of these long overdue tectonic transformations. The conversion that primarily affects societies in turn discloses deep value divergence in defying the seemingly well-established concepts as state sovereignty, rights of civic society, roles of economic welfare, military strength and information. In this vein Russia is not willing to remain an eyewitness on the outskirts of the universe; it seeks to obtain the place of a decisive and sagacious world leader.

It is against this background that this chapter endeavours to answer the question of what Russian relationships with the events of the Arab Spring are, and what the role and place of Russia in the revolutionary events in the Middle East is. The beginning of the Arab Spring fell on the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, succeeded by Vladimir Putin in 2012. And, thus, this chapter also accentuates the distinction between the courses of the two heads of the government, reflected in different approaches towards the events in Libya and Syria.

Contextualizing Russian foreign policy

In answering the questions posed above, Russian leaders consider themselves proceeding from a just and neutral stand. According to the Russian establishment, until now institutionalized forms of international law will remain unaltered – the use of force must be warranted by United Nations mechanisms, whereas foreign involvement in a regime change and meddling in revolutions are inadmissible.

The current fragile balance of political forces demonstrates that there is a lack of steadiness and a meeting of minds of international elites. Various exogenous forces pursue each own interests, frequently differing with the interests of indigenous communities. With the decrease of manageability of world processes, even the most sagacious analysts give up to make plausible predictions about the future course of events. This pushes conservative Moscow leaders towards taking un-shifting and inflexible stands, as happened in the case of Syrian war.

In terms of protecting national interests, Russia's policy proceeds from geopolitical location, size and ethnic diversity. Spreading over an eighth of the Earth's landmass, Russia willingly or not becomes a significant player of world's politics; therefore, 'independence in foreign policy has no alternatives' (Lavrov 2013b). At the same time, the increasing significance of Islamization and its influence on world processes urge the Russian government to work out a wise mode of interaction with the world's non-spatial Muslim community, which includes 10 to 15 per cent of Russia's own population.

By the year 2010 Russia had rebranded itself and created a positive image in the Middle East, personifying in mass consciousness an alternative for brutal Western values. Due to Putin's own design, Russia became an observer in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2003. Russia is engaged in dialogue with Hamas and Hezbollah, simultaneously maintaining stable relations with Israel and the Palestinian National

Administration. Medvedev was the first official of his level to meet Khaled Mashaal. In contrast to the Western powers, Russia stood against the American invasion of Iraq and supported Lebanon in 2006. At the same time Russia reinforced and reorganized its relations with Iran, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Syrian war disenchanted the Arab or, broader, the Muslim community and disclosed the reality: behind Moscow's global pretensions for universal justice is the same old *real-politik* (Muhametov 2013). Assads may come and go, economic ties will gradually be re-established, but its image seems to be lost in certain circles. The disillusionment reached the point of no return by the time the Muslim Brothers' ideologist Sheikh Qaradawi called Russia 'The No 1 Enemy of Islam'. Doubtless, in terms of foreign politics, Russian pragmatists can endure such a declaration painlessly.

Bilateral relations between Russia and America with regard to the Arab Spring require particular consideration. Russian elites set themselves against the Western powers almost reflectively, bearing in mind the vortex of past events believed to be provoked by the West. Among them are Colour revolutions on the post-Soviet space and in the Balkans, the 2008 war with Georgia, the rise of Taliban supported imprudently by the US, along with some Gulf States against the USSR. Perhaps the last one has had the most devastating effect on both regional life and Russian fashion of interpreting the events. The high-tech US army has proven unable to fight Afghani guerrillas and to hold back drug trafficking, causing a great deal of headache for the whole region. Some Russian analysts consider that the US along with Gulf States are replaying the scenario of the Afghanistan war by supporting and equipping those who might possibly turn their weapons against present-day sponsors. Secondly, the proverbial 2014 Afghani syndrome gives rise to anxiety, for the potential increase of violence would be trouble for the Russian government. These obscure perspectives leave no alternative for the Kremlin but to adhere to the hard-line philosophy of 'pragmatism, transparency and predictability'.

The upshot is that Russia has no overt or latent claims on world dominance; it does not seek to assume the role of world policeman. But the transformation of the Africa–Middle East (AME) region in economic, political, social and cultural spheres cannot bypass Russia (interview with Marina Sapronova, 10 April 2013). Seeking to protect itself from political indeterminism and secure stability, intransigent Moscow sticks to its guns. Moreover, Russian history, unlike that of the European Union and the US, is not associated with the promotion of democratic values, and most probably will not be due to the specificity of its political system.

Today the crucial moot point for Moscow is the project of Eurasian integration. All moral and financial forces are focused on this specific dimension. The crux of it is the search for national self-identification, lost with the fall of the USSR. Hence, for Russia, the conceptual component of the Arab revolutions is largely reduced to the interpretation of international norms. According to Western perspectives, the Arab upheavals imply an ideological context, particularly keeping in mind the solid Western experience of democracy promotion in the Middle East. This difference in the appraisals of the Middle Eastern uprisings essentially sets Western partners at odds with the Kremlin.

'Revolutionary' lessons for the Kremlin

Analysts put forward several assumptions why Moscow opposed the initial plans of the US, the EU and some Arab states in the Syrian war. It is widely believed that Bashar

Assad is the last ally and the only friend of Moscow in the Middle East, or that Russia seeks to retain control over the Tarsus base, or the costly contracts on weaponry are behind Moscow's policy. There is only a grain of truth; those are the side issues of broader matter, where the stakes are higher than ever.

Syria became the apple of discord for too many actors. Absence of international accord over Balad al Sham (Syria) reflects the views of the participants on the conflict: deep discrepancy of their concepts of world order. It regards the issues as a perception of sovereignty, human rights, rights of civic society, responsibility for the use of force and so on. The settlement of the Syrian crisis requires the involvement and cooperation of all parties, rather than their solitary discordant actions. But the plot of the Syrian crisis and the role Russia assumed in it entirely rests on Libyan intervention.

Why should the retention of economic positions not be considered one of Russia's priorities in the Arab Spring? First, at the scale of the Russian economy, there is no strategic economic presence in the region. Arab countries lost the status of Moscow's considerable clients of military industry in the aftermath of 1991. Among the states, to which Soviet debts were written off, are Afghanistan (US$11 billion), Algeria (US$4.7 billion in 2006), Iraq (US$12 billion in 2008) and Syria (US$10 billion in 2005) (Makarichev and Samojnev 2011). The value of the debts had been lost due to growing inflation.

Perhaps most of its positions in Russian business could have been lost in Libya. The Russian state intermediary agency responsible for import/export of the full range of defence and dual-use end products, Rosoboronexport JSC, had several contracts with Jamahiriyyah's government on weaponry delivery totalling US$4.5 billion (Isaykin 2013). However, Libya did not pull out of the deal. In September 2013 the first part of the order – Russian BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles – were handed over to the Libyans. In 2008 Russian Railways JSC signed a contract with Libya estimated at US$3.5 billion on constructing a railway between Sirt and Bengazi. The contract was suspended but negotiations are still on (Russian Railways 2012). These projects were obtained in return for debt relief in 2008 (US$4.5 billion).

In addition, three Russian oil and gas companies, LUKoil JSC, Tatneft JSC and Gazprom JSC, had been operating in Libya on the eve of the rebellion. Tatneft, which previously had been conducting exploration works in Ghadames and Sirt, announced its return to Libya in March 2013. Prior to the revolution Gazprom had staked out a claim to become a serious player among foreign oil and gas companies along with German Wintershall AG or Italian ENI. By the end of 2012 the company intended to exercise an option to purchase a share of the Italian ENI to participate in a consortium in the Libyan El Fil (Elephant) project (Gazprom JSC 2012). Russian companies did not holding the leading positions in the Libyan oil and gas sector, unlike those of Italy or France. By March 2013 Mahmoud Jibril, previously known as Libyan interim prime minister, had visited Moscow. The resumption of military equipment supplies and the recovery of trade relations had also been discussed during the visit of Libyan Foreign Minister Mohammad Abdelaziz to Moscow in September 2013.

As in Libya, Russian business has not suffered much as a result of the Arab Spring elsewhere. In April 2013 Mohammad Morsi, currently disposed from his position as the result of a military coup, visited Moscow. Trade turnover between Russia and Egypt did not decrease during the revolution and increased in 2012 by 35 per cent to US$3.5 billion, of which Russian export made up US$3.2 billion (Ministry of Economic Development of Russia 2013). In April 2013, Yemeni President Abd Rabboh Mansur Hadi visited

Moscow as well, where he encouraged Russian business to broaden its activity in Yemen (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Russia 2013).

To recap, Russian trade relations with the Arab states have not been seriously affected. No government is eternal, but each government seeks to develop diversified economic ties. The recovery of trade affairs is merely a matter of time.

Moving to the political sphere, it would be a fallacy to assume that Russia was misled in Libya. Russia took unprecedented measures and did not interfere deliberately in Western plans by abstaining from the vote for the 1973 United Nations Security Council resolution and gave support for the 1970 resolution. Dmitri Medveded and Vladimir Putin put on a 'good cop, bad cop' act when Putin publicly disapproved the position of then President Medvedev to allow the infamous resolutions to be passed. 'The UN Security Council resolution is inadequate and defective. It … resembles a medieval appeal for crusades. It virtually permits invasion to the sovereign state', said Putin (RIA Novosti 2011).

Disagreements within the Russian diarchy were implausible. The Russian position was adjusted to play up both sides to minimize the risks. Expensive commercial contracts were at stake in Libya. In case the colonel had remained on his feet, the president to-be, Putin, would have discharged himself, pleading his past position. In the meantime, Medvedev was haggling with the West over various issues, including preventing the deployment of the American anti-missile defence system in Europe, terms to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), delivery of the contract on French Mistral-class ship construction and so on. By calling a 'politically dead body' in March 2011, Medvedev not only accidentally foretold his destiny, but determined Russian priorities, according to which the colonel was not a client worth risking relations with the West. Moreover the guilt for the potential Bengazi massacre could have been laid upon the Kremlin (Lukyanov 2012).

Moscow complied with the requirements, including the arms embargo, and renounced any help for Assad's regime. Several days later the Ambassador of Russia to Libya, Vladimir Chamov, was recalled to Moscow and ousted from his position for deprecating the Kremlin's plans. In fact, Chamov had not called for the vetoing of the 1973 resolution. His idea was that the hastily designed document had been ill conditioned, allowing broad interpretations of the text (Chamov 2012a). The Kremlin knew it. All of the parties realized that the 'no-fly zone' over Libya would mean massive use of force. It is still not certain how many civilians fell prey to the helpful international coalition, and it is not likely that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is to be held accountable. The protection of the civilian population by humanitarian intervention, authorized by the UN Security Council, was legal, for 'taking all necessary measures' was the only clear formulation of the document, while the only distinct prohibition on land operations was observed (UNSC 1973).

