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Reflections Five Years After the Uprisings

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Project on Middle East Political Science

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The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

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Conventional wisdom holds that the Arab uprisings that began in Tunisia in December 2010 failed. It's hard to argue with such a harsh verdict. Most Arab regimes managed to survive their popular challenges through some combination of cooptation, coercion and modest reform. Egypt's transition ended in an even harsher military regime. Yemen and Libya collapsed into state failure and regionalized wars, while Syria degenerated into a horrific war.

But simply dismissing the uprisings as a failure does not capture how fully they have transformed every dimension of the region's politics. Today's authoritarians are more repressive because they are less stable, more frightened and ever more incapable of sustaining their domination. With oil prices collapsing and popular discontent again spiking, it is obvious that the generational challenge of the Arab uprising is continuing to unfold. "Success or failure" is not a helpful way to understand these ongoing societal and political processes.

Instead of binary outcomes, political scientists have begun to more closely examine the new political forms and patterns, which the uprisings generated. A few months ago, the Project on Middle East Political Science convened a virtual symposium with thirty political scientists examining how the turmoil of the last five years have affected Arab politics. Those essays, many of them originally published on the Monkey Cage, are now available for open access download as an issue of POMEPS Studies. Those essays offer an ambivalent, nuanced perspective on what has and has not changed in the region since 2011 – and point to the many challenges to come.

The new politics shaped by the Arab uprising can be tracked along multiple levels of analysis, including regional international relations, regimes, states, and ideas.

Regional international relations: The uprisings of 2011 played out as a fully transnational event, with simultaneous challenges to most of the region's governments. The subsequent response was also fully regional. My new book *The New Arab Wars*, to be published in a few weeks, and a recent POMEPS symposium, track these international relations dimensions of the response to the uprising.

The overthrow of leaders in Egypt and Tunisia badly frightened Arab regimes, which had come to believe themselves to be invincible, while also opening up new opportunities for aggressive new regional policies. The disagreement between these regimes and Washington over Egypt's transition and Syria's war (along with the Iran nuclear deal) drove an unusually intense public crisis in America's traditional alliance structure.

The balance of power within the region has been significantly altered. The upheavals have largely removed traditional regional powers such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria as significant actors. Size, population, and historical position now seem to matter less for the exercise of regional power than do wealth, domestic stability, media empires, transnational networks, and access to advanced weaponry.

Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates took advantage of the uprisings to engage in unprecedented types of interventions across the region. Regimes within the Saudi sphere of influence such as the monarchies of Jordan, Morocco and the Gulf Cooperation Council, received significant aid to buffer them against popular challengers. Gulf regimes poured resources into the challengers to other regimes outside that regional order, such as Libya's and Syria's, intensifying their political and then military struggles. Anti-Islamist forces in transitional countries such as Egypt and Tunisia received support from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while Islamists received support from Qatar and Turkey. Syria became the central site of a regional proxy war including not only the Arab powers but also Iran and Turkey.

Those proxy wars and interventions have manifestly changed the dynamics of regional international relations, mostly in destructive and counterproductive ways.

Regimes and Political Systems: Of all the Arab states, which experienced mass protests in the first few months of 2011, only Tunisia has even partially succeeded at consolidating a democratic transition. Egypt is the model case for failure. The hopes of Tahrir Square and the June 2012 presidential election ended with the military coup of July 3, 2013. Managed transitions in Libya and Yemen collapsed, protests in Jordan and Morocco faded, and Bahrain's uprising was crushed by force. But that does not mean that any of these regimes have simply continued business as usual. The authoritarian regimes which currently hold power are for the most part less inclusive and more repressive.

Tunisia remains the sole partial success story of the uprising. By avoiding Egypt's fatal mistakes, Tunisians managed to find political compromise, as Monica Marks details, drafting a new constitution, and rotating power peacefully through elections. The success of the Tunisian transition remains very partial, of course. Repeated terrorist strikes have damaged an already weak economy and frustration with the political leadership is mounting. Still, for all the frustration and the return of old regime politicians to power, as Laryssa Chomiak observes, it would be wrong to say that nothing has changed. There is a richly diverse new set of political practices, which continue to evolve new opportunities, and the principle of meaningful elections has taken hold. Institutions ranging from the labor unions (Ian Hartshorn) to the military (Sharan Grewal) have been deeply changed by the new political environment.

The failure of Egypt's transition was not preordained, as Michael Wahid Hanna trenchantly observes. Ellen Lust, Gamal Soltan and Jakob Wichmann show powerfully how a toxic combination of fear and uncertainty interfered with democratic consolidation. The military (Ellis Goldberg) and police (Dina Rashed), the Muslim Brotherhood (Steven Brooke) and the political class (Michael Wahid Hanna) made choices under these difficult conditions which collectively derailed the transition. Despite the fervent belief by many Egyptians that this coup would restore and not end democracy, its outcome has proven to be every bit as repressive as political scientists expected. Egypt has certainly failed to consolidate a democratic transition, but its politics have equally certainly been fundamentally transformed by the upheavals of the last five years. Nobody should be fooled by Egypt's return to the practices and forms and personalities of the Mubarak

era, however. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi's Egypt is more repressive and violent, less institutionalized, more economically challenged and internationally dependent. This is not the description of a stable regime.

While Egypt and Tunisia consume most attention, no Arab regime escaped unscathed from the uprisings. Morocco and Jordan managed to deflect challengers without significantly the underlying patterns of monarchical power. Morocco introduced constitutional reforms and allowed the election of an Islamist-led government, but as Merouan Mekouar argues this did not introduce real political accountability. Despite their frustration, Morocco's young activists continue to find new modes of challenge, as Adria Lawrence describes. The daunting effects of Syria's war helped Jordan's regime deflect political challenges, as Curtis Ryan explains. Bahrain survived by embracing exceptionally fierce forms of sectarian repression with long term costs to the regime's ruling strategy.

Even countries initially thought to have escaped Arab uprising protests have in fact been affected. Algeria's constitutional reforms, observes John Entelis, did not mask the reality of top-down rule and political stalemate. Palestinian politics (Daniel Nerenberg and Nathan Brown) have been disrupted. Lebanon's #YouStink protests showed the continuing hopes of its activists to find some way to challenge a stagnant political system. Qatar and Saudi Arabia each navigated a monarchical transition, with significant implications for their domestic and regional policies. In 2012, Iraq's Sunni protest movement intersected in devastating ways with the sectarianism of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's regime and the war in Syria to produce the conditions for the revival of the Islamic State.

The resurgence of Arab security states thus signals not a return to the old ways but a change in the ruling bargains and survival strategies of these embattled regimes.

States: If the surviving regimes have developed new forms of politics, several states have failed dramatically. The disastrous, externally managed, transitions in Libya and Yemen led to state failure, massive regional intervention and multiple competing governments. The degeneration of the uprising in Syria into a brutal and fully internationalized war has shattered that state for the foreseeable future. The failure of these states has left large pockets of ungoverned or contested space, while driving many millions of people from their homes. Kurdish forces have carved out their own de facto polities, while the so-called Islamic State clings tenaciously to its remaining territories spanning the Syrian-Iraqi border.

None of these states or their traumatized populations have any meaningful prospect of stable or peaceful governance in the near term. It is at this point unclear whether Syria, Iraq, Libya or Yemen still exist as sovereign states – or how their disaggregation affects regional politics over the long term.

Ideas and identities: Finally, there have also been palpable transformations in the realm of identities and ideas. It has never been more obvious that the only motivating idea for most Arab regimes is their own survival in power. But the very exposure of this naked survival instinct before an unprecedentedly mobilized Arab public sphere has been significant. The failure of the Arab uprising has been a painful political education for an extraordinarily talented generation of activists, public intellectuals and entrepreneurs. So too has the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood in government, and the harsh outcome of the Egyptian coup, which too many of them supported.

This has begun to open the way for new political thinking and network formation, for now mostly off the public radar. There has been little answer to the aspirations for democracy and social justice, which Mark Beissinger, Amaney Jamal and Kevin Mazur show motivated the uprisings. Michael Robbins draws on Arab Barometer data to show that democracy remains a vital ambition, despite profound frustrations. Michaelle Browers argues that Arab political thinkers are beginning to rethink concepts such as moderation and democracy.

But for all of that, more negative and alarming forces today dominate Arab public discourse. Sectarianism has taken deep root. The Egyptian media has been consumed by regime-supporting xenophobic nationalism. Islamist politics have moved towards the extremes, driven by Egypt's military coup, the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood, Syria's jihad and the rise of the Islamic State. Those pernicious ideas and identities will likely continue to thrive in the absence of viable political alternatives. The currently popular idea that revived Arab autocracy can provide an antidote to extremism is likely to prove just as misguided today as it has for the last half century.

Five years after the Arab uprising, it is no longer enough to score the cases as successes or failures. New political systems have taken shape that must be understood on their own terms. Power flows through different institutions and networks. New regional alliances, identities and political ideas have evolved. "Five Years After the Arab Uprising" shows how political scientists are beginning to grapple with these new politics on their own terms.