Moscow began changing the rhetoric to criticism when the operation was subject to procrastination. It was averred that 'setting no-fly zone pursued solely prevention of governments aviation use against civilians. Disproportionate use of force, exceeding and contradicting the UNSC mandate, does not imply regime change in Libya and would lead to fatal consequences' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2011). Overall, Russia passively stayed away confining itself to ambiguous statements. The two-headed Russian administration consciously became a participator of this immense act of organized hypocrisy. Partitioning of oil by the belligerent Western powers began in the full view of the international community long before the operation of international

coalition had been accomplished. In March 2011 Mustafa Abdel Jalil, head of the opposition National Council, said that any post-leadership would allot shares in Libya's oil business 'according to the positions countries are taking towards Libya in these difficult times'.[1]

Medvedev pretended to turn a blind eye to the vanity and looting of the European leaders, while the Americans rather unwillingly lead from behind. In fact, the Europeans sought to assure the status of great powers by winning this little splendid war and to secure their energetic interests as well, not to mention that the country first to acknowledge the National Transitional Council is currently fighting mercenaries in Mali whom it armed in Libya, while its ex-president is under investigation over who sponsored his electoral campaign.

The biggest inexcusable mistake that Moscow made was waiving the principles and devaluing the notion of legitimacy in exchange for concessions from the West. The mission was formally undertaken by an international coalition in conformity with the UN resolution, unlike NATO aggressions to Iraq or to Yugoslavia. But practically this was the first time in history when the alliance directly interfered in a civil war and openly supported one of the parties, proclaiming in advance a random coalition of forces as a lawful government. This was a direct violation of the principles of international law, which Russia claims to defend in Syria. It states that 'every State has the duty to refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in acts of civil strife or terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts' (UNGA 1970).

Arrogantly teasing the West, Moammar also became a trail-blazing example for the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 2003, he denounced his claims to obtain nuclear weapons in exchange for economic freedom and safe conduct from the US administration. Undoubtedly, Iranian Ayatollahs were watching the show as a rehearsal for hunting their heads. Long live nuclear-free Middle East!

Overall, regarding the ulterior motives directing the participants of the Libyan conflict and their affected pathos, NATO's military campaign against Libya cannot be called anything but a glaring deception equal to the one in Iraq (Chamov 2012b). In the Libyan case, Russia became a passive participant in a theatre of the absurd, assuming it as a mistake in the aftermath (Putin 2012).

The conceptual distinction of Moscow's policy in the Syrian and Libyan conflict is obvious. It was its passive abstention in the first case, and it is strong rigidity in the second. The conclusions the Russian leaders drew for themselves from the Libyan war are determinative in understanding the Russian stance in Syria:

- Evolutional transformations will occur beforehand. Revolutionary wars lead to no good.
- European and Gulf State actors, as well as the US, will not be trusted.
- Short-term market interests are not worth waiving principles.
- The supremacy of international regulations willl not be questioned.
- The Libyan scenario was a Russian mistake which will not be repeated.

The 'Syria story' through Russian narratives

The prevailing accusation of the Russian government in the Syrian war is its 'support for Assad's regime', whereas Russian leaders repeatedly stated that they 'have never

been fascinated by the regime and have never supported it. The destiny of "the regime" is in the hands of Syrian people, who must solely be responsible for the future of their state' (Lavrov 2013c). The Geneva Communiqué, according to the Russian establishment, will remain the basis for a political settlement of the crisis, which requires Assad's government and the opposition to form negotiation teams and to agree on the establishment of a transitional governing body. There are no preconditions regarding the need to remove the incumbent president of Syria.

Russia is not against revolutions *per se*, as is seen from the Libyan example. From the very beginning of the conflict, it is not the regime that Russian leaders want to retain. Bilateral relations between Russia and Syria are far from being historically strong. After 1991 cooperation was limited due to Russian proximity with Israel and a neutral stance towards the occupation of the Golan Heights. The first visit of the Russian president to Damask took place in May 2010, when the idea of any kind of insurgency there seemed absurd. The first foreign visit of Bashar Assad outside the Middle East was to France in 2001. He visited Moscow only in 2005, when the Syrian debt of the Soviet times totalling US$9.8 billion was written off in exchange for economic preferences. This was the rebirth of economic and political cooperation. New relations have been being built on pragmatism and mutual economic interests, and not at all on the glorious past.

Assad has never been Moscow's best friend. Unlike the majority of international brokers, Russian leadership 'is engaged on regular basis in the dialogue with all the interested parties, including with all the oppositional groups unexceptionally' and Lebanese participants (Lavrov 2013a). It is by no means done in the name of liberalism and triumph of democracy! First of all, Russia seeks to secure stability in the region, and secondly to strengthen its positions in world politics on a global level. In doing so, the Kremlin seeks to constrain all parties to play by the rules of international law. It is believed in Moscow that disregard for the main principles of life in the global village pushes the world into uncontrolled chaos. So if Syrian rebels are eager to become a part of the international community, they need to abide by the rules, lay down arms and negotiate. Syrian opposition groups are disunited and fight one another. The deposition of Assad seems to be the only telos and clear demand. But the overthrow of the regime with the help of international forces will not yield effective results while there is no coherent vision or political programme for the future. The Kremlin is quite right, assuming that people, incapable of overcoming sectarianism today, would not be able to control the whole state tomorrow.

During the year 2012, the world media reproached Russia for imperialistic aspirations and a desire to preserve the 'naval base' in Tartus. The presence of base of material and technical support was upgraded by journalists and analysts to the level of a fully fledged military facility with regard to the Syrian war. In effect, it is not. The base has very little to do with the Soviet port created in 1971. The agreement to set up the present base in Tartus was signed in 1984. During the 1990s it was on the brink of closure, as the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron had ceased to exist. In the aftermath, the port was used only occasionally due to improper technical condition and lack of maintenance resources. The base of a total 2.3 hectares includes a floating dock structure, a floating repair shop, storehouses, barracks and administrative buildings. The purpose of the base is replenishment and refuelling. Russia is certainly not going to relinquish it for no particular reason. The 'Mediterranean Sea has always been in [the] operational zone of the Black Sea Fleet' (Ministry of Defence of Russia 2012), all the more so that the

rebels show no determination to shut it down. However, in mid 2012 the commander-in-chief of the Navy announced that the Tartus servicemen team could be evacuated in case of an assault (*RIA Novosti* 2012a). In the interim, Vietnam announced its willingness to reanimate the Soviet base in Cam Ranh (*RIA Novosti* 2012b). Thus, Tartus's significance in the Syrian conflict, especially taking into consideration its unsatisfactory technical condition, is overestimated.[2] Neither can it be considered a bargaining chip for any state to coerce Moscow into particular actions.

Another accusation of the Russian government is the arms supply for Assad's army. Between 2008 and 2012, 71 per cent of the import of armament was received by Syria from Russia (Novichkov 2013). The Kremlin claims it to be legitimate from the point of view of international regulations, as the trade contracts were concluded before the beginning of the conflict with the legitimate government of Syrian Arab Republic. Compared with the Russian conservative leadership itself, the Syrian regime indeed can be called legal. Whether true or not, the reality is that by October 2013 its leaders are still recognized as lawful by the UN. As claimed, the arms sold to the regime belong to the defensive weaponry to provide anti-missile protection in case of foreign air and sea intervention. They are inapplicable in offensive actions against the rebels (Sivkov 2013). In 2012 Syria took only 13th place among the trade partners of Rosoboronexport JSC. In comparison, Russia complied with the arms embargo on Libya, but the opposition was receiving the armoury from France and Qatar, flaunting delivery of those arms (Lavrov 2013a).

In addition, Russian leaders never felt the need to conceal their involvement in printing money for Syria. For several years, Syrian currency had been printed in Austria. However, due to EU sanctions, the company rejected the agreement. Along with Syria, federal state enterprise Gosznak manufactures money for another 20 countries.

More importantly, despite the growing outrage of the reactionary Gulf States, Russia appears to shield Assad in the UN Security Council. The threat of humanitarian intervention apparently bypassed Syria. In response, Saudi Arabia turned down a UNSC non-permanent seat, accusing its participants of double standards. Perhaps protection in the UN is the biggest assistance rendered by Moscow, and not in order to 'save the regime'. 'If anyone intends at any cost to resort to force actions, we can hardly impede. But let it occur on their own initiative and stay upon their conscience. There will be no authorization from UN Security Council,' said Sergey Lavrov (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2012). Or – as Putin put it – 'the destiny of Assad's regime does not cause any concern for us. We understand [that] the change is timely. We are anxious about something else: what's next?' (Putin 2012).

Indeed, what is next? There is no way back and it is hard to break the conceptual deadlock. Keeping in mind the Libyan war, Moscow considers itself morally justified to render the above-listed assistance to keep parity, while military and human aid is supplied for Syrian opposition under CIA cover through multiple logistics streams mediated by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Jordan (Chivers and Schmitt 2013), and Al Qaeda mercenaries are fighting in Syria. Where would they turn the ordnance should Syria be finished off?

Perhaps, prior to anything else the international leaders should have reconciled discordancy between themselves – if that had been possible, considering the real objectives of the interested parties. Russia does not have and never had any exclusive suggestions for Assad. There are no powers that Russia could execute to either persuade Assad to leave or to help him stay (Lukyanov 2012). And even if it had, would 'pragmatic' Russian – as Putin puts it – 'pull the chestnuts out of the fire' to satisfy the ambitions of Gulf and

Western powers? In that respect Russia's position is undisguised and reasonable. As for the political opponents, support of an utterly disjointed Syrian opposition, lacking common notions about the objectives of the war, is not the sharpest tactic.

What is noteworthy here is the battle in the informational space. The main Russian 'adversary' here is Qatar's Al Jazeera. The channel repeatedly distorts facts and broadcasts contradictory materials aimed at discrediting the Russian position. Among them are the allegations such as 'Russia has remained a key arms supplier to the Syrian regime', 'Assad is Russian key ally',[3] or attempts to present the Russian position towards Assad as hesitant. On the whole, Al Jazeera tries to keep up the message that Russians insist on preserving Assad's regime, whereas the coalition of Gulf and Western powers promotes political settlement; the necessity of military intervention is stipulated by Russian and Iranian single-mindedness.

This virtual duel reflects intrinsic contradictions in understanding world processes, as well as the diplomatic conflict between Russia and Qatar. The Gulf feels quite safe under the shelter of innumerable American military facilities in the region, such as the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar or the 5th Fleet based in Bahrain. As for the diplomatic quarrel, beyond all doubts, Al Jazeera either considered a scandal with Russian ambassador in Doha not worthy of their audience's attention or applied their policy of 'contextual objectivity' to it.[4] In any case, it lost a good chance to once again demonstrate Russia's 'dishonourable aspirations' in Syria.

Russia Today, one of the biggest international media networks,[5] accepted the challenge of unleashing a war and directly accused Al Jazeera of forgery. According to Russia Today evidence, provided by the military's space monitoring, Al Jazeera documents demonstrating government-inflicted airstrikes on Benghazi in February 2011 were forged. Other reproofs include the involvement of Al Jazeera along with CNN in permanent stage filming in Libya and Syria, bias in the channel's stance causing resignation of the key staff from Al Jazeera's Beirut Bureau, refusal to publish freelancers' material, providing rebels with telecommunications equipment, complete partiality, and meddling in revolutionary events (see various Russia Today broadcasts in 2011–2012). In the meanwhile, the US administration in the person of Hillary Clinton changed its attitude towards the channel, evaluating Al Jazeera's materials as 'real news', soon after its director general had resigned after being exposed by WikiLeaks as linked to the CIA (*Foe to Friend – Changed US Stance on Al Jazeera*, 2011).

In an epoch of informational technology, the media and social media have turned into practical tools of warfare. Al Jazeera's role in stimulating unrest and the professionalization of the upheavals – with the exception of Bahrain – is crucial. Similarly, its role in denigrating Russia's public image is substantial. It is hard to prove which side is truthful in the Russia Today versus Al Jazeera battle, but it is with certainty only one of them. The second one necessarily distorts the reality.

In October 2013, the Syrian war became a civil war. The opportunity when Assad could have been turned over to arrange a transitional period has been lost (Lukyanov 2012). Syria suffers inhumane atrocities of war, while the fighting sides and their supporters lay claim to be advocators of the ultimate truth. All of them have too much blood on their hands and none appears to be trustworthy in terms of future leadership: this war will not have a winner. There is a possibility of creating a bridge for a joint Russia–US initiative, bent on destroying Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons and establishing a dialogue between the belligerent forces. But it would require the consent of the regional players: Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Only they can push the umbrella

coalition of fighting opposition to dialogue (interview with Russian orientalist and ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary Alexander Aksenyonok, 2 October 2013).

Conclusion

The outburst and scope of the Arab Spring was an unexpected political *force majeure* in the world community. In practice, it intensified the rearrangement of a domestic political milieu of each Middle Eastern state and the world redistribution of power in intergovernmental affairs. In theory, it sparked a new global debate aimed at the rethinking of scholarly underpinnings and key concepts of ages-old ostensible truisms.

Russia is consciously taking part in this procedure, although by virtue of obvious reasons Moscow demonstrates certain distrust and apprehension towards the uprisings. Among the causes are the government's conservatism, a highly explosive neighbouring Central Asia and Caucasus, foreign sponsorship of extremists in the country, instigation of the Colour revolutions in adjacent regions from abroad, and its own insurgent past – two feverish changes of polity within the 20th century with ambiguous consequences. Unfortunate experiences in Libya can also be added. In general, the population shares this opinion, and that accounts for the Russian media's disdain for the phenomenon of the Arab Spring.

Nonetheless, it does not imply that Russia automatically sets its forces against revolutions or tries to intervene in a state's domestic affairs. Russian policy is not burdened by ideological conceptions – neither 'regime change' nor 'preserving regimes' can be attributed to its features. By her rigid actions Russia seeks to earn power and prestige, which means the capability to influence the events on a global level, for leaving the game would mean loss of the status of a significant player. Such a scenario is inadmissible in the Kremlin's view owing to Russian geopolitical location, which causes potential threats within and without its borders. The weakening of Russia and its concessions, as in the Libyan case, would mean yielding ground on the highest level of world politics. This could provoke *inter alia* degradation of international norms of conduct due to a sense of impunity, further casting out 'pariah states', increasing the vulnerability of Central Asia or Afghanistan and beyond.

Considering the unmanageability of world processes and the lack of a political moral even among the 'enlightened' European states, Moscow truly believes its position to be rational and sensible. The Arab Spring and what it brought along came on the scene with an abrupt unexpectedness. To this effect, political mistakes at the beginning were naturally made by all the external participants. But from the Russian side there have been less tactical blunders committed (interview with Alexander Aksenyonok, 2 October 2013). From the initial stage of the insurgences until the culmination of the invasion of Libya, the dispersion of opinions between Russia and the rest – their mutual proneness to conflicts – was not apparent. The first reaction to the uprisings in the world was disconcerted, scattered and delayed.

Although not as open as in the West, the aspirations brought up by Arab Spring were actually supported by the Russian establishment. However, Russia – not being an apologist or a practitioner of democracy – could afford rather restrained feedback, unlike the Americans who locked themselves up in their own rash promises and appeals and had to come down on 'the right side of history'. To capture its essence, Russian endeavours have not been ideologised. The disparity in approaches, such as those

developed vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict, points to Moscow's efforts, focused on preventing or minimizing foreign involvement in the revolutions.

Notes

1 Later on, the bargaining over the frozen Libyan assets began. 'The frozen assets must be released for the success of the new government to be established after the Gaddafi regime', said Mahmoud Jibril as the United States and South Africa announced a deal allowing the release of US$1.5 billion in frozen Libyan funds in August 2011. In September, after the roadmap for democracy had been outlined, Western leaders announced unfreezing of Libya's assets abroad, of which $15 billion was pledged by France and $700 million by the US. For example see Al Jazeera. 2011. 'Libyan rebels urge quick release of funds', 26 August, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/08/201182693150613102.html; Reuters. 2011. 'Comments from Paris Conference on Libya', 2 September, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/02/us-libya-conference-highlights-idUSTRE7810JG20110902; US Department of State. 2011 *Press Availability on Libya*, 1 September, http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/09/171604.htm.

2 The further report produced by Rossia 24 state TV channel shows the ill-managed facilities of the base: *Военная база России в Тартусе держится на голом энтузиазме* [*Turtus Base Is Kept up by Enthusiasm Alone*], 2012, Rossiya 24, 3 July, http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=430656.

3 Indeed, Russia does supply Syria with armoury, but this ordnance is meant to prevent foreign intervention, which is never mentioned by Al Jazeera. For example, see Al Jazeera. 2013. *Iran 'Steps Up' Military Support for Assad*, 14 March, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/03/201331494828530200.html.

4 Ambassador Vladimir Titorenko suffered an assault and was beaten at Doha Airport in November 2011. While passing through customs control he was attacked by customs security who made an attempt to confiscate his diplomatic pouch. Russia has down-scaled the level of diplomatic relations with Qatar following the incident.

5 Rusiya Al-Yaum (Russia Today's outlet) is headquartered in Moscow and broadcasts in Arabic. It was awarded Top 3 News Channel Online in the Arab World after Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya by Forbes Middle East. According to the Google Analytics data, Rusiya Al-Yaum website's visit rate is the highest among the three TV channels.

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North America's Response to the Tunisian and Egyptian Uprisings

Dalal Daoud

Mankind is created with innate dignity that cannot be seized by any form of authority. In 2011 the peoples of Tunisia and Egypt revolted for the dignity that autocratic governments had stripped away from them decades earlier. The Tunisian and the Egyptian voices called for an end to tyranny and they anticipated that the rest of the world would echo their aspirations, but this was not the case. It is evident that the voices of the aspirant Arabs fell on deaf ears in the two North American states that were comfortable with the status quo and desired its preservation. This chapter focuses on the American and Canadian response to the Arab revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Through in-depth examination of key statements made by Washington and Ottawa during the Tunisian (14 December 2010 to 25 January 2011) and Egyptian revolutions (17 January to 14 February 2011), the chapter provides an analysis of the North American reaction and the factors that have shaped it.

The North American response was not singular as it changed throughout the course of the revolutions. The reaction involved four different phases, the first of which is a period of wishful silence. During this period the North American governments were hoping that the autocrats would soothe the protesters and end the uprising without any changes to the leadership of the nations. The determination of the demonstrators and the continuation of the autocrats' violent response prompted the second phase in which the Western governments were compelled to take a stance. The second phase represented a period of timid criticism in which the American and Canadian governments sought the preservation of the regimes without the figurehead. The third phase reflected a period in which the Western governments finally internalized the Arab citizen's demand of completely discarding the regimes and attempted to control the transition. The fourth and last stage came after the removal of the North African governments and in this stage the Obama administration and the Harper government attempted to place their countries on 'the right side of history' by praising the revolutions and supporting the democratic aspiration of the Tunisian and Egyptian peoples.

The Obama administration and foreign policy

Unlike his predecessor, Obama did not come to the White House with a concrete foreign policy doctrine. Some praise this approach, arguing that it gives the president flexibility

when dealing with various issues, while others argue that his approach is 'tentative, indecisive, timid and nuanced' (Morey et al 2012). Obama, however, did not lack a vision. There are distinct views that shaped his foreign policy and in some aspects differentiated him from his predecessor. Among Obama's beliefs is that America's hegemonic and economic powers are in decline at the cost of the rise of other powers, namely China. Another conviction is that Bush's aggressive and unilateral policies had damaged America's reputation and turned the country into a reviled entity and therefore needed to be reversed (Morey et al 2012).

The difference between Bush and Obama stems from the make-up of each of the administrations. While Bush surrounded himself with hawkish neo-conservatives who were committed to democratization and militarism, Obama's bevy, including Defence Secretary Robert Gates and the Pentagon, were traditionalists and realists who argued that America's interests outweigh 'uncertain democratic change' (Morey et al 2012).[1]

The above core beliefs shaped Obama's foreign policy strategies. Obama's first strategy constituted a shift of focus from the Middle East to Asia, and the second strategy was to substitute the use of military force with the use of diplomacy and dialogue. This was accompanied by an abandonment of Bush's freedom agenda including a de-emphasis on democratization.[2] Since the Middle East was the most affected by Bush's hawkish attitude and US popularity had reached its lowest in the Middle East during the Bush administration, Obama thought to retreat from the region and to 'proceed with a sense of humility' (Obama 2011a). Hillary Clinton explained that the administration had 'launched a new era of engagement based on common interests, shared values, and mutual respect' (Clinton 2009). This retreat also meant 'foregoing chances of helping pro-democracy movements in the interest of maintaining working relations with autocratic leaders' (Morey et al 2012). An additional policy that is relevant to this chapter is the return to multilateralism or what has been referred to as leading from behind that entailed backing the international community's consensus.

These policy changes affected the American response in a tremendous manner. When the Tunisian and the Egyptian peoples revolted, the American administration was caught by surprise. Not only has the administration deprioritized the region, but it has also deprioritized democratization and strong international leadership. The Obama administration leading Washington during the uprisings proved to be overwhelmed, confounded, and torn in between realism and Wilsonism, the comfort of the known past and the fear of the uncertain future, and duplicity and virtue.

The Harper government and Canada's foreign policy

The Canadian response was also shaped by its government's ideology. One journalist writes, 'Canada under Stephen Harper is a different country than it ever was before, and what they might like to think of as a paradigm is definitely shifting' (Dobbin 2012). Indeed, Harper has introduced to Canadians and the world an entire new foreign policy. Coming from the Reform party, known for its radical right-wing agenda, Harper was keen on making a clean break from the Canada the liberals and moderate conservatives had built, a Canada that the world had largely known as a neutral middle power mediator. Harper's policies demonstrate more commonality with American neo-conservatism than conventional 'Canadian-ism'. The new Canadian Right resembles its American counterpart in that it shares its ideology and its make as neoconservatives, Christian evangelicals, and fiscal conservatives form the core of the party (Smith 2012).