Marc Lynch, Director of POMEPS
March 28, 2016

Lessons from Egypt

What has changed in the five years since Egypt's police sparked a revolution — and what hasn't

By Dina Rashed, University of Chicago

Egypt's Jan. 25, 2011, uprising was largely inspired by brutal police practices. Citizens mobilized against the Hosni Mubarak regime's repressive Interior Ministry and its police force en masse, and movements like "We Are All Khaled Said" — inspired by the abuse of an Alexandrian activist — became key symbols of the uprising. Five years later, the relationship between citizens and the police remains uneasy. Despite some early attempts at reform, abusive practices have returned and the state's institution of law and order is shaky. The regime of President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi hopes that its current war on terror against an evolving Islamist insurgency will restore a positive image for the police. But will this be enough to restore public confidence?

Since the ouster of former president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, the Interior Ministry has exerted significant effort to restore public order and bolster the regime's legitimacy. Police patrols are more visible on the streets, units to combat sexual harassment and domestic violence against women have been established and deployed, and most importantly, some officers are being tried for abusing the power of their badge. The visible, yet limited, trials aim to convey a sense of accountability in an institution that for many years was above the law. This development is a marked change from practices under Mubarak.

These sentences by criminal courts do not reflect change in the judicial system as much as change in the ministry's investigative authorities, which are now more willing to disclose evidence in some torture and corruption cases. However, cases of indicted officers can't keep up with new incidents of police impunity. National newspapers are replete with stories about abuse of authority in police stations, on the streets and even in hospitals. Airing with greater frequency over the past year, such stories reflect the low professionalization of junior officers not only when dealing with criminal or political suspects but also in their everyday practices as citizens.

The ministry's security record is further complicated by political policing. Domestic and international rights groups are calling attention to the disappearance of citizens showing dissent, or even suspected of expressing it. During Mubarak's rule, "emergency laws" were used to legalize the police's extensive arresting powers but were lifted in June 2012 by the then-governing Supreme Council of the Armed Forces only days prior to transferring power to civilian authorities. In the absence of these laws, political kidnappings have become a means to detain unwanted voices that cannot be readily tied to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Complaints about forced disappearances date to early 2014, and family members of the missing persons have criticized the ministry for its lack of cooperation in disclosing information. The ministry's initial response was complete denial. Later, the official line claimed that some of the disappeared have fled the country to join the more militant groups in the Syrian conflict. However, a sustained public campaign from pro-democracy activists, some pro-Sissi media hosts and the state's human rights organization eventually led to the ministry's disclosure of the status of some missing persons. Out of 191 names about which the National Council for Human Rights inquired, the ministry disclosed the whereabouts of 118, noting that they have been detained for investigation.

Daily interactions between citizens and officers in public offices show that little has changed in the way the police serve the people. The Interior Ministry continues to oversee the processing of important personal and work documents such as national identification papers, passports, driving licenses and some work permits. As

it was under Mubarak, processing or renewing such documents still entails the payment of hidden fees collected by low-level officials dealing directly with the public. Known as the "open drawer," such practices demonstrate the type of corruption that the higher administration of the ministry has failed to eradicate.

But not all challenges facing the ministry come from the public's disillusionment; law and order is also suffering from some major intra-institutional problems. Some non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are growing increasingly militant,defying orders of their superiors. Although there have been a few incidents of internal rebellion since 2011, the past year witnessed a qualitative turn as some of the NCOs threatened the physical safety of senior police generals. In one incident, police officers in the delta province of Sharqiya held hostage the provincial head of security and called for the resignation of the minister of interior. Lasting for days, the volatile situation threatened to escalate as NCOs in other provinces showed support to their colleagues. This bureaucratic insurgency centered on demands for financial and medical benefits. The standoff was finally resolved as the administration promised to provide the NCOs some benefits and continue negotiations over their demands.

Amid all these challenges, the war on terror seems like the most promising venue for the ministry to re-create the image of policemen as heroes. With the ouster of Morsi and the outlawing of the Muslim Brotherhood, some splintered factions from the Brotherhood have used violence against policeand other state officials. Other militant groups with ties to the Islamic State have targeted officers of different ranks as well as conscripts serving with the ministry in Sinai and other areas of the country. In a TV interview, the daughter of a slain senior officer suggested that Police Day be changed to Police Martyrs Day in an attempt to glorify the sacrifices of police keeping the country safe.

The campaign to rebrand police as heroes in the fight against terrorism has rallied religious figures, pro-government journalists and TV show hosts, and even opposition leaders from secular and religious factions to acknowledge police efforts.

Borrowing from similar media dedications to the military, the campaign attempts to present police as agents of state independence and liberation, recalling the historical narrative of police struggle against British colonialism. During the 2016 Police Day celebrations, the public was reminded of how Egyptian police refused British demands to hand over weapons and evacuate the Ismailia Police Station on Jan. 25, 1952. The celebrations highlight the narrative of police sacrifice and draw a parallel to the present steadfastness displayed in the course of fighting the insurgency.

However, while the war on terror presents an opportunity to redefine the national role of the police, it carries its own set of challenges. As more officers have been involved in the war on terror, the ministry's incompetence has come to the fore. In a speech during the 2016 celebrations of Police Day, Sissi publicly criticized the ministry's administration for falling behind on providing appropriate health care for its officers injured while serving in the state's anti-terrorism campaigns. Sissi's rebuke came in response to complaints from incapacitated police officers that had reached his office. The ministry's mishandling of post-combat care contrasts with the military's strong record of providing for its members.

As Egypt commemorates the fifth anniversary of its Jan. 25, 2011, uprising, the Interior Ministry still has a long way to go to gain public trust. While citizens may recognize the sacrifices of fallen police officers, they won't turn a blind eye to the ministry's everyday mistreatment of Egyptians. Notions of martyrdom may temporarily boost sympathy, but public support requires good service and constant cultivation of trust.

Dina Rashed is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on authoritarian regimes, armed actors and civil-military relations.

Contrary to popular opinion, Egypt's transition wasn't always doomed to fail

By Michael Wahid Hanna, New York University School of Law

The fifth anniversary of the 2011 Egyptian uprising has produced an oddly structuralist set of reflections in which the failure of its democratic transition has taken on an almost foreordained quality. Influential political science interpretations of the Egyptian uprising's failure have focused analytical attention on structural factors, such as the role of a politicized and overreaching military, the uneven balance of power between the Muslim Brotherhood and its non-Islamist competitors, the former regime's political structure and the weakness of transitional institutions.

Structure matters, of course. But so does agency. Overly structural interpretations miss the decisive impact of highly contingent events, deflects responsibility from the political actors whose choices drove the transition off course and can lead to unwarranted skepticism about the possibility of meaningful political change.

Egypt's transition to a legitimate, civilian-led political order after the popular mobilization of January 2011 always faced long odds, but the failure of the transition was never inevitable. Structural explanations of the July 2013 military coup gloss over the fear and uncertainty that shaped political decision-making over the previous two years. The political openings of 2011 were real and potentially transformative and could have provided a platform for slow but sustainable change. Structural analysis should not become an excuse for political malpractice or an analytical surrender to the necessity of autocracy. Different decisions by key political actors such as the military, the Muslim Brotherhood and the National Salvation Front could have shaped a very different political environment.

The military's overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013, is one obviously crucial inflection point. Why did the military choose to act as it did rather than remain in the background and allow the political process to play out? When the military removed former president Hosni Mubarak in 2011, it did so both to avoid civil strife and to preserve its institutional interests, while allowing for a managed political transition. But the military's 2013 intervention led by then-Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sissi did not seek a negotiated settlement to Egypt's political crisis and destroyed the prospects of a civilian-led political order. The coup and the subsequent course of repression were choices, not necessary responses to an obvious structural reality.

To understand the link between structural forces and the often poor decisions made by actors fighting for their interests, it is vital to recapture the political murkiness of the transition. Structural analysis now makes the military's decision to intervene seem obvious and inevitable, but at the time it seemed anything but certain to the Egyptian public and political actors, not to mention analysts and scholars. Indeed, throughout the run-up to the June 30 protests, speculation varied wildly about the military's ultimate intentions. Even now, as Ellis Goldberg observes, the motivations behind the major shift to intervene directly and irrevocably into politics remain opaque.

We know that key military leaders had a dim view of civilian political leaders and, crucially, had never moved beyond the military's traditional suspicion and hostility toward the Muslim Brotherhood and had lost confidence in Morsi's ability to maintain stability as the political crisis deepened. Their genuine concern over the prospects of civil strife should not be minimized; however, this concern did not require a specific course of action. Whatever the truth of the military's rumored role in promoting the June 30 protest, the size of the protests represented a decisive and highly contingent turning point. Had the protests fizzled, the military would almost certainly have elected to stay in the barracks. But the military's senior leaders were buoyed by the size and scope of the demonstrations

and the explicit and widespread calls for a military intervention. Their choice, then, was contingent upon a very specific set of events and could very well have gone differently.

The role of anti-Brotherhood political leaders, activists and the National Salvation Front in these events was also far from predetermined. The military's choice was enabled by the support of the National Salvation Front, the coalition of opposition figures that mobilized against Morsi and offered a civilian cover to the coup. Without explicit support from this broad spectrum of opposition leaders, it is unlikely that the military would have been emboldened to act so decisively. Even in the midst of escalation, these civilian leaders could have insisted upon Morsi's resignation, a referendum on his leadership or early presidential elections as their sole goals. However, such options were likely eschewed in that chaotic period for fear that ambiguity would undermine the military's motivation to act.