In the international arena, the Conservative party has attempted to reinvent Canada into one of the big international players. This meant that Canada's soft power traditional capabilities were to be abandoned. Harper emphasized a more assertive and hawkish foreign policy by beefing up the military, increasing military commitments aboard, crusading what he calls Canadian values, and holding vehement international stances.[3]

Harper was among the first to commit troops to Afghanistan, and he had expressed disappointment in the militant abstinence from Iraq (Hibbard 2012). In 2003, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, Harper co-authored an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* critiquing Canada's choice of not participating in the Iraq War (Smith 2011). In addition to the increased military commitments abroad, the party has particularly affirmed a commitment to promoting what they termed 'Canadian values' overseas. An important example of this is the establishment of the Office of Religious Freedom under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose mandate is to promote freedom of belief and religion abroad. Harper has indicated that promoting religious freedom and pluralism is a key pillar of his foreign policy. This project has been criticized for its crusading un-Canadian nature that many argue will produce discriminatory and biased outcomes. Jordan Michael Smith states: 'this policy shift grows out of a larger worldview that prioritizes confrontation and support for democracies over the traditional Canadian values of neutrality and mediation' (Smith 2011).

The most evident example of this shift is witnessed in Canada's change of position with regard to the Palestinian–Israeli issue. In order to communicate a position of power to the world, Harper held unrelenting international stances of which support to Israel is the most evident. Since Harper assumed power, his government has been remarkably candid about their support to Israel. Whether it was the 2006 Lebanon war or the Gaza war in 2008–2009, Harper continued to speak of Israel's right to defend itself and the right to 'measured' response (Engler 2012: 116). The Harper government continued to repeat 'Israel has no greater friend in the world than Canada' (Siddiqui 2011), and Israelis have described Canada as better friend to Israel than Israel itself. One commentator in Israel Hayom described Baird, the Canadian minister of foreign affairs, 'when he discusses the Palestinian issue, Baird sounds like he could have voted in this week's [right-wing ruling party] Likud primaries' (Siddiqui 2011).

Harper's Middle East policy and the response to the Arab Spring were therefore shaped by the new Canadians' beliefs and policies. Other than providing unflinching support to Israel, occasional vocal support to minority groups, and mild criticism to Arab dictators, Harper's government did not take particular interest in the Arab world and for the most part continued to follow American and British leadership. Murray Dubbin writes: 'The Harper government's Middle-East policy is well known – continuous posturing about Arab dictatorships and terrorists and a sycophantic pandering to the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu' (Dobbin 2012).

The Tunisian uprising

Since independence, Tunisia has always been a key ally to the West. With its neo-liberal economic policies, secularism and more recent war on terror legislations, it has in fact proved to be a particularly valuable friend. The Western powers had full knowledge of Bin Ali's oppressive policies, corruption, and human rights abuses. However, they choose to ignore it at the cost of all the services the dictator provided. Indeed it is confirmed from WikiLeaks diplomatic cables that the United States had comprehensive

prior knowledge of the extent of corruption and the degree of the Tunisian's frustration. Similar to other Western powers, Obama and Harper choose to remain silent during the first days of Tunisian uprising (Shahshahani and Mullin 2012). Their comments were released at a later stage after the inability of the survival of the Tunisian regime was evident. Offering assistance to the transition, or attempting to steer the transition in the desired direction, ensued. Finally, commendations to the Tunisian people and their aspiration for freedom were released. Therefore, the four phases of silence, mild criticism, hope for controlled transition, and late praise can be clearly seen in the Tunisian case.

When analysing the four phases in depth it can be seen that the first phase (i.e., silence) was largely caused by ignorance and underestimation of the gravity of the situation. Two weeks after the self-immolation of Bouazizi, State Department officials seemed to be unaware of the situation and Clinton stated that they had not been informed about the Tunisian developments (Ghattas 2011). On 30 December 2010, Freedom House asked Foreign Affairs of Canada about the 'worsening situation in Tunisia', and the Canadian government refrained from answering, indicating that it is waiting for allies' reaction. In fact, for the first 25 days of the uprising, when the increasing number of civilian deaths and the government's brutal response were well documented, neither the US nor Canada made a statement condemning Bin Ali's government. As Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist, commented on the American response, 'Not one word of condemnation, not one word of criticism, not one word urging restraint came from Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton as live ammunition was fired into crowds of unarmed men, women, and children in recent weeks' (Ridley 2011).

On 12 January 2011, the 26th day of the uprising, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton finally remarked on the situation with a tepid comment that fell short of condemning the violations committed against the protesters: 'I have spoken to the [Tunisian] foreign minister and to the interim prime minister, the prime minister as recently as this weekend. I'm encouraged by the direction that they are setting toward inclusive elections that will be held as soon as practicable', she said (Wagner and Machnowki 2011). She also indicated that the US government had sent Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman to Tunisia to see 'how they want to see this process unfold'. State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley stated that Feltman would bring a 'first hand view' of the situation and determine how the US could assist in building a stable democracy (Wagner and Machnowki 2011).

During this period, it was still evident that the American administration was still hoping to preserve the Tunisian regime. Similar to Clinton, the State Department spokesman spoke of a transition to democracy through the regime:

> We support the transition that is underway, and we hope that this transition will be peaceful. We understand that Tunisian civil society has questions about the nature of the government. Clearly after decades of mistrust, there are questions that the people continue to raise. The government is trying to be responsive. We know this is hard … and we know that the government will at times have missteps along the way.
>
> *(Crowley 2011)*

The American administration finally commented on the use of violence in Obama's first statement after Bin Ali fled: 'I condemn and deplore the use of violence against

citizens peacefully voicing their opinion in Tunisia, and I applaud the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people' (Obama 2011g). This was the first comment issued by the American president on the Tunisian uprising. His second comment followed during the State of Union speech: 'And tonight, let us be clear: the United States of America stands with the people of Tunisia, and supports the democratic aspirations of all people' (Obama 2011a, b, c).

Canada as indicated earlier had decided to wait for its ally's reaction first. The Harper government commented for the first time on the same day that the American administration issued their first comment, 12 January. However, Canada's comments recognized some of the aggression the Tunisian uprising had been met with. Foreign Affairs issued the following statement:

> Canada is concerned by the deterioration of peaceful demonstrations in Tunisia into widespread violence. We are particularly concerned by reports of violence during public rallies, where many people have died, others have been wounded and a large number have been arrested. Canada urges the Tunisian authorities to restrain their security forces and to engage in an open dialogue with civil society.

On 14 January, when Bin Ali absconded, the Canadian government issued another press release: 'Canada welcomes news that free elections will be held in the near future, which will give all Tunisians a voice in building a new government committed to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law' (Cannon 2011a).

However, during the uprising the two countries were negotiating a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement (Engler 2012: 64). *Le Devoir* states that ten days after the dictator fled, Export Development Canada released an assessment of Tunisia's investment climate and the report 'reassured' potential Canadian investors by claiming the 'regime of President Ben Ali is staying the course and maintaining Tunisia's political stability, thanks to its special attention to social welfare and, in parallel, the force and effectiveness of the national security forces' (Engler 2012: 65). The report also stated that the Islamist opposition does not have threatening presence in the country, 'most of the Islamist opposition has left the country or been imprisoned' (Engler 2012: 64). These developments have led many to question whether the Canadian government has indeed hoped to preserve the regime but with a new face.

Additionally, when Harper and Obama's last semi-supportive comments were released Bin Ali's bevy remained in their posts in the government. Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi was still in power and members of Bin Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally (RDC) party controlled key ministries. The two North American governments ignored the continued protests across the country that candidly demanded the severing of all ties with the old regime. Due to this many concluded that Obama and Harper were interested in the reincarnation of the regime in a new leadership.

Despite neglecting the Tunisian uprising for the first three weeks, and ignoring the violence and killing committed against peaceful protesters, the American and Canadian administrations tried to claim that they supported the democratic aspirations of the Tunisian people. Harper told the press during his trip to Morocco on 26 January: 'We support the democratic development that is taking place there and obviously want to see that proceed positively' (Ibbitson and Clark 2011). Similarly Obama fervently affirmed his stand with the Tunisian people during his State of Union speech.

The Egyptian uprising

The Egyptian uprising took many by surprise. During the Tunisian revolution many in the West and East dismissed the idea of an Egyptian uprising: Egypt is much more convoluted. The importance of Egypt as a North African–Arab state cannot be understated. The country is the largest Arab country and is undoubtedly a regional leader. Since the late 1970s Egypt and the US, as well as other Western countries, have developed amiable and reciprocal relationships. In addition to al-Sadat's peace treaty with Israel, Egypt has been an acquiescent friend supporting all of America's policies in the region from the first Gulf war, to the invasion of Iraq and the stifling of Hamas in Gaza. Returning the favour, Washington was to provide generous aid to Cairo, making it the second largest recipient of aid after Israel in the region, and to turn a blind eye on the human rights abuses and the authoritarian rule the Egyptian people had to endure. Given this profitable relationship, Washington was keen on keeping its strong ally in the region.

During the 11 days of protests that led to Mubarak's resignation, the West (US and Canada) hesitantly moved from neglecting the people's demands in the period of silence (due to underestimating the scope of the protests), to condemning violence, and to encouraging an 'internal' orderly transition through the regime. Finally, after recognizing that the regime was crumpling, the North American states confidently and feverishly praised the young Egyptians attempting to situate themselves on the right side of history.

The Canadian response

The ideological changes the Harper government introduced to Canada would dictate the response. Since the conservative government pronounced itself as Israel's best ally, Canada naturally backed the Israeli response. As Alee Castonguay stated in *Le Devoir*: 'Canada was the only western country to not call for an "immediate transition" in Egypt. … Ottawa sided with Israel in refusing to condemn the old dictator' (quoted in Engler 2012: 65). Furthermore, with the Harper government's emphasis on the protection of religious minorities, he also voiced a concern about Egypt's Coptic population.

The Canadian government was silent through the first three days of the protest. It ignored the street protests and the conspicuous violent police response. On 27 January Foreign Affairs Minister Cannon issued a statement in which he expressed the government's regret for the loss of life (Cannon 2011a). However, he failed to assign any responsibilities to the Egyptian government and confirmed the importance of the relationship between the two governments:

> Canada regrets the loss of life of both protestors and police officers during political demonstrations in Egypt. We urge all parties to refrain from violence, and in particular, we urge the Egyptian authorities to respond to these protests peacefully. … Egypt remains an important partner for Canada, and we urge the Egyptian government to ensure full freedom of political expression for its citizens.
>
> *(Cannon 2011c)*

It appeared that the Canadian government was adamant on the survival of the regime and supported the slow paced transition led by the regime. After Mubarak announced that he would not rerun for elections and the ensuing Battle of Camel that

left several dead and 1500 hundred injured, the *Globe and Mail* reported: 'Harper endorsed the go-slow transition plan set out by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's regime, signalling that Mideast stability and peace with Israel are its paramount concerns while other western nations push for faster change' (Clark 2011). Israel seemed to be the conservative government's main concern and focus.