The NSF's choice to set aside concerns about the potential ramifications of military intervention and to align fully with the coup has come to seem inevitable but was not. Some influential political leaders who participated in the June 30 protest, such as Amr Hamzawy and Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, endorsed the notion of peaceful protest and mass mobilization as a tool for pressure against Morsi while explicitly warning of the dangers of renewed military rule. Their warnings, wise in retrospect, were ignored by a political leadership determined to seize its moment.

Perhaps the greatest miscalculations were made by the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi. Neither the NSF nor the military's choices would have been politically viable were it not for the remarkably poor decisions by Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood after Mubarak's fall, especially during their year in power. Even at the late stage of June 2013 — when the military was publicly signaling its frustration with President Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood-led government and its inclination for some form of intervention — a coup was still not inevitable and could have been avoided. Had Morsi read the military's calculations more clearly or anticipated the size of the June 30 protests, he might have taken greater steps to head off the challenge with preemptive concessions.

This failure was not due to the absence of advice. Morsi and his advisers may have understandably brushed aside or been suspicious of the suggestions by Western political scientists and diplomats about how to effectively govern Egypt. But it also received similar advice from its own ideological brothers. As the country tipped toward polarization and instability, Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood were cautioned by senior leaders from Tunisia's Islamist Ennahda party to temper their maximalism and to accept tactical defeats in the name of preserving Egypt's political transition. In interviews with numerous senior figures in Ennahda, the obstinacy and myopia of the Egyptian Brotherhood was noted and rued.

Choosing to preserve the political transition in such circumstances would have slowed the pace of Egypt's already glacial reform, but it might have avoided the usurpation of the political process by the military and would have offered a more inclusive political process going forward.

A negotiated stand-down could have also insured a place within political life for the Muslim Brotherhood. While perhaps an unfair outcome, Morsi resigning or agreeing to early elections or a referendum on his rule would have outmaneuvered the military and the growing public agitation in some quarters for the ouster of the democratically elected president. Offering more concessions may still have failed, of course, given the polarization of the political arena and the anticipation of victory by Morsi's opponents. But this failure was not inevitable — particularly if it had undercut the momentum toward the June 30 protests and removed the military's pretext for intervention. But such a decision, which was favored by some more conciliatory Brotherhood figures, was rejected.

Why did the Muslim Brotherhood make such poor decisions, and what might it have chosen instead? First,

and perhaps most important, senior Brotherhood leaders sought to preserve the coherence of their organization above and beyond any other national goals. The Brotherhood leadership was afraid that major concessions and compromise would alienate much of the rank and file, many of whom were demanding a more radical policy toward state reform and the elimination of the old regime.

This organizational tension also came at a time of increasing Brotherhood unilateralism, in which any calls for reform, let alone revolution, were understood more broadly as calls for state capture. In essence, this posture reaffirmed the worst fears of Brotherhood opponents, who began to believe in the inevitability of zero-sum outcomes with clear winners and clear losers. That backdrop informed opposition decision-making, but also, quite crucially, tempered the willingness of the Brotherhood to make painful compromises during the escalating crisis. Instead of exerting their influence as leaders, they chose to avoid any compromise that would risk splitting the organization. At a moment of national crisis, Morsi chose to address the crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood rather than taking the necessary but difficult steps to preserve Egypt's political transition. It is darkly ironic that the reckless course of action ultimately adopted by the Brothers has ushered in a period of unmitigated repression and violence that, as Steven Brooke demonstrates, now threatens the integrity of the Brotherhood as a functional entity and organization.

Second, the Brotherhood chose confrontation because it misunderstood its own position in Egyptian society and the scope of dissatisfaction with its rule. Warnings about growing disaffection and social unrest were understood by many within the Brotherhood as the out-of-touch whining of urban elites, unrepresentative of Egyptian society and insignificant in the broader scope of the country's politics. This view was informed by an exaggerated emphasis on their recent electoral successes. Rather than understanding those outcomes as a reflection of an embryonic political system — in effect, the last elections of the Mubarak era — the Brothers chose to see their string of successes and victories as representative of the deep-seated and abiding preferences of the Egyptian electorate. At root, they understood themselves to be the authentic representatives of Egyptian society.

Lastly, Brotherhood leaders overestimated the constraining power and influence of outside actors, most notably the United States. The Brothers, as demonstrated by their last-minute pleas for U.S. exertion of influence to avoid a coup, thought that fear of U.S. reaction would deter the Egyptian military.

Once again, however, while the cumulative effect of these factors weighs heavily, they cannot be seen as wholly determinative. Other more prudent courses of action remained open and were discussed actively at the time. And as the counsel from external allies in Tunisia demonstrates, concrete discussions of alternative approaches were broached and ultimately rejected. It is here that the temperament and judgment of senior leaders, such as Morsi and his closest colleagues, were lacking. A direct conflict with the state was a reckless and potentially ruinous proposition from the start. Disaster could have been avoided with a more cautious, patient, and prudent decision-making process on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Egyptian uprising has certainly failed, but it didn't necessarily have to. Powerful structural factors set the stage for Egypt's political crisis and influenced the world views of key decision makers, but ultimately political actors must be judged on the choices they made and the options they rejected.

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Why fear explains the failure of Egypt's revolution

By Ellen Lust, University of Gothenburg and Yale University, Jakob Mathias Wichmann, Voluntas Advisory, and Gamal Soltan, American University of Cairo

Five years after Egyptians took to the streets in the demonstrations that eventually helped to oust Hosni Mubarak from power, a quiet, fear-based cynicism has replaced boisterous, empowered optimism. It is tempting to blame Egypt's failed transition on one side or the other — the Islamists' overreach or their opponents' incompetence — but to do so misses the fundamental role that fear played in Egypt's transition from the outset.

All transitions are periods of uncertainty, but they differ in the extent to which contenders focus on the possibilities of gain or the fear of loss. When Egyptians took to the streets on Jan. 25 five years ago, they overcame not just the wall of fear between Egyptians and the regime, but one between groups within Egyptian society as well. That fear returned over the course of the transition, to deadly effect. Even many of those who protested, or applauded from the sidelines, to oust first Mubarak and later Morsi, have come to fear both the current regime and the alternatives. As one Egyptian commentator put it, "The Brothers and the Military: Two sides of the coin."

There are deep historical roots to the pervasive distrust which has shaped the Egyptian public. Egyptian politicians had long manipulated fear as a strategy for retaining power. Distrust had escalated in the 1990s, when a wave of radical Islamist terrorism and open calls for killing ideological opponents, on the one side, and the general silence of human rights advocates in the face of regime repression on the other, widened the chasm between Egyptians of Islamist and non-Islamist orientation. Members on both sides of the political divide (a political divide, we should note, that is in reality multi-faceted) had reason to blame and fear each other. As the intellectual and activist Ahmed Abdallah warned in his 1994 call for a national dialogue, "The current polarization imposes extreme choices upon people: either we or them."

Yet in the decades that followed, fear had subsided. The terrorism of the 1990s was quelled; Islamist and secularist-oriented activists mobilized jointly in the 2000s over common economic and humanitarian demands; while the regime, in part because it was intent on catapulting Mubarak's son, Gamal, to power, distanced many of its supporters. On Jan. 25, 2011, Abdallah's warning was but a faint echo as Islamists and secularists, men and women, rich and poor took to the streets to voice their frustration. At least for the moment, they were no longer engaged in a zero-sum game. Egyptians could imagine a better future for all.

However, the politics of fear soon reared its ugly head. By March 2011, the agreement between the army and the Muslim Brotherhood over the framework for the political process fostered fear among the Brotherhood's opponents. The apparent collusion between the Islamists and the army, they worried, would set the country on a course toward Islamism that could not soon be reversed. Islamists were hopeful and tried to capture the great opportunity emerging after the fall of Mubarak. When they willingly grabbed the deal that the military offered them, they brought an end to the Islamists-Secularists revolutionary coalition that overthrew Mubarak's rule only weeks earlier. The democratic, anti-Mubarak common ground rapidly eroded, allowing the return of the politics of ideological polarization, within which mobilizing fear, rather than making promises, became a main strategy.

The emergence of the orthodox Salafi movement exacerbated the situation. The uncompromising anti-Coptic and anti-liberal discourse of the Salafis heightened mistrust and fueled ideological rivalry. For instance, after the Islamists' sweeping victory in Egypt's first poll in the post-Mubarak era, held in March 2011, Sheikh Mohamed Hussein Yaacob proclaimed that the Islamists victory was the "Ghazwat al-Sanadeek," or conquering the ballot

boxes. Invoking the notion of "Ghazwa," a term typically preserved to describe the wars launched by early Muslims against infidels, indicated the way Salafis perceived democratic politics. Sheikh Yaacob invited those who didn't like the outcome of the vote to leave for the United States and Canada, signaling his perception of tolerance and pluralism in the post Mubarak political system. The Salafi sheikh fostered fears that Islamists intended to turn Egypt into an Islamic state that would not accommodate all of its citizens.

Islamists aroused fear among their opponents, but they were also motivated by their own fears. The instrumental role that liberal youths played in bringing down the Mubarak regime alarmed the Islamists, particularly the ultra-religious Salafis, who feared uncompromising secularism. Two days after Mubarak stepped down, the leading Salafi Sheikh Saeed Abdel Azimcalled upon his followers "to come to the rescue of article 2 of the constitution against the fierce secularists attempt to undermine Egypt's Islamic identity." Moreover, Islamists feared prosecution. The Brotherhood didn't join the anti-Mubarak revolt until it became too costly to continue sitting on the sidelines. But once they accepted the risk of joining the protest, the Brotherhood was certain that "their necks will be put at stake if their attempt at power fails."

There were attempts to overcome the fear and find compromise. In fall 2011, concerns over military intentions to maintain power pushed Islamists and their more secular opponents to join forces, and a similar concern about a return to the autocratic past led many who would otherwise oppose the Muslim Brotherhood to support the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohamed Morsi, edging him to a win over Ahmed Shafik in the presidential elections of 2012. (It is important to note that the military's popularity had declined slightly in the lead-up to these elections, with slightly less than 70 percent of Egyptians evaluating the military performance as good or very good in polls conducted by the AlAhram Center for Political and Social Studies and the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute. Even then, however, the military remained the single most trusted institution in Egypt.)

Yet after the elections, underlying suspicions led both sides to dismiss the conciliatory moves, emphasize blunders, and escalate tensions. President Morsi's constitutional declaration of November 2012 amassed extra-constitutional power in the president's hands.

The Islamists' monopoly over the drafting of the constitution in January 2013 drove the relationship between Islamists and their opponents to the point of no return. And Egyptians, frustrated with economic stagnation and political wrangling, lost confidence in the Morsi presidency and, by extension, the Brotherhood quickly lost confidence. As shown in Figure 1, in the run-up to Morsi's overthrow, 61 percent of Egyptians disagreed

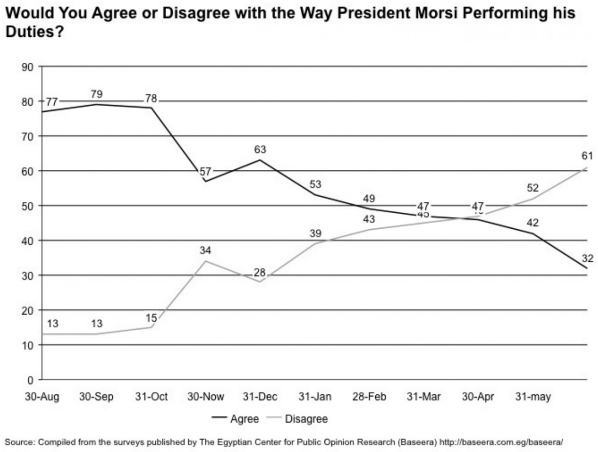

Figure 1

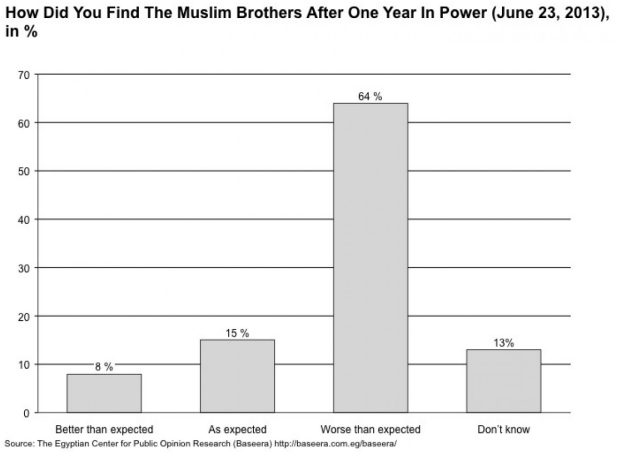

Figure 2

with the way that the president was performing his duties, and only 32 percent agreed. After one year in power, only 64 percent of the Egyptians deemed Morsi's administration to have been worse than expected. (See Figure 2.)

This fear had distinctive effects on behavior during a transitional period. When actors see the situation in terms of enormous, potential failures rather than possibilities of success, they are in what Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky called the "domain of losses." In their seminal work, Kahneman and Tversky show that actors who *perceive* outcomes in terms of potential loss rather than gain, they are more willing to take risky actions. Importantly, it is the *framing* of the outcomes, not the outcomes themselves that drive each sides' strategies. But when attention turns to the fear of loss, actors are more likely to engage in brinksmanship.

And in Egypt, they did. Some who took to the streets perhaps had longed for the days of Mubarak and sought to restore the military to power. Yet, many who called to oust Mohammed Morsi from power hoped that that it could be a reset button, starting the revolution afresh. They certainly had not asked for the terror that ensued at Rabba' Square on August 14, or for the repression that ensued.

But the two-and-a-half years since the uprisings began could not simply be erased. The military and many like-minded nationalists had grown angry and tired. They could not tolerate the Muslim Brotherhood — or even its sympathizers. With power on their side, they no longer needed to accommodate opposition; indeed, they could mobilize against any opponent in the name of the state, with heady, nationalist fervor.

Fear plays an even greater role in the post-Morsi era. Officials, politicians and activists from the post-Morsi era frequently describe Egypt as in a state of war, and the failing states and the rise of terror organizations across the region underpin this argument. Fear of chaos is equally palpable. As Gerard Padró Miquel put it, "Fear of falling under an equally inefficient and venal ruler that favors another group is enough to discipline supporters."

Such arguments help to legitimize the Sisi regime as the protector of the nation in the war against the enemy forces of extremism, terror, foreign intervention, and irresponsible activism; the integral parts of the conspiracy designed to destroy the Arab World under the guise of the Arab Spring. This is how the current reality is depicted in the official and semiofficial discourse, where Islamists are terrorists; human rights activists the agents of imperial powers, and mobilized youth the anarchists who reject notions of state and authority. Defeating the Arab Spring conspiracy has become the primary goal one so dear that many are willing to pay, even if the price is the reign of fear. This discourse once again mobilizes fear in the service of regime survival, limiting the memories of the great hopes for the Jan. 25 uprising.

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What was the Egyptian military thinking after the revolution?

By Ellis Goldberg, University of Washington

Five years after the Egyptian uprising, the role of the armed forces in shaping events is at once obvious and mysterious as it has been for the last 60. Since Jan. 29, 2011, when residents of Cairo woke up after a day of tumultuous demonstrations to discover tanks and armored personnel carriers throughout the city, the army has been on the streets and in the halls of government nearly continuously. What kind of politics does such an overt military presence suggest?

The conventional narrative of a civil uprising followed by a shaky democratic transition and ending in a military coup fundamentally misunderstands Egypt's politics. Egypt's military has been deeply invested in politics for the last half-century. The military, not street protesters, ultimately removed President Hosni Mubarak on Feb. 11. The military, not civilians, governed Egypt between Mubarak's removal and the inauguration of Morsi on June 30, 2012. And the military, not civilians, removed Morsi on July 3, 2013. Overthrowing a government and governing through the collective leadership of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces are as much political acts as winning elections or stitching together a legislative coalition.

The military's political role in the republican regime descended from the 1952 coup merits closer inspection. Its power does not only flow from the barrel of a gun, and it is not based upon a supposed economic empire. Over the past five years, the Egyptian armed forces benefited from the two distinct kinds of control over information to retain institutional power. Information asymmetry and narrative control are key to the army's recent success: Only generals understand the army's politics, and generals are key to the way Egyptians have been taught to understand their own history. These advantages have allowed the army to fend off challenges to subject their institution to legislative control and transform it into one more government agency rather than the embodiment of the nation.

There is a profound asymmetry in the information available about the inner workings of Egypt's major political actors. The military and state intelligence services had far keener insight into the internal workings of the Muslim Brotherhood and of the activist community. But even the sharpest and best-connected Egyptian political analysts (to say nothing of U.S. political scientists) have trouble peering into the inner circles of the military leadership. Despite continual rumors about what the army wants and with which political forces it has been allied, civilian politicians have been unable to see its inner workings, let alone control it.

There have been significant conflicts within nearly every institution and social force over the last five years. The military is no different, but it is far more able to protect its internal secrets and block scrutiny of its political dealings. The military's opacity has broader implications. As an institution, the armed forces has remained intact and united behind its leadership, but its internal workings and even its conflicts remain opaque. It is easy to forget that almost all of the men who served on the Supreme Council of the armed forces when it issued its first communiqué following the removal of Mubarak no longer do so. The officers who oversaw the ouster of Mubarak were not the ones who took down his successor.

Perhaps the best example of an unnoticed inner conflict within the military may be the June 2012 runoff election between the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi and former Mubarak prime minister Ahmad Shafiq. The former general was widely seen as the military's man, running on a mandate to reinstall authoritarianism. But in the wake of his narrow loss to Morsi, Shafiq left Egypt for Abu Dhabi, where he remains to this day. He has been charged with electoral and financial irregularities and is on a Cairo airport watch list. Shafiq was no democratic angel; he promised the Egyptian electorate to restore order with a heavy hand. He does not, in retrospect, appear to

have been the favored candidate of an armed forces high command that has not allowed him to return or even facilitated his attempt to create a viable political party.

Shafiq, the former air marshal, must have had keener insights into the personalities available to replace then-Minister of Defense Mohamed Tantawi in August 2012 than the Muslim Brother who, thinking he was increasing his control over the military, appointed the general who ousted him. Shafiq might well have appointed Sami Anan, another air force general and then chief of staff of the armed forces, as commander in chief and minister of defense. But Morsi, misreading the military's internal politics, removed Anan from office and general (now President) Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has kept him politically isolated and impotent.