One day before the resignation of Mubarak, the Canadian government refused to acknowledge the aggression of the government and continued to issue vague statements such as 'restraint from all parties to settle the crisis' (Engler 2012: 66). Few hours before Mubarak's resignation, Harper said: 'our strong recommendations to those in power would be to lead change. To be part of it and to make a bright future happened for the people of Egypt' (Harper 2011a). Yves Engler writes concerning the Canadian government's response: 'The conservatives stuck with Mubarak until literally the last possible moment. Most of Canada's traditional allies abandoned Mubarak before the conservatives' (Engler 2012: 65). After Mubarak resigned, the *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Thompson stated: 'The Harper government, once again seeing the Middle East through the exclusive prism of Israel's interest, remained throughout so hesitant, cautious and frankly, on the wrong side of history in commenting on Egyptian developments' (Thompson 2011).

After a week of the protests, the Canada–Israel Committee called on the Harper government to support 'stability' in Egypt based on 'a future that's not simply more democratic but where that democracy is guided by such values as non-violence, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of religious minorities' (Siddiqui 2011). Yves Engler noted: 'Effectively, the Canada–Israel Committee was saying that 80 million Egyptians should live under dictatorship so the "only democracy in the Middle East" can more securely occupy Palestinian and Syrian territory' (Engler 2012: 66). Indeed, the nonchalance the Canadian government demonstrated about the dignity and the freedom of the Egyptian man is outrageous. Even after the resignation of Mubarak, Harper continued to voice his concerns about Israel's security: 'We will also continue to encourage and support Egypt's efforts to promote regional stability and peace, including with Israel as well as continued respect for peace treaties in the Middle East,' he said (Thompson 2011).

Another focus of the Conservative government was the Christian Coptic minority. As mentioned, Harper has identified the protection of religious minorities as one of his foreign policy priorities. A month before the revolution, when 21 Coptic Christians were killed in bombings in Alexandria, Egypt's second largest city, the Canadian government took a strong stand. After the incident, Cannon said in a statement, 'we fully support the call by Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak to close ranks and confront the terrorists who were behind this deplorable attack' (Cannon 2011b). Similarly, during the revolution Harper specifically affirmed his concern for the minorities of Egypt: 'What we want to be sure is that we lead towards a future that is not simply more democratic, but a future where that democracy is guided by such values as non-violence, as the rule of law, as respect and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, including the rights of religious minorities' (Harper 2011).

The American response

After the Tunisian uprising, one would assume that the American administration was better prepared for a subsequent Arab revolution. However, the West largely dismissed

the idea of an Egyptian uprising and if it were to occur it did not want to see what happened to the Tunisian regime happen to its Egyptian counterpart. Robert Danin of the Council on Foreign Relations said that it was clear that the American administration wanted to see in Egypt a 'genuine change that originates from the government rather than a dramatic overthrow as occurred in Tunisia' (Mohammed 2011).

The four stages of silence, mild criticism, controlled transition, and praise were apparent in the American response to the Egyptian uprising as well. However, the period of silence was shorter than in the Tunisian case and the criticism and controlled transition phases occurred simultaneously as opposed to separately. Along with the criticism we witnessed support to internal transition to democracy. The desired American outcome was, as Danin described, 'managed change'. Finally, after the failure to control the transition the US moved into praising the Egyptian revolution and speaking more favourably of the opposition, including the Islamists.

Phase one – support to the ally and deaf to the Egyptian demands

During the first three days of the Egyptian uprising the American administration chose to ignore the call of the Egyptians perhaps hoping that they would be silenced in one way or another. Additionally, the administration turned a blind eye to the violent police response to the peaceful protesters and confirmed its friendly relationship with Mubarak. On the first day of the uprising in Egypt, 25 January, when substantial street protests were met with tear gas and water hoses, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, 'Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable' (Tisdal 2011). It appeared as if the administration was attempting to underplay the government's violent reaction by issuing vague statements demanding that the protesters refrain from violence. 'The security personnel in Egypt need to refrain from violence. Protestors should refrain from violence as well', Robert Gibbs, the White House spokesman, said (Gibbs 2011a). This is despite the fact that the government's aggression and the protesters' peaceful approach were evident.

The American administration also affirmed its relations with Egypt: 'Obviously we have a close and important ally in Egypt and they will continue to be', said Robert Gibbs on the second day of the uprising when the Egyptian authorities advanced orders to prevent demonstrations, arrested hundreds of protesters, and severed communication services (Gibbs 2011). When Gibbs was directly asked if Washington still backed President Mubarak, he affirmed, 'Again, Egypt is a strong ally' (Hounshell 2011). Other officials also confirmed this relationship; the American Vice-President Joe Biden called Egypt an ally in Middle East peace efforts and said: 'I would not refer to him [Mubarak] as a dictator' (Murphy 2011).

Phase two – criticism of government and the controlled orderly transition

Gradually the administration started to issue more stern statements. The fourth day of protests, 28 January, saw rioting, with Washington taking its most serious stand since the inception of protests and stating that it would review the aid it sends to Egypt: 'we'll be reviewing our assistance posture depending on the events of the next several days,' the administration stated (Gibbs 2011b). However, later on officials mentioned that no actual review was planned. On the same day when Obama spoke in a televised statement, he did not mention any aid reviews; rather, he asked the Egyptian authorities to

'meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people', to refrain from any violence against peaceful protesters, to allow freedom of communication, to take steps towards democracy and economic progress, and to start a meaningful dialogue (Obama 2011b).

Phase three: Controlled transition

Along with the criticism, the administration started to speak of an orderly transition. Clinton said: 'we want to see an orderly transition so that no one fills a void, that there not be a void, that there be a well thought out plan that will bring about a democratic participatory government' (Clinton 2011). Obama used a more stringent language when he said on the ninth day of the protests, the bloodiest day, that 'the status quo is not sustainable and change must take place. An orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and must be now' (Obama 2011a).

However, the administration never stated that Mubarak had to step down. Other statements and the Wisner incident showed that Washington hoped that Mubarak would remain to lead the transition. On the tenth day Clinton still spoke of the positive steps the regime had taken: 'But let's look at what we have. We have a calendar that already has elections for the next president scheduled. So there is an action enforcing event that is already on the calendar', Clinton said, and Obama similarly commented on the 11th day of the demonstrations (Wagner and Machnowki 2011): 'He's already said that he's not going to run for re-election' (Obama 2011f). These statements leads one to question if the administration was at all aware of the Egyptian people's demands, which called for a complete segregation from the regime.

Frank Wisner, a former US ambassador, who was sent to Egypt during the uprising to assess the situation, said that it was 'critical' to have Mubarak lead the transitional period. Wisner stated after his visit: 'we need to get a national consensus around the preconditions for the next step forward. The president must stay in office to steer those changes' (Borger and McGreal 2011). The White House later disowned Wisner's statement and claimed that it had no affiliation with Wisner's trip to Egypt.

The administration never spoke explicitly of Mubarak's resignation and continued to disperse vague statements about orderly transition. On the 15th day of the demonstrations Washington outlined steps that the Egyptian government must take, including a repeal of the emergency law; but it fell short of asking Mubarak to step down. Gibbs said two days before Mubarak's resignation: 'the Egyptian government has not taken the necessary steps that the people of Egypt need to see. That's why more and more people come out to register their grievances' (Gibbs 2011c). Two days later, after Mubarak resigned, Obama said: 'By stepping down, President Mubarak responded to the Egyptian people's hunger for change' (Obama 2011g). At this point, however, Omar Suliman, one of Mubarak's men, was to lead the transitional government.

The Islamists

The American administration revealed two prominent concerns during the Egyptian revolution. The first is that of the Islamists and the second is of Israel's security. The dilemma of the Islamists is not new. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Islamists emerged as the greater concern and threat. This belief was planted by the Arab dictators who painted the Islamists with the colours of radicalism, barbarism and anti-Westernism.

Later on, some in the West, including academics, politicians and policy-makers, confirmed this same belief.

Other developments in the Muslim world, particularly the Iranian revolution, played an important role in highlighting the danger the Islamists posed. For the various American administrations, all those who claimed political Islamism were the same and the possibility of any regime with Islamist elements turning into Iran was high. This explains the American and Western response to the Algerian uprising in 1990 and their hostility to countries with political Islamist elements such as The Sudan.

The Obama administration's response to the Egyptian revolution was shaped by this deep-rooted yet inaccurate conception of the Islamists. The administration was particularly worried because the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement, was the largest opposition in the country. The American media was inundated by headlines about the Muslim Brotherhood and the administration was continuously questioned about the group, its power and popularity, and if they maintained any communication with it (Clinton 2011c).

The American administration demonstrated such concern and fear in various statements. Hillary Clinton stated when describing the transition that the administration would like to see: 'Transition that will meet the needs of the Egyptian people and that will truly establish democracy, not just for one election and then no more elections after that, or not for radicals, extremists, violent elements to take over' (Clinton 2011a). In another interview she also said: 'True democracy. Not a phony one like we saw with Iranian elections' (Clinton 2011a).

Israel

Another concern that stood conspicuous in the American response during the Egyptian revolution is Israel's future. Egypt receives US$1.3 billion annually for one main reason: its peace treaty with Israel. Explaining America's unflinching commitment to Israel is beyond the scope of this chapter; but Israel plays a major role in shaping America's policies in the Middle East. In fact, there are those who say that American foreign policy is made in Tel Aviv. Therefore it is no surprise that Obama called Netanyahu immediately after the uprising, seeking his view on the situation. Netanyahu was very clear on his support to Mubarak and Mubarak's importance for the stability of the region, and that he wanted to see the American administration standing by the dictator.

In many instances, Clinton reiterated that the peace treaty with Israel is a prime concern. On 30 January when Clinton was asked whether the administration supported Mubarak or the people, she explained, 'It is a complex, very difficult situation. Egypt has been a partner of the United States over the last 30 years, has been instrumental in keeping the peace in the Middle East between Egypt and Israel, which is a critical accomplishment that has meant so much to so many people.' On the same day and in a different interview, when Clinton was asked about the administration's assessment of the situation, she responded: 'Obviously, this is a volatile situation. Egypt has been a partner of the United States for over three decades, has been a partner in achieving historic peace with Israel, a partner in trying to stabilize a region that is subject to a lot of challenges.' On 6 February Clinton clearly voiced the administration's concern about Israel: 'Well, we care deeply that what comes next in Egypt respects international agreements, including the peace treaty with Israel. That peace treaty has kept Egyptians and

Israelis from dying and from having to wage continuous war for 30 years' (Clinton 2011b).

The fear of the Islamists and the concerns over Israel's peace treaty led the administration to commit to the preservation of the regime. This was manifested in the administration's indifference to the Egyptian people's demand of the removal of the regime in its entirety (*isqat al nizam*) and encouraging an internal 'orderly transition'. This was also manifested in praising the appointment of Omer Suliman as the vice president, a man whom the revolutionaries saw as one with Mubarak.