If asymmetric information made it impossible for Morsi to choose his generals wisely, a different kind of information asymmetry made it easy for the armed forces to claim political authority. Despite its losses on battlefields, the Egyptian army has shaped a narrative of itself as the able defender of national sovereignty and security. This narrative has been shaped by academics as well as the military and has been tirelessly repeated in movies, television and print.

Consequently, if the Egyptian army and its internal conflicts are opaque, its popularity is not in doubt. Polling consistently shows that the military remains by far the most popular and most trusted of the political forces in the country. Nearly half of Egyptians voting freely cast ballots for someone perceived as the military's candidate 60 years after a military coup brought to power a republic governed only by former generals. And this was less than a year after armored personnel carriers ran over several dozen protesters near downtown Cairo. There are many possible explanations for the vote, including a widespread desire for security and order in the face of social and economic collapse or fear of a victory by the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate. That so many Egyptians preferred a former air force general to an Islamist politician reveals more than how Egyptians balanced a decision between two candidates.

The military's place within the political realm is testimony to the central role the military plays in the historical narrative of modern Egyptian history. That the military would be important for a country whose modern history is invariably said to have begun with Napoleon's invasion in 1798 is not surprising. Successive battles — from the naval bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 to the wars with Israel in the mid-20th century — understandably generated popular and elite concern with military prowess. Many histories of Egypt move effortlessly from the creation of an army by Mehmet Ali in early 19th century Egypt through the revolt of Colonel Ahmad Urabi in 1881-1882 against the Turco-Circassian elite and the British, to the seizure of power by the Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952. These were crucial turning points in Egyptian history, but the telling conflates the military as an institution with the creation of state institutions more generally.

The military's narrative reinforces a trend to portray recent Egyptian history as one of military martyrs and heroes occasionally flanked by Islamist victims such as Sayyid Qutb or Hassan al-Banna. This narrative erases civilian politics in consequential ways. To make the military so central to the narrative of modern history, the army after 1952 required erasing the stories of the civilian elite brought to power by a massive revolt in 1919 that forced the British to relinquish the occupation. The tendency to imagine recent Egyptian political history as a conflict over the role of Islam in politics reinforces this erasure of the past. Just as it did in previous historical epochs, the military is now equally busy erasing the accounts of civilians in the politics of the past five years.

Many of the most important events in the past five years — from the dissolutions of parliaments to the creation of new parties to the prolonged wrangling about election rules in early 2013 — revolved around the role of an elected legislature. There is an equally plausibly historical narrative of Egyptian politics over the last century, which would emphasize the role of an elected legislature in politics both as a representative of popular expression and as the ultimate arbiter of government decisions. The most recent

constitution formally empowers the legislature in ways that pose a challenge to the executive authority and the officers who control it. The military seems determined for the moment simply to ignore the challenge. It is this narrative which the military seeks to submerge.

Military control of the state therefore rests on key information asymmetries which go beyond the material and institutional power advantages that it enjoys. In Egypt today, the armed forces have moved to prevent reporting and publication that would inform Egyptians about its internal workings or its larger role in the economy or society. Recently, one human rights advocate, Hossam Bahgat, was held for several days for questioning because of an article he wrote. (See above link.) Given the advantage it has gained from opacity and public ignorance, it is not surprising that the Egyptian armed forces view the revelation of information as being nearly as dangerous as overt public protest.

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Why did Egyptian security see Giulio Regeni as a threat?

By Jean Lachapelle, Harvard University

A few weeks ago, someone doing what I do — field research in Egypt — was murdered. Giulio Regeni, an Italian citizen, was a PhD student at Cambridge University studying Egyptian labor movements. He went missing on Jan. 25, the fifth anniversary of the 2011 uprising, and his remains were discovered a few days later, bearing burn marks, broken bones and signs of electrocution. These injuries have been interpreted as indications of torture, as they resemble those of many Egyptians who have confronted the country's security forces in the past. Facing what could be the first deliberate police killing of a foreign researcher in Egypt, the Middle East Studies Association has recently sent out a travel warning to its members.

What are we to make of this tragedy? Why was he killed? And are other researchers at risk?

The news of Regeni's death comes as a deep shock for anyone who has conducted research in Egypt. Like him, I have interviewed activists from independent trade unions. And like many other non-Egyptian nationals, I subscribed to the widely held but seldom stated assumption that my foreigner status offered some protection from extreme forms of physical abuse. This terrible event points to both the limits of that sense of comfort and the ever-narrowing space for researchers, both foreign and Egyptian.

It is not immediately obvious why authorities may have considered Regeni threatening. He researched independent trade unions, a seemingly innocuous topic in a country where the Left is not only weak but also hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, the regime's main opponent. Moreover, the junior scholar was not the only academic on the ground studying sensitive issues. Researchers have interviewed opposition activists under the current military regime, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, while other scholars have published criticisms of the regime. Yet it was this young PhD student who met such a brutal fate. Why?

Since 2011, I have studied how Egyptian security forces perceive threats and select their targets. I have cataloged acts of police coercion, consulted administrative documents and spoken with political activists, including labor leaders and former members of the security forces.

My research has taught me two things. The first is that security forces pay close attention to signs of politicization among the labor movement. Under the regime of then-president Hosni Mubarak, security forces established a sharp distinction between political and economic types of unrest. Labor protests were often tolerated or ignored as long as protesters did not make political claims. In parallel, political activists were also allowed to protest and criticize the regime as long as they did not attempt to stir up the masses for anti-government ends.

Second, the security forces have distinct ideas about the causes of popular mobilization. Like social scientists, the Egyptian authorities developed theories for the explosion of popular unrest in 2011. While political scientists have emphasized the spontaneity, courage and agency of ordinary citizens during the 18 days of the 2011 uprising, Egyptian security forces believe that the unrest was steered by well-organized political forces capable of manipulating the average citizen for political ends. In the summer of 2011, when I asked a former member of the security forces why the anti-Mubarak protesters had succeeded, he blamed foreign conspirators, particularly the Palestinian group Hamas. Such allegations of outside forces causing political instability in Egypt are common in the Egyptian media.

In the United States, these views are often dismissed as classic authoritarian propaganda. However, my research suggests that such anxieties are real and inform the way the Egyptian regime perceives threats. In particular, they make security forces highly attentive to ties between "foreign elements" and "mobilizable" sectors of society.

It is possible that Regeni's research activities were misinterpreted as groundwork for preparing a new uprising. He had built ties with local actors, attended meetings with labor activists and spoke excellent Arabic — an essential skill for a researcher, yet one that unfortunately tends to raise suspicions. He appears to have felt a personal investment in labor issues and authored articles critical of the current regime led by President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi in an Italian newspaper. One article, published posthumously, offers an insightful analysis of the state of independent unions in Egypt.

Contrary to what has been suggested elsewhere, his critical views were probably less consequential than his connections, contacts and careful on-the-ground reporting.

Regeni disappeared at the height of a security sweep aimed at forestalling any protest on Jan. 25. In the days preceding this anniversary, security forces searched 5,000 apartments in central Cairo, a sweep that reportedly followed months of intelligence gathering about "pro-democracy activists inside and outside the country, including foreigners." Perhaps Regeni's kidnapping was ordered after lengthy surveillance. Or perhaps he was simply picked up on the street by twitchy officers while on the way to a meet a friend, only awakening suspicions while in detention. In any event, the fact that he was "interrogated for up to seven days" points to the likelihood that security forces viewed him as a threat.

Egypt holds a special place among scholars of the Middle East. Not only is it where a large number of today's non-Arab experts received their language training, but this country has also been a central site for developing theories of politics in the Arab world, including studies of economic development, party politics under authoritarian rule, and Islamist politics and movements. Such works leverage in-depth fieldwork and local knowledge, the acquisition of which is becoming increasingly risky.

The death of Regeni highlights the difficulties of managing one's safety in Egypt's current climate. In theory, researchers could mitigate risks by eschewing activities that may be perceived of as having a political or mobilizing component. In practice, however, making this distinction is highly difficult. Fieldwork requires navigating an environment in which the police rarely believe that researchers do research for its own sake. It also requires precisely the activities that, as this recent tragedy illustrates, feeds into the very anxieties of the security forces — speaking Arabic and building actual ties with people. Regeni was not careless. And that is perhaps most worrying for both scholars and the future of the field.

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Are coups good for democracy?

By Joseph Wright, Penn State University and University of Cape Town; Barbara Geddes, UCLA; Erica Frantz, Michigan State University; and George Derpanopoulos, UCLA

When Egyptian troops overthrew President Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013, a number of observers proposed that the coup might be just what Egyptian democracy needed. After all, many Egyptians supported the military's actions, the Islamist elected government had shown little respect for minority rights, and the military-led interim government announced a clear timetable for a return to democratic rule just a few days after seizing power. Despite initial optimism, less than a year later, the military's own Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi won 97 percent of the vote, in a race that none of the major opposition parties contested.

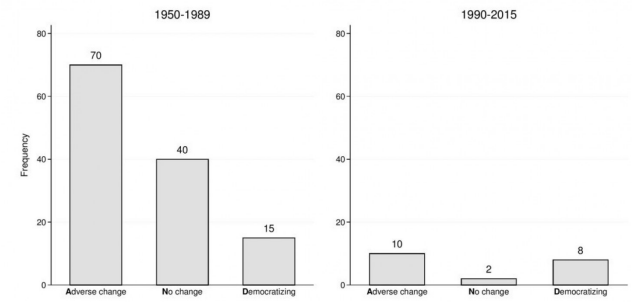

Figure 1

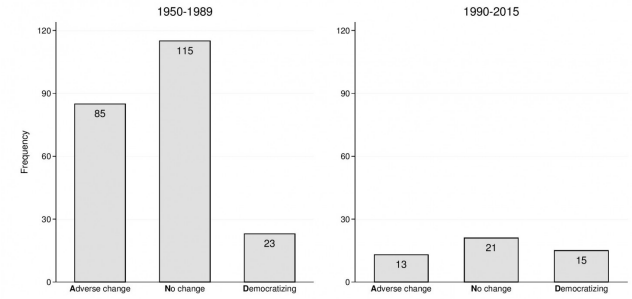

Figure 2

Though the Egyptian coup did not usher in democracy, "good coups" — or those against dictatorships that lead to democratization — appear to havedramatically increased in number since the end of the Cold War, at least partially because of the incentives created by international pressures for democratization. Examples include coups in Mali in 1991, Guinea Bissau in 2003, and Niger in 1999 and 2010.

This trend has generated arguments that coups — traditionally seen as a sign of democratic breakdown — may actually be a tool to usher in democracy. By creating a shock to the political system, the argument goes, coups can generate opportunities for political liberalization that would otherwise be absent. As Paul Collier wrote in 2009 for the New Humanist, "coups and the threat of coups can be a significant weapon in fostering democracy."

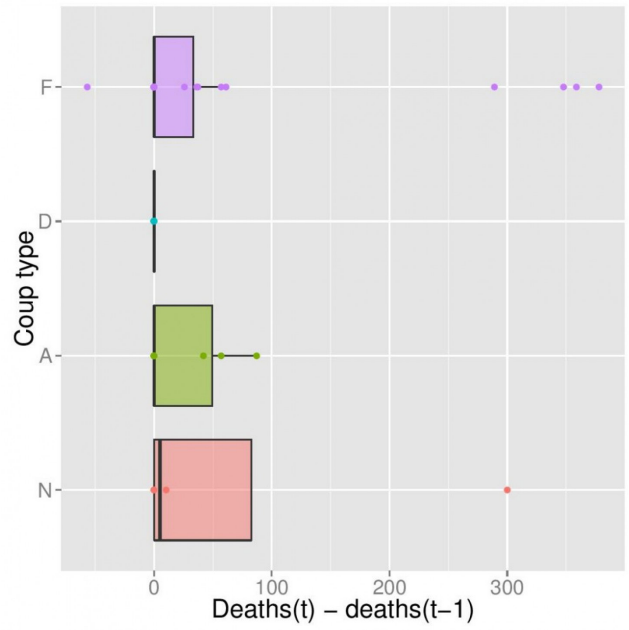

Figure 3

Can coups really foster democracy? In a recent study, we weigh in on this question. We look at the political systems that follow coups against autocrats, as well as the ensuing levels of repression.

We emphasize that though the most basic goal of coups is to bring about changes in leadership, coup plotters often seek more-significant political change. Successful coups against autocrats can therefore lead to three distinct

outcomes: no regime change (such as when the Nigerian military replaced Gen. Yakubu Gowon with Brigadier Murtala Muhammad in 1975, without changing the identity of the group in power or the rules for governing), ouster of the incumbent dictatorship and establishment of a new one (such as when Gen. Idi Amin toppled Milton Obote's dictatorship in Uganda in 1971), and ouster of the dictatorship followed by democratization (such as the two "good coups" in Niger in 1999 and 2010).

We find that since the end of the Cold War, regime change of some sort increasingly follows successful coups (68 percent pre-1990 compared with 90 percent afterward, with the rest simply reshuffling the leadership). Though more of these changes now end in democratization, the most common outcome is still the replacement of one dictatorship by a different group of autocrats. As Figure 1 shows, about half of all coups — 56 percent during the Cold War and 50 percent since the end of it — install new autocratic regimes. On the contrary, only 12 percent of coups during the Cold War installed democracies; that increased to 40 percent post-Cold War. Finally, 32 percent of Cold War coups and 10 percent of post-Cold War coups merely reshuffled the regime's leadership (no regime change). In short, more often than not, coups in dictatorships simply install new dictatorships.

A bevy of statistical tests that take into account a host of potentially confounding factors unearth a similar message: Coups increase the chance of a new dictatorship but do not exert a noticeable effect on the chance of democratization.

The same is true when we incorporate failed coups in our analysis. Though some have argued that coup attempts — whether successful or not — can create opportunities for democratization, our study indicates that this, too, is an unlikely outcome (see Figure 2).

"Good coups" may grab our attention, but the data indicate that they are not the norm. For example, though Nigerien coups in 1999 and 2010 imposed democracy, coups in 1974 and 1996 led to the establishment of new dictatorships.

The bad news does not end there. Using annual data on repression, we find that coups that launch new dictatorships lead to higher levels of repression in the year that follows than existed in the year leading to the coup. Moreover, indaily event data for the 49 coup attempts that have occurred since 1989, we find that there is only one case of a coup followed by a drop in state-caused civilian deaths during the subsequent 12 months.

Figure 3 summarizes our analysis of the 49 coup attempts. The dark lines in the boxes display the median change in state-sanctioned deaths in the 12 months after the coup, versus the 12 months before the coup. The width of the boxes reflects the spread in the distributions. Though we cannot be statistically confident that repression increases after coups — even for reshuffling coups — two things should be noted. First, there is only one case of a (failed) coup followed by a drop in deadly repression. Second, post-coup increases in state violence are common.

The experience of Guinea illustrates the typical pattern. After the death of longtime dictator Lansana Conté, Cpt. Dadis Camara staged a coup on Dec. 23, 2008. Citizens initially welcomed the coup as a chance for greater freedom, but the new government began a campaign of repression soon after. State violence peaked in September 2009, when security forces killed scores of citizens participating in anti-government protests. Rather than opening the door for democracy, the 2008 coup instead brought a new dictatorship to power and plenty of bloodshed.

Though democracies are occasionally established in the wake of coups, our research indicates that more often coups initiate new dictatorships and more human rights violations.

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North Africa: From nascent democracy to entrenched regimes

Five years after the Tunisian revolution, political frustration doesn't diminish progress

By Laryssa Chomiak

It was only half a decade ago that Tunisia dramatically ruptured with its dictatorial past. The self-immolation of a young produce seller in the country's impoverished interior brought to the fore decades of simmering dissent, culminating in the surprise departure of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali who had ruled for 23 consecutive years. Memories of a massive, nation-wide revolutionary movement — images of state violence against protesters, of young Tunisians passionately ripping down an omnipresent public cult of personality, of emotional cries calling for the departure of the dictator, of thousands pouring into the streets of Tunis on Jan. 14, 2011 — stir emotions to this day.

As Tunisia celebrates its fifth anniversary of the revolution, nostalgia for the euphoria of those moments are coupled with currents of discontent and frustration. Such complex and ambiguous feelings about the revolution and its aftermath are important markers for where Tunisia stands today. Yet discordant sentiments should not overshadow the courage and aspirations of this radically transformative moment in Tunisia's history.

Today's Tunisia is a far cry from that of late 2010. Public expressions of citizen demands and new political actors have transformed a previously tightly controlled political space and represent a radical rupture from country's dictatorial past. Jan. 14, 2011 shook an entire system with ideals that reverberated across the region, fundamentally changing the rules of the political game in Tunisia and beyond. It is this moment that Tunisians are celebrating and commemorating today.

Tunisia's 2010-2011 revolutionary movement was a volcanic reaction to decades of heavy political and social repression against dissenters, human-rights activists and workers, who developed a collective yearning for a just and inclusive political and economic order. However, progress toward implementing the "just order" imagined during the dark Ben Ali years has been jarred by spectacular fits and starts. The international spotlight remains fixed on Tunisia, though the country's process is often viewed through different lenses.

Many highlight Tunisia as a success story. Its first election cycle opened the political system to an Ennahda-led coalition of parties, which drafted a celebrated democratic constitution. The second election marked the first defeat of an incumbent Islamist government but also saw its first successful transition of power. The state's progress has been internationally celebrated with the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize and its place among the Forbes top-10 list of start-up friendly countries.

Other observers have focused on negative developments, including the assassination of two leftist politicians, ongoing attacks against security forces, the horrific acts committed against tourists at the Bardo Museum in Tunis and a beach resort in Sousse, the subsequent government crackdown, including arbitrary arrests, and increasing fears of the criminalization of public expression and protest. Moreover, Nidaa Tounes, the ruling party that won the 2014 legislative elections, is collapsing under the weight of infighting, with massive defection among its deputies and members of its political bureau.

While both optimists and pessimists have good reasons for their outlook, analysts' extensive focus on political achievements indicative of liberal democratic consolidation, or the linking of devastating events to a "reversal of democracy," have not only painted a limited and minimalist picture of where Tunisia stands today but have also influenced public opinion. Juxtaposing moments of success with trends of failure, has resulted in an emphasis of an epistemology of absence — the idea that something fundamental is missing in Tunisia, which needs rapid reform, particularly along economic

and security lines, to continue on its democratic track. Most devastatingly, the reform-focused emphasis based on absence and inadequacy, has contributed to popular sentiments of frustration with the post-revolutionary governments and potentially dangerous calls to bring the old order back.