Conclusion

North American governments were not supportive of the revolutions on the Tunisian and Egyptian streets. Once again, their rhetoric contradicted their actions, and their ideational and security commitments compromised the Arab man's freedom and dignity. The Canadian and the American administrations supported the autocratic regimes through choosing to respond with silence, weak criticism and a desire to control the revolutions through 'managed transitions'.

Notes

1 Obama, however, did include some liberals such as Susan Rice, the US envoy to the United Nations, Samantha Power, Gayle Smith and Ben Rhodes, who advocated human rights and democratization. This ideological mixture explains some of the nuanced responses the administration gave throughout the Arab Spring.

2 It is important to note that there are similarities between the two administrations with regards to the war on terror. In fact, it has often been said that Obama's foreign policy has been a continuation of the Bush doctrine with a particular concentration on fighting al-Qaeda, including pre-emptive strikes on terror targets, targeting leadership within terror organizations, and working to deter nuclear proliferation. See 'Barack Obama's Foreign Policy: All Very Engaging', 2009; Brose (2009); Freedland (2009); Kagan (2009).

3 Under his government, Canada's military spending has scored its highest levels since World War II. The country spent Cdn$14.8 billion per year on its military when Prime Minister Harper first took office.

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The Arab Spring

A View from India

Anwar Alam

Introduction: Making sense of the Arab Spring

In order to make sense of the Arab Spring, it is important to sketch out the broad contour and meaning of the phenomenon. What does development of the Arab Spring signify for its respective Arab countries, the region and the world at large? The spring that unfolded itself with the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouaziz, the Tunisian street fruit vendor, on 18 December 2010 soon engulfed both *mashreq* and *maghreb*, jolted the authoritarian political establishments of the region and resulted in the dethroning of some of its republican emperors: Bin Ali of Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Abdullah Saleh of Yemen. The Baathist Assad regime in Syria is almost on the brink of collapse. Without elaborating on general as well as specific internal and external factors and processes that have gone into determining these political outcomes, it can be said that the historic phenomenon of the Arab Spring reflects the following trends:

1 It is symptomatic of a 'deep structural malaise' within Arab society in general.
2 It reflects the democratic aspirations of marginalized sections of Arab society, particularly the youth, for a dignified livelihood.
3 It stands for a kind of social, economic and political reform that ensures respect for individual identity, dignity and social equity.
4 Although the mass participation and democratic content of this phenomenon is visible, it does not reflect what is called a 'third or fourth wave of democracy'.
5 The inspiration of this movement is deeply Arab–Islamic, rather than a tradition of Western democracy and therefore even though the movement aspires for 'democratic space' it does not necessarily imagine this democratic space in terms of Western democratic values and principles.
6 It is the rainbow of multiple ideological currents: Islamism, nationalism, tribalism, sectarianism and localism with each competing with each other for representation in future power arrangement but also uniting for loosely defined national purpose against external challenges (such as military intervention in Iraq, Libya and Syria).

7 It will have long-term implications for the stability and security of the region.
8 Finally, the relative peaceful, leaderless, unorganized but mass element only reinforces the notion that people remain the motor of wider social and political changes and in the process delegitimize the violence-prone politics and discourses of radical/militant Islamic organizations in the name of an 'Islamic' transformation of Muslim societies.

Has India influenced the discourses of the Arab Spring?

Has India played any role in the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, given the popular projection is that the Arab Spring is about an Arab quest for democracy and freedom? In particular, in what way has 'the functioning Indian democracy' influenced the discourse of the Arab Spring? It is true that India has strong civilizational links with parts of the Arab world and Islam has deeply affected the Indian sub-continent to the extent that it is the home of some of the largest Islamic movements in the world, such as Tablighi Jammat – the largest Sunni Islamic revivalist (*daw'a*) movement in the world (see Sikand 2002); Jamaat–e-Islami – a prototype of political Islam in South Asia (see Nasr 1994; Ahmed 2009); Darul Uloom, Deoband – one of the most important Sunni conservative Islamic seminary in the Muslim world (see Metcalf 2002); the constant movement and cross-fertilization of Islamic ideas between the Indian sub-continent and the region of the Arab world, the two most important geographical centres of production of Islamic knowledge and ideas in the world; its uni-vocal support to the Arab world on the plight of Palestine against Western–Israeli imperialism; the presence of 6 million Indian migrants in the region that must be acting as a carrier, whether directly or indirectly, of ideas and practices of Indian democracy in the region; the popularity of Bollywood in the Arab world and the growing admiration among the cultural and intellectual elite of the world, including the Arab world, about the 'functioning' Indian democracy despite its many pitfalls, including large-scale poverty, income disparity and illiteracy – all of these factors suggest that India must have, at a subtle level, influenced and inspired the development of the Arab Spring. However, notwithstanding the fact that India has a strong cultural capital and history to influence such developments in the Arab world, it would be difficult to argue that it has acted as a source of inspiration to the youth or other sectors of Arab society for taking the 'Arab Spring' beyond an occasional reference to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, who has otherwise become a universal symbol of 'peaceful protest and resistance against state oppression'. Thus, Yemen's Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakkol Karman noted during her visit to India in April 2012 that 'Gandhi inspired peace struggles the world over. The youth who participated in the Arab spring too were inspired by his teachings' (*Deccan Herald* 2012). One may also find the occasional flagging of Mahatma Gandhi's photograph in Tahrir Square, the symbol of the Arab Spring.

However, beyond this reference to Gandhi, which is also derivative of the relatively peaceful nature of people's protest in the Arab world, one hardly comes across any reference to the Indian constitution, institutions of Indian democracy or 'political personalities' that have shaped and played an important role in the institutionalization of Indian democracy. In fact, what is interesting to note is that it was a Turkish model of democracy, which is yet to acquire the full-fledged features of democratic rule, not the Indian or Western model, that was widely debated among the Arab intelligentsia and protesters. The issue of India influencing the discourse of the Arab Spring largely

depends upon the question of how India is imagined in the collective conscience of the Arab nation. In fact, except in Egypt, where India traditionally enjoyed a reputation on account of being leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), its anti-imperialist postures and its support to the Afro-Asian nationalist liberation movement, and where it figures in some Egyptian works (Islahi 1994: 195–216, cited in Mekkawi 2008: 193–194), it hardly figures in the intellectual production of the rest of the Arab world. In contemporary times India has been perceived in the collective psyche of the Arab people as 'poor, dirty and culturally inferior' and the same has been reinforced by a vast magnitude of unskilled Indian workers in Arab society; and with increasing Hindu backlash against Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s (particularly the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 and the Gujarat pogrom in 2002). Its 'democratic–secular credential' was badly damaged even among the progressive sections of the Arab intelligentsia. In addition, even though India manages to survive as a democratic model, it could not emerge as 'democracy of growth and development' for long, something that belongs to the West and is therefore irrelevant to the ruling elite and intelligentsia of the Arab world. It is interesting to note that while Pakistan became relevant for the politics of the larger Arab world (it possess three elements: Islam, the military and, of late, nuclear technology), India has nothing substantial to offer to the Arab world until recently – whether transfer of technology, economic aid, services, consumer goods or military alliance. Moreover, India never used its Islamic legacy to foster close relationships with the Muslim world, including the Arab region, partly owing to politics of majoritarian construction of a post-colonial state and nationalism and partly in deference to sensibilities of being a secular–democratic nation that does not allow religion any role in conducting inter-state relations. Notwithstanding these limitations of making India attractive to Arab society, one can argue that the Indian Islamic thinker Sayyed Abul Hasan Nadvi (1914–1999), with his anti-Shia polemics in the 1980s and 1990s, might have influenced and strengthened the Saudi-backed Sunni Salafist discourse, one of the most visible aspects of the Arab Spring (see Zaman 1998: 59–81).

Indian government and the Arab Spring

How have outside governments reacted to this unexpected arrival of the Arab Spring? What has been the dominant concern of various governments with regard to this development? Since oil and gas is considered a 'strategic commodity', the measured global concern is one of maintaining the stability and security of the region in order to ensure the uninterrupted production and transportation of hydrocarbon resources in the region. Within the conventional realist 'paradigm of stability and security', the governmental responses in the world have mostly been structured along the line of 'imagined national interest' and therefore vary in responses that range from 'military intervention' (such as NATO in Libya) to neutrality, advocacy of humanitarianism, and appeals for respect for people's aspirations and democratic changes. The specific 'national stance' or positioning reflects the capability of the nation concerned, its relationship with the countries of the Arab world, its interest in the region, and its cultural philosophy that somehow conditions its behavioural response *vis-à-vis* other nations. India has not been an exception to this process of decision-making in the realm of foreign policy.

India's nuanced position on the Arab Spring can best be understood in terms of its articulation of national interest; its understanding of its own national strength; its developmental priority that demands a sustained stability in its immediate neighbour

(South and Central Asia) and its extended neighbourhood (West Asia, with particular emphasis on the Persian Gulf and South-East Asia); its relationship with global (principally, the United States) and regional powers (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt); its need to maintain a 'diplomatic balance' between the US and Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iran and Israel and Iran standoff; a consideration for intra-global power conflicts and competition in the region, as well as intra-regional power conflicts and competition; and its tendency to undertake a situation-specific response without having a regional or global perspective.

Along with these factors, India's response to the Arab Spring has first and foremost been affected by consideration of the likely impact of 'disruptive processes' of the Arab Spring in the Gulf, whose security and stability is the most vital for India's rapid economic growth witnessed since the mid 1990s. The Gulf is not only 'the major' source of hydrocarbon products for expanding Indian markets, but is very important from the point of view of market, trade and investment. It is, after all, the home of around 6 million Indian expatriates, which accounts for the largest remittance from the Indian diaspora. Thus, its trade rose from US$6.2 billion in 1995–1996 to US$81.4 billion in 2009–2010 with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) emerging as India's largest trading partner, marginally overtaking the Chinese mainland. With its limited oil and gas reserves and tremendous increase in consumption of oil- and gas-related products, India has become far more critically dependent on the hydrocarbon resources of the Gulf region than ever before, notwithstanding its recent attempt to diversify the sources of import of hydrocarbon. Thus, from about 1.2 million barrels per day (mbd) in 1990, its consumption reached 2.1 mbd in 2000 and stands at 3.58 mbd in 2012 and is expected to reach 5.2 mbd in 2025. Similar growth can be seen in gas consumption. From an annual consumption of 0.4 trillion cubic feet (tct) in 1990, it doubled to 0.8 tct in 2000 and is expected to reach 2.5 tct by 2025 (see Kumarswamy 2012: 14–15). It is equally important to stress here that 75 per cent of hydrocarbon products that India imports from the world pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which comes under the jurisdiction of Iranian territorial water. Furthermore, Iran remains important for India for its oil and gas requirements, as well as to secure access to Central Asia. The Ministry of Defence (2012: 4–5) aptly put the Indian concern:

> The developments associated with the Arab Spring were seen as introducing a democratic dynamic in West Asia and North Africa. While these were welcomed universally, there are concerns about the impact of these developments on the security situation in the region and the consequences for the flow of energy supplies. India imports a significant proportion of its energy requirements from countries in the region and in addition, has to also take into consideration the interests of the almost 6 million Indian workforces in these countries

On the other hand, India (along with China) is emerging as a 'safer and lucrative destination' for Gulf (particularly Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries) to export its oil and gas resources and invest its surplus in the Indian market, keeping in mind the declining Western import of oil and gas from West Asia and a political atmosphere generated in the post-9/11 period that has cast a doubt on the safety and security of Arab investment in the West. It is under this international conjecture and national interest that Saudi's 'Look East Policy' and India's 'Look West Policy' converge. It is in this context that Shiv Shankar Menon, the former Indian foreign secretary and now

national security adviser, highlighted the paradox of Indian and Western stakes in West Asia:

> Now the Middle East accounts for less than 16 per cent of global recoverable reserves. New shale oil and new gas fields are coming into production in the next few years. The Western developed economies can now afford the chaos that the so-called Arab Spring is bringing to the Middle East. They can actively encourage regime change in the area. The main victims of uncertainty in supply will be emerging economies like China and India who are still to diversify their sources of supply into long-term flexible contracts with other outside the region.
>
> *(Cited in Bhadrakumar 2012a)*

The second matrix that has conditioned India's response to the Arab Spring is its non-ideological understanding of events in the Arab world in general and non-adherence to a Western framework that treats Islam as 'security discourse' despite the fact that India has been one of the largest victims of Islamic terrorism. As a result, India is not alarmed, though it is concerned, at the prospect of the emergence of Islamists/Salafists as a political force in the Arab world. Neither does it perceive them as a destabilizing force, something that the West advocates and fears. Thus, unlike the West, which first works on the strategy to contain the rise of Islamists/Salafists, failing which a policy of engagement, accommodation and negotiation will be pursued, India does not have any such qualms and is always ready to work with any regime on the principle of mutual recognition, respect and bilateral relations. Thus, India was trying hard to raise a hitherto low-key relationship in the post-Nasser period to a new height with Egypt under former President Morsi, the first elected Islamist government in the region and currently under house arrest following the military coup, keeping in mind the rising influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region and the re-emergence of Egypt as a regional power. Thus, the Indian Embassy and Maulana Azad Cultural Centre in Cairo organized a poster exhibition on a theme entitled 'Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir Square?' to mark the 143rd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi (Bhadrakumar 2012b). India is also keen to extend its cooperation in facilitating, supervising and conducting elections in Egypt.

The third element that has influenced the broad response of the Indian government to the phenomenon of the Arab Spring is the Gandhian–Nehruivian moralism, which still underpins India's engagement with international relations despite its increasing acceptance of the rules of power politics that constrain the Indian government from interfering in the internal affairs of the country and therefore, in principle, cause India to oppose any doctrine of regime change.

From this perspective, India's official response towards the Arab Spring has the following policy features: 'wait and watch'; 'caution'; 'active display of concern for the safety of Indian nationals trapped in the Arab crisis'; travel advisory to its nationals depending upon the nature of deteriorating situations; a posturing of neither too much support to 'people's protest' nor an endorsement of the regime's brutal suppression of these protests; offering mild criticism to Western intervention in Libya and in Syria; lending moral support to regional organizations (such as the Arab League) to take the initiative for the resolution of crises at regional levels; and, in general, welcoming the people's aspiration for democratic changes in the region. India even initially evaded using the term 'Arab Spring' as it signifies 'people's protest against the ruling political

establishment'. The Ministry of External Affairs Annual Report (2011–2012: iii) used the term 'Arab Spring' for the first time, in the context of the Libyan crisis. Within this range of policy options, India gave top priority for safety of its nationals and managed to 'facilitate' the exit of Indians from Egypt (around 3000), 'evacuated' an estimated 16,200 (of around 18,000) nationals amid violent conflict in Libya with the help of the Egyptian government under Operation Safe Homecoming (Ministry of External Affairs 2011–2012: x–xi) and 'advised' its nationals in Yemen to leave and its citizens in Bahrain 'to keep a low profile, stay indoors and to avoid all non-essential travel within the country'. Similar concerns for the welfare of its citizens dominated India's official positions on Syria and other affected West Asian countries.

The policy statements that were/are issued by various Indian officials from time to time with reference to developments in West Asia reflect the 'middle of the road' position, as indicated above, of Indian foreign policy. This will be demonstrated by examining India's political statement, made from time to time with reference to three countries, Egypt, Libya and Syria, which witnessed the major upheaval in the course of the Arab Spring. Thus, despite the escalation of protests and international calls for Mubarak to step down, India insisted that 'it's up to the people of Egypt to decide whether one should stay or go. India doesn't interfere in the internal affairs of other countries' (Kanwal 2011, cited in Piccone and Alinikoff 2012: 13). Later, in the aftermath of Hosni Mubarak stepping down, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared: 'if the people of Egypt want to move toward the processes of democratization, they have our good wishes and that's true of all countries … though we do not believe it is our business to advise other countries, we welcome the dawn of democracy everywhere' (Denyer 2011, cited in Piccone and Alinikoff 2012: 14). Indian External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna welcomed the decision of Mubarak's demise and considered it 'in deference to the wishes of the people of Egypt' (Dikshit 2011, cited in Piccone and Alinikoff 2012: 13).

Similarly, while India cast a vote in favour of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 (February 2011), extending sanctions on certain Libyan officials and referring the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) with the aim of restoring stability in Libya along with the protection of its nationals, it preferred to abstain when the Security Council passed Resolution 1973 a month later (March 2011), authorizing force to protect civilians. India implemented a no-fly zone, emphasizing its opposition to a military solution of the conflict in Libya (Puri 2011). India reiterated this preference for political solutions over military interventions during the second Africa–India Forum in May 2011, convened in Addis Ababa. Referring to the Security Council resolution, India 'called for an immediate cessation of all hostilities in Libya and urge the parties in the conflict to strive towards a political solution through peaceful means and dialogue' (Ministry of External Affairs 2011). India further underlined the regional approach by supporting the mediation of an African Union on the Libya crisis (Ramesh 2011).

India's diplomatic postures on the 'Syrian crisis' also reflect its 'cautious' approach. Keeping in mind India's long-term friendly relationship with Syria, a limited but significant investment in the Syrian oil and gas fields, concern with an idea that a destabilized Syria has the potential to destabilized the Gulf, the principal source of India's energy requirement, and the necessity of maintaining a 'diplomatic balance' between the Iran–Syria axis and US–GCC collaboration to remove the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, India first supported the Syrian government by abstaining from the United

Nations Security Council (UNSC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). With the escalation of violent conflicts, it called upon the Syrian government to introduce the necessary political reform, condemned the escalating violence from both government and opposition sides and asking them to enter into dialogue to ends the violence. India also supported the UN-authorized Kofi Annan mission and the Arab League to end the crisis, and then moved to support the US- and Arab League-backed UNSC resolution for economic sanctions against the Syrian regime despite the Chinese and Russian vetoing of the same.

Indian civil society and the Arab Spring

Notwithstanding India's muted, guarded and cautious reaction to the Arab Spring, Indian society witnessed the lively debate and discussion on this issue at various levels/forums, including political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, research institutes, think-tanks and media houses. In general, the media, both print and electronic, civil society organizations, political parties and large numbers of people across religions, castes, creed and other barriers reacted positively and welcomed the 'fall of the dictators' with a desire to see a democratic transformation of Arab society. Many saw in the sudden eruption of the anti-corruption civil–social movement, organized by India against Corruption (IAC) under the leadership of 74-year-old Anna Hazzare, against the then ruling Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, that forced the later to convene the joint session of Indian parliament to debate the Lok Pal Bill, as the 'Indian version of the Arab Spring'. However, it is difficult to say whether the development of the Arab Spring has any direct role in influencing the Indian youth to protest against the issue of 'corruption' that is plaguing Indian political and economic life. Institutions of higher education took a lead in organizing a symposium and seminar on the theme of the Arab Spring. For instance, Jamia Millia Islamia organized a three-day international seminar on 'Arab Spring: Region and India' from 15–17 February 2012 in New Delhi. The January 2012 Jaipur Literary Festival was dominated by a discussion on the Arab Spring (see wespeaknews.com).Government think-tanks such as IDSA (the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis, a research wing of the Indian Ministry of Defence) and ICWA (Indian Council of World Affairs) organized a series of discussions on the same issue with the objective of understanding its ramifications for India. *Indian Foreign Affairs* journal (April–June 2011: 111–151), a quarterly journal of the Indian Association of Diplomats that was launched in 2006, devoted a special issue on the subject matter.

The Observer Research Foundation (ORF), an important non-governmental think-tank, organized a series of discussions on the subject and also came out with a publication (Naqvi 2012). The focus of these debates and discussions were/are as follows:

1 the democratic potential of the Arab Spring: whether it will usher in a democratic Arab society;
2 its implications, particularly in terms of security, for Indian foreign policy;
3 its impact upon Islamic terrorism; and
4 the rise of Islamism, particularly Salafism, in the Arab world and its implications.

What is interesting to note is that while the discourse of 'securitization of Islam' has dominated the discussion on the 'Arab Spring' among secular, metropolitan intelligentsia,

in general, and among 'strategic and security analysts', in particular, whose number has increased in recent times with the shift in India's position towards the West, particularly towards the US–Israeli axis, it would be difficult to state whether such discourse has an impact in shaping the government's response to the Arab Spring.

The intelligentsia and the Arab Spring

Critics on both side of the left and right, including media personalities, intellectuals and retired diplomats, saw in Indian's position on the Arab Spring something not befitting to a nation that aspires to global power. In other words, many find the governmental position on the Arab Spring as 'deficient': it does not reflect the aspiration of its people and its rising profile on the international level. An *Indian Express* editorial (2011), one of the leading English daily newspapers in India, categorized the government's reaction as 'severe circumspection [that] is unbecoming of a rising global power currently on the UN Security Council and aspiring for a permanent seat'. Chandra and Sareen (2011) argue:

> At a time when there is great tumult in the entire Arab world, India's continuing silence on the developments in a region of critical strategic and political importance is not just inexplicable but also deafening. Whether this is borne out of abundant caution or a natural proclivity for fence sitting until the situation crystallizes, or even the result of an increasing tendency in Indian diplomacy to wait for a cue from the Western world [read US], is not quite clear.

Syham Saran (2012), the former foreign secretary and member of the National Security Council (NSC), cautioned the government of the day of the dangers of rising sectarianism and Islamic Salafism embedded in the Arab Spring and remarked:

> … recognizing this dichotomy, while India should welcome and support the democratic awakening and the legitimate assertion of popular aspirations in our West Asian neighbourhood, it must not shy away from speaking out on the parallel threat posed by the growing and often violent sectarianism spreading across the region. The reluctance to confront this darker side of the Arab Spring for fear of being seen as being unsympathetic to the positive aspects of political change is a mistake, and it may endanger our own and other plural democracies across the world. Sectarianism, even if dressed in democratic colours, is a threat to our values of toleration and inclusive and liberal society.