Warnings of an unstable political transition have reinforced these sentiments and have called into question the revolutionary movement, its aspirations, dreams, courage, and most importantly, the fundamental achievements of Tunisians in the last five years. More profoundly, such doubts might explain the tacit acceptance by some of the return of former Ben Ali regime elements into politics, the economy and public life.

The fifth anniversary of the Tunisian revolution provides a moment to reflect and rethink the political trajectory of how a revolution is institutionalized and to separate the very real euphoria of a revolutionary movement from various forms of discontent with post-revolutionary governance.

The most notable achievement of Tunisia's Jan. 14, 2011 revolution — one that astonishingly seems to have been forgotten — is the space for political critique, assembly and speech that the revolution carved and has protected. In only five years, public debate in Tunisia has been marked by contentious and open discussions about previously taboo topics, including religion and political orders, rule of law, stability vs. reform, gay rights, national consensus and political compromise, artistic expression, and the meaning of revolution and a democratic polity. It is the revolution that has made such discourse possible.

Today, Tunisia is celebrating first and foremost a rupture from dictatorship and the dreams and aspiration that have flourished with that political opening. While the last five years have been marked by exemplary political achievements, Tunisians continue to grapple with the legacy of the old regime and the still-open wounds that it created. In the fall, a proposed economic reconciliation bill to grant amnesty to former regime figures stirred public debate and gave rise to a movement called Manich Msameh (I will not forgive). Such public reactions indicate that, despite important institutional advances toward transitional justice via law and the establishment of a Truth Commission, the political and economic abuses of Tunisia's dictatorial past continue to loom in the near memory. Not all Tunisians are willing to sacrifice consensual stability for social peace and public forgiveness.

Such sentiments have been perhaps most successfully addressed through artistic production that confronts citizens with a painful past. Films, such as "Sira'a" (Conflict) recount the political persecution, imprisonment and torture of Islamists, trade unionists and leftists. "Yalan bou el fosfate" (Cursed is the Phospate) shows the 2008 rebellion in the mineral-rich Gafsa region. Meanwhile, the film "Dicta Shot" and the National Museum of the State Security System, opened November 2015, lend insight into the workings of the former regime's security apparatus. At the museum, former political prisoners lead guided tours, recounting their stories of persecution, imprisonment and torture. Screened across Tunisia the evening before the anniversary, Leyla Bouzid's film, "A peine j'ouvre les yeux" (I Can Hardly Open My Eyes), tells the story of young musicians pushing the boundaries of the permissible through lyrics and poetry just months before the revolution. Endeavors like these continuously remind Tunisians of the open wounds still to be healed that transcend the high politics of parties, commissions and elections.

The 2011 revolution fundamentally changed the rules of the political game in Tunisia, and while it remains a source of contention and conflict, this achievement is irreversible. As painful testimonies and artistic representations remind us, today, unlike in 2010, Tunisians can publicly debate and disagree on their new political order. Tunisia is celebrating the anniversary of the end of silence: the irreversible effects of a revolution that has opened space for the outpouring of ideas, political ideologies, criticisms of policy and politicians, commentary and free speech. Public political space has changed radically from a controlled and repressive dictatorship to a significantly more open pitch

on which a battle of ideas can be loudly debated. Rather than foretelling any democratic demise, the ongoing struggle between Tunisia's past and future embodies the spirit of its revolution.

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What did Tunisia's Nobel laureates actually achieve?

By Monica Marks, Oxford University

Now that Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet has won the Nobel Peace Prize, the political crisis it helped resolve in 2013 has become the focus of newfound scrutiny and fascination. Renewed attention is important, because the history of that high-stakes period remains a rough first draft. Once told in full, this story will offer instructive examples for Tunisia and other countries navigating choppy transitional waters. For now, though, the history of this period remains recent and raw, subject to simplified narratives spun by the Dialogue's participant protagonists.

So far, Tunisia's National Dialogue has been heralded as a case of "democracy saved," with Quartet members described as patriotic civil society organizations that placed collective over parochial interests. These organizations are understood to have thrown Tunisia a life preserver in a crisis moment, saving political actors from themselves. The Quartet has been cast as an example of civil society "outsiders," in cooperation with allegedly apolitical technocrats, rescuing elected government – both from its purported incompetence and from unelected opponents intent on dismantling democracy. The Quartet members – especially the UGTT, Tunisia's powerful trade union and the Dialogue's undisputed standard-bearer – are portrayed as standing midway between Tunisia's seemingly familiar secular actors and its "devil-we-know" Islamist political elites, yet simultaneously outside politics.

In this script, the heroic Quartet enables Tunisia to peacefully negotiate the Islamists out of power without completely eroding nascent democratic institutions. Tunisia avoids collapsing into chaos or crude coup-making, like Libya or Egypt, and its transition weathers the storm. Told this way, the lessons of Tunisia's National Dialogue story shine in bold, broad brushstrokes: strong civil society steps in to light the path forward and mediated consensus triumphs over conflict.

However, that's not quite what happened.

The National Dialogue occupied one pivotal moment in a three-way struggle for power among Tunisia's secular left, personified by the UGTT, its Islamist center-right, personified by Ennahda, and a range of political figures and economic elites connected to the old regime, personified by elements of Tunisia's now-ruling party, Nidaa Tunis, and its Employer's Association (UTICA). This three-way struggle has produced a counterbalancing effect that can check excesses of power, in which any two can offset gains or threats posed by the third. But it has also produced

a pattern of self-interested positioning in which these groups' political goals have subsumed the pursuit of core revolutionary goals, such as socio-economic dignity, institutional reform and transitional justice.

The Dialogue's initiator and leader was Tunisia's general trade union, the UGTT – a group whose secular unionist values represent many Tunisians, especially those on the left. From its founding in 1946, UGTT's leadership has seen the union as tasked with a special, dual role: defending the rights of workers, but also – and perhaps more importantly – guaranteeing Tunisia stays on a sovereign, "modern" path. The UGTT coordinated resistance against the French during Tunisia's fight for independence and is imbued with a huge amount of historical and popular legitimacy. Boasting 750,000 members in a population of just under 11 million, it also holds a powerful political bargaining chip: by calling a general strike, UGTT can grind the economy to a standstill.

Despite its legacy and large membership, however, UGTT's leadership was heavily co-opted under Tunisia's first two presidents, Habib Bourgiuba and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Ben Ali took co-optation to a new level, buying off UGTT's top brass with free cars, special access to loans and guarantees of legal immunity. The famous Gafsa mining basin protests of 2008 – whichanticipated Tunisia's revolution – began as a protest of local union activists against UGTT's corrupt national leadership. When revolution struck in December 2010, protests often started from local UGTT branches, but some protesters carried signs indicting union bosses' corruption.

After Ben Ali's departure, the UGTT was eager to re-establish its credibility and reassert political influence. At its December 2011 conference, the UGTT ousted its general secretary and other Ben Ali-era leaders. A reenergized union sought to assert itself as an independent force – one that could powerfully oppose, partner with or even supervise the role of government. This new mission created tension between UGTT and the Troika government. The Troika came to power through Tunisia's first democratic elections in October 2011, and was led by Ennahda, an Islamist party which had been banned for decades. Though it formed a coalition with two smaller, mostly secular parties, Ennahda's victory stunned many secularists, pro-union leftists, and political and economic elites.

UGTT's leadership had long viewed Islamists as a broad and blurry group inherently opposed to "modern" values. Ideological hostilities ran deep. Even some UGTT leaders imprisoned and tortured alongside Ennahda members under the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali tended to label Islamism – rather than old regime authoritarianism – the main threat to unionism. "Bourguiba did what he thought he had to do… he defended republican values," Mongi Ammami, an adviser to UGTT's Secretary General who was imprisoned under Bourguiba, told me in 2014. "But Islamists have a totally different project, *khilafa* [building a caliphate]. It's a fascist discourse."

UGTT leaders also saw Ennahda as a political competitor intent on dismantling unionism. In the years following Tunisa's 2011 revolution, UGTT leaders alleged Ennahda – with the support of purportedly Islamist revolutionary militias, Salafi jihadis and even some members of the Troika coalition party CPR – was attempting to crush the union by infiltrating it from within and attacking it from without. UGTT held large protests against Ennahda in February and December 2012, in response to garbage dumpedoutside union offices and police firing birdshot on union-backed demonstrators respectively. UGTT's leaders strongly believed Ennahda was behind these abuses.

For its part, Ennahda claimed the UGTT was intentionally sabotaging Tunisia's economy to topple the Islamist-led Troika. Ennahda leaders I interviewed throughout 2012 and 2013 described UGTT leaders as ideologically prejudiced against Islamists. Many suggested UGTT's leaders were intentionally taking a hands-off approach to thousands of wildcat strikes happening throughout the country. Some even claimed UGTT, possibly with support from the RCD, was stoking these strikes to make governance an especially impossible job. Research has suggested such assertions, like some of UGTT's claims

against Ennahda, are untrue. Yet with the economy in post-revolutionary free fall, and thoroughly inexperienced in the art of governing, Ennahda leaders tended to approach the UGTT with fear and frustration – unsure how to transform what they perceived as obstructionism into constructive collaboration. One crucial mistake Ennahda leaders made was encouraging their supporters to counter-protest at UGTT demonstrations during 2012. Instead of cooperating to solve Tunisia's socio-economic challenges, UGTT and Ennahda spent much of 2012 locked in a destructive cycle of competing street protests that directly contributed to Tunisia's 2013 political crisis.

Ennahda placed itself in further opposition to the union by awarding public administration jobs to its own supporters. Ennahda leaders denied wrongdoing, claiming that winning parties in established democracies often exercise their prerogative to make political appointments. Yet such actions brought Ennahda into heightened conflict with the UGTT, which condemned it for threatening the public administration's neutrality. Some prominent members of UGTT, along with anti-Islamist parties like Nidaa Tunis and the Popular Front, went further, claiming Ennadha was covertly seeking to Islamicize the Tunisian state.

Escalating tensions between Ennahda and the UGTT played a central role in precipitating the National Dialogue, a project that began a full year earlier than most observers realize. UGTT began the first National Dialogue in June 2012 in an attempt to apply pressure to Ennahda, which its leaders perceived as jeopardizing both the union's strength and the "civic" (i.e. secular) character of the state.

In the months prior, Ennahda – freshly installed in the Constituent Assembly – had engaged in protracted, painstaking debates over whether or not the word "sharia" should appear in Tunisia's new constitution. These conversations generated identity-based controversy and engendered fears among secular and leftist Tunisians that Ennahda would railroad their views, imposing a majoritarian conservatism on the country. UGTT's intervention therefore found strong support among well-established secular civil society organizations that shared its suspicions regarding Ennahda. Two of these, the League of Human Rights and the Bar Association, helped UGTT convene the 2012 Dialogue, forming the base of what later became the Nobel-winning Quartet.

But the 2012 National Dialogue initiative faced strong pushback from Ennadha and its coalition partner, Congress for the Republic (CPR), a stubbornly revolutionary human rights-oriented party. Ennadha and CPR believed the Dialogue was an attempt by unelected actors to dictate the democratic political process. They were especially disturbed by the Dialogue's inclusion of Nidaa Tunis, an unelected party heavily represented by former members of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) party of Ben Ali. Ennahda and CPR viewed the 2012 Dialogue not as a neutral, civil society process but as a vehicle for the old regime to influence Tunisia's freshly elected government and legislature.

However, their position grew less tenable after a series of destabilizing events, including the September 2012 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tunis and two high-profile political assassinations in 2013. The first assassination, on Feb. 6, targeted leftist politician Chokri Belaid, a vocal critic of Ennahda and long-time defender of trade unionists. Though Islamic State militants later claimed responsibility, many secular and leftist Tunisians believed Belaid's assassination proved what they had always suspected: Ennahda's supposedly "moderate" Islamism was just a cover for an Islamo-fascist takeover. Thousands massed to accompany Belaid's coffin to the Djellaz Cemetary in Tunis, and UGTT declared a general strike. The second assassination, on July 25, targeted lesser known Arab nationalist MP Mohamed Brahmi.

Brahmi's assassination ground Tunisia's transition to a standstill. It also set the stage for a dramatic three-way power struggle, pitting Nidaa Tunis, sometimes in criticism of but often in agreement with UGTT, against Ennahda.

The political crisis of summer 2013 was inflamed and exploited by political elites, including UGTT. Nidaa Tunis

was especially well poised to exploit political tensions that, though brewing during 2012, boiled over following the two assassinations. While Tunisia's two best-organized political forces, UGTT and Ennahda, contributed to the development of these tensions, Nidaa Tunis – a charismatically led party with strong ties to the former regimes –capitalized on them the most.

Though Nidaa Tunis enjoyed the support of many Tunisian secularists, leftists and trade unionists, its political machine was fueled by ex-RCD money and manpower. Members of the Employer's Association, which joined the UGTT-led Quartet in August 2013, represented Tunisia's traditional economic elite, and many had a heavily vested interest in maintaining the status quo ante. Together, these groups represented large segments of Tunisia's old political and economic elite – an elite that felt cheated by the victory of three largely non-establishment parties in 2011.

For months prior to Brahmi's assassination, Nidaa's leadership had been calling for not just the resignation of the government but also the dissolution of Tunisia's core transitional body: the elected National Constituent Assembly. Beji Caid Essebsi, Nidaa's founder and president,appeared on Tunisian television February 7, 2013 – one day after Belaid's assassination – to demand the Assembly's resignation. Essebsi and other opponents of Ennahda claimed that replacing the elected Assembly with an unelected group of supposedly apolitical "technocrats" was necessary because the Assembly had overstayed its mandate and was therefore illegitimate. Incidentally, the Assembly's one-year mandate, which international experts labeled unrealistically short, was created by Tunisia's 2011 transitional government, which Essebsi headed .

Against these demands, the UGTT cast itself as a neutral mediator determined to negotiate a peaceful solution to the standoff. In August 2013, UGTT made the surprising decision to invite the Employer's Association, a group with which it had traditionally been at loggerheads, to form a 3+1 mediation Quartet leading the Dialogue. In September 2013, this Quartet presented Ennahda and Nidaa Tunis with a roadmap to resolve their differences through a two-way compromise. Ennahda and its Troika partners would leave government completely within the space of just three weeks, while the Assembly would stay on to complete the constitution and pave the way for Tunisia's 2014 elections.

UGTT and the Employer's Union, the Quartet's other heavyweight, were not neutral actors. Both overlapped politically and ideologically with Nidaa Tunis, and both shared Nidaa's goal of booting Ennahda from power. Yet under the UGTT's leadership, the Quartet opposed Nidaa's demand of dissolving the Constituent Assembly. Had it decided otherwise, Tunisia's transition would likely be in tatters.

The 2013 political crisis presented the UGTT with an important opportunity to regain "national savior" status, recouping lost credibility after decades of regime persecution and manipulation. UGTT burnished its reputation both locally and internationally through its successful mediation efforts. This so-called Bardo Crisis also presented UGTT with a platform on which to display its political and ideological weight. Indeed, though Ennahda ultimately succeeded in negotiating the terms of its exit, the UGTT's chief negotiator Houcine Abbasi did not shy from using union power to cajoledesired concessions.

Ultimately, the National Dialogue managed to quell the highly politicized three-way struggle that produced Tunisia's 2013 political standoff. The Quartet resolved this impasse without dissolving the Constituent Assembly – a crucial decision that helped keep Tunisia's transition afloat. The National Dialogue also forged a fragile consensus among Tunisia's major power players: the UGTT, Ennahda and Tunisia's traditional political and economic elites, represented jointly by Nidaa Tunis and the Employer's Union. Throughout the 2013 Dialogue and the crisis that catalyzed it, each of these groups asserted themselves as powerful forces on Tunisia's post-revolutionary stage, demanding to be integrated – or, in the case of the old elites, re-integrated – in Tunisian politics.

Despite overcoming a major political hurdle, the National Dialogue did little to concretely advance Tunisia's pursuit

of revolutionary goals, including socio-economic dignity, institutional reform, and transitional justice. Rather than collaborating to address these critical issues, the Dialogue's protagonists spent much of 2012 and 2013 aggravating, exploiting, and eventually resolving a diversionary political crisis. That crisis sapped political and civil society leaders' energies at a critical transitional moment during which far-reaching changes may have been possible.

With the Nobel Peace Prize, Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet has been rightly applauded for helping Tunisia overcome a major political crisis. History should learn from their efforts. But history should also remember that the Dialogue's principal protagonists resolved a conflict that, to varying degrees, each one helped create, and that political power players were the primary winners in this saga. For average citizens to taste the fruits of Tunisia's revolution, their leaders must transcend opportunistic infighting that characterized 2012 and 2013 to enact far-reaching economic and institutional reforms. Long after global applause for the Quartet has faded, Tunisians will keep asking what, if any, dividends their revolution has delivered.

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Tunisia's labor union won the Nobel Peace Prize. But can it do its job?

By Ian M. Hartshorn, University of Nevada, Reno

On Jan. 22, Tunisians in the impoverished interior regions of the country took to the streets, demanding increased economic development. Five years ago, similar protests sparked a revolution centered on economic justice. The Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), a working- and middle-class-based labor union, played a leading role in the transition process that followed, winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize as part of the group of civil society organizations credited with preserving Tunisia's democratic transition.

For all these contributions, however, the UGTT is first and foremost a labor union, and the democratic transition has yet to achieve the economic gains of most concern to its constituents. Tunisia's unemployment rate is over 15 percent, worse than before the revolution, with more than half of college educated youth out of work. In a survey last month, 86 percent of Tunisians said the economy was bad or somewhat bad, the highest since 2011. The emergency measures promised by the Cabinet and appeals for calm from the president and prime minister may have ended protests for a moment, but structural problems persist.

Later this year, the UGTT holds its national congress, likely to coincide with regional and municipal elections throughout the country. With no presidential or parliamentary elections until 2019, national power will remain split between the Islamist Ennahda party and the governing Nidaa Tounes, which is riven by internal divisions. This means that the local elections and the UGTT national congress will be an important moment in determining the politics of economic reforms over the next few years. These elections will reveal the balance between competing forces both within the union and the

country: secular and Islamist, coastal and interior, left wing and conservative, with serious ramifications for the unemployed youth who drove the revolution and still await its material benefits.

The UGTT played an outsized role in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Tunisia. The idea of unions playing such a role in a transition isn't a new one, but it cuts against some recent global trends. Unions played a key role in the so-called pacted transitions in places, such as Spain and Portugal, where elites cut