P. R. Kumarswamy (2012: 1–48), a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), wrote a fairly long critical paper entitled 'Reading Silence: India and Arab Spring' on the Indian government's response to the Arab Spring which highlights a paradox, rather a disjunction, between India's aspiration of becoming a great power and its lukewarm approach, what he called 'a studded silence', to the tumultuous event called the Arab Spring. Although the paper rightly takes into consideration those factors that have conditioned India's response on the subject matter, he is highly critical of government's wavering position on the Arab Spring, particularly its reluctance to promote democracy, which he links with India's own poor record of human rights. K. C. Singh (2011: 16–21), a former secretary with the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, concluded

his piece on 'India and Arab Spring' with a desire to reflect upon the relevance of the Indian model of democracy that accommodates the issue of identity and diversity in the context of the Arab Spring.

These critical approaches towards India's stand on the Arab Spring reflect a lack of proper understanding of the fluid, archaical nature of international relations, misplaced expectation and a poor sense of history. First, pragmatism is the principle hallmark of the foreign policy-making exercise of all nations and therefore India cannot be accused of being 'pragmatic' in its approach towards the phenomenon of the Arab Spring. Second, modern states and governments have hardly indulged in the promotion of democratic values across the globe despite the fact that they owe their existence to the development of modern ideas of democracy, secularism and nationalism. The 'colonization project' of the modern democratic West was the most undemocratic exercise in the annals of human history; it was essentially an economic project rather than a political project, and if democracy manages to emerge and survive in a few colonialized societies, such as India, the reasons for the same are internal rather than external. In recent memory, the imagery of 'democratic America' is jinxed with supporting all sorts of military, authoritarian and dictatorial regimes, to say the least. It is futile to argue that a democratic state carries a *political obligation* to promote democracy abroad. At best such obligation is moral. Chinmaya R. Gharekhan (2011), former special envoy of government of India in West Asia and one of India's highly respected diplomats, while reflecting on the 'democracy promotion debate' in the context of the uprising in Egypt, rightly remarked that:

> India is not, and must not be, in the business of promoting democracy abroad, either by itself or in association with anyone else. We have rightly taken the position that it is not up to us to tell others what type of government they should have; we will deal with whichever government is in power and is able to take decisions on behalf of its people, decisions that the government concerned is able to implement. This does not mean, when genuine democratic impulses propel a people to take to the streets in a peaceful manner that we should not respond to them positively. There would be absolutely no risk in doing so, especially if our assessment suggests, as it ought to have in this case, that there was no question of things going back to what they were earlier and that in the end, Egypt will end up having more democracy.

The Indian left and the Arab Spring

The issue of the Arab Spring was also debated and reflected upon across the major national political parties. The chief centrist political party, the Indian National Congress (INC), currently the ruling party, echoed the government's position on the Arab Spring. The other centrist parties, which are mostly regional in character, did not feel the need to comment on the issue. The Indian left broadly located the phenomenon of the Arab Spring within the conventional understanding of people's struggle against 'Western imperialism'. They welcomed the people's democratic assertion and struggle on Arab streets for freedom and dignity but they also detected the design of Western imperialist power (particularly the US), as they refer to the West, to use the 'the Arab Spring' for the purpose of achieving the goal of regime change (such as in Libya and

currently in Syria) in order to retain their domination over the oil and gas fields of the region, as well as to prop the Islamic fundamentalist forces in order to undermine the liberal, left and democratic forces of the Arab countries. Looking at the 'Arab Spring' from this perspective they find India's silence and vacillation as 'capitulation' before the Western imperial powers.

Thus, the *New Age* (2011), the mouthpiece of the Indian Communist Party, commented:

> People's uprising may throw out these dynasties most of whom are subservient to the American imperialists. Americans who were taken by surprise by the developments in Tunisia and Egypt are now out with clear cut goal of protecting those dynasties that remain subservient to them and oust all those who may prove to be defiant. … It is true that the Manmohan Singh government is bent upon embedding India with the US imperialist. But one expected it not to surrender at least on developments in such crucial region where we have huge economic and political stakes. Ignoring all traditions, it is adopting piece-meal approach on the developments in the Arab world that will ultimately harm our national interest. It is time for all patriotic and anti-imperialist forces in the country to halt this dangerous drift in foreign policy of UPA-II and organize mass movements to expose the sinister designs of American imperialists and its NATO allies. Arab people deserve our solidarity at this testing time.

Similar sentiments were echoed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (2012: 17), the largest Communist party in the country. Thus the resolution adopted in the Central Committee Meeting held on 17–20 January 2012 in Kolkata stated:

> The popular uprisings in the Arab world are a significant development. … To hijack and divert such popular uprisings, the US and its NATO allies engineered the intervention in Libya utilizing the protests against the Gaddafi regime. This was accompanied by the US-approved Saudi intervention to suppress the protests in Bahrain which hosts the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet of the US navy. Efforts to destabilize the Syrian regime are also part of this process. In Tunisia and Egypt, elections were held and Islamist parties have secured a dominant position. The military council continues to exercise control in Egypt. The US is willing to countenance Islamist forces coming to power in these countries provided they do not challenge US interests and imperialist hegemony in the region.

The Indian right and the Arab Spring

On the other hand, the right-wing Hindu fundamentalist parties and groups such the Bharitya Janta party (BJP) and RSS (Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) found the Arab Spring as essentially a disturbing phenomenon, giving rise to forces of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the region that may pose a credible threat to India's national security, given the large Muslim population of India, which according to them are 'anti-national', and the tendency of Pakistan state to export Islamic terrorism to India. Since the right-wing Hindu parties and organizations primarily conduct their

politics of mobilizing sections of Hindu society on the basis of its 'anti-Muslim plank', such projections of the Arab Spring are also a deliberate political construct and therefore a part of state politics. It is in this context that Jaswant Singh, the former minister of external affairs and current national leader of the BJP, the principle opposition party in India, advised that 'if you sit for too long on the fence, the fence enters your soul'.

The *Organiser* (2012), the mouthpiece of RSS, commented:

> The 'Muslim Brotherhood' (MB) has now been emerging as the most powerful and important 'international political organisation' in the Arabic speaking world in this post-Arabic Spring era after the elections held in recent past. Salafists, the greater ultra-conservative Islamists, have emerged as the second most powerful political organisation, who do not hesitate to talk of jazia (tax levied on non-Muslims) encasing of Pharaoh Statue's face (4300-year-old statue in Egypt) to prevent prohibited idolatry, making hijab wearing mandatory and implementation of Sharia. Salafists are also in full agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood about the institution of a caliphate (i.e. Khalifayat to direct the Muslims world over). MB's global plans are no more a secret after the December 29, 2011 speech of Muhammed Badie wherein he is reported to have stated that the 'Islamist Government in Cairo (Egypt)' would lead to a rightly-guided Caliphate that will instruct the world. … Therefore, countries like India should tread cautious and deliberate interaction at government level with the countries wherever the Muslim Brotherhood has come to power, to ensure that the MB does not entertain the separatist groups.

Indian Muslims and the Arab Spring

More important than the left or right's opinion on the Arab Spring is the viewpoint of major Muslim organizations, groups and individual leaders. There are many, mostly belonging to the right spectrum of ideology, that hold that a Muslim presence along with systems of 'competing electoral democracy' have influenced India's tilt towards the Arab world at the cost of relationships with Israel. A survey of Urdu (the mother tongue of the Muslim community in India) newspapers, journals, Islamic magazines and statements of Muslim leaders (both political and religious) indicates that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community and Islamic organizations in India welcomed the downfall of dictators in the Arab world but were also highly critical of the role of Western powers in West Asia, and see their role as part of a long sustained 'conspiracy' by Western powers to dominate and weaken the Islamic *Ummah*. The Muslim leaders urge the Government of India to exercise its influence in keeping the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Western powers away from interfering in the internal affairs of the Arab countries. Thus, on 4 March 2011, the major Islamic organizations of India (namely, All India Muslim Majlise-Mushawarat; Jamaat-e-Islami Hind; Jamiat Ulemae Hind; Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith; Students Islamic Organization of India) issued a joint statement (*Milli Gazett*, 2011) in which they condemned the brutal rule of Gaddafi but also denounced Western and NATO aims to oust Gaddafi in the name of human rights. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), the proto type of political Islam in South Asia, has termed the success of Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimeen) candidate Mohamed Morsi in the presidential election in Egypt as the 'expression of

Ultimate Power of Allah the Exalted' in changing the situation and as an important political event in expressing its hope; hence, the new government of Egypt, with its home and foreign policies, should prove that Islam is the source of success and salvation for the whole world and for this it has a complete system.

However, in addition to this generalized reaction of Muslims in India, the reaction of Muslims in India to the Arab Spring has also occurred along sectarian lines of Sunni and Shia. Thus, *Al-Daie* (2011: 5, cited in Ahmad 2012), an influential Arabic journal, accused the Assad government of Syria of unleashing a reign of terror on Sunni Arab Muslims. The editorial discusses Iran's Arab agenda in the context of the Arab Spring and suggests that 'Tehran wants to establish Shia governments in Bahrain and parts of UAE and Kuwait and their concentration to develop nuclear power and weapons is to take on the Arab countries. USA, Western powers and Zionist regime are well aware of this fact and supporting Iranian regime behind the certain. They always speak against Iran but they do not want to take any action.' The editorial accuses US and Western countries of adopting double standards regarding Shias and Sunnis, saying: 'If any Sunni country had wanted to develop nuclear weapons, US and western powers have demolished it.' It ends by stating: 'Here we do not want to incite US and Western countries against Iran because Islam dose not teach to incite enmity and hatred among the human societies.' On the other hand, *Imam-e-juma* and eminent Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawwad organized a Shia protest march against Saudi intervention in Bahrain in Lucknow, the stronghold of the Shia community, and accused Saudi Arabia of 'killing the innocent Muslims in Bahrain but is silent over their killings in Palestine by Israel'. The All India Shia Personal Board (AISPLB) also condemned the Saudi intervention in Bahrain and staged a protest march in front of the Bahrain Embassy in New Delhi (see Two Circles 2011).

In lieu of a conclusion

What emerges from the above analysis is that there is a greater divergence between the responses of government and major civil society organizations to the issue of the Arab Spring. In general, while civil society organizations aspire for a proactive foreign policy in order to buttress the rising status of India as a global power, the government continues to prefer a 'piecemeal' approach while responding to international events, including the Arab Spring. Given the 'fuzzy' character of India's decision-making process, which partly owes to the multiple centre of decision-making concerning foreign affairs (Prime Minister Office, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Overseas Indians, etc.), the response of the government to the Arab Spring is primarily one of '*ad hoc* gradualism', 'caution' and 'wait and watch'. It conducts its foreign policy on the principle of pragmatism and not on ideological considerations; neither is it in the business of constructing long-term perspectives and doctrines to react to the events of international relations. On the other hand, ideology, worldview and domestic state power politics shape the response of various civil, religious and political organizations in responding to external events, including the Arab Spring.

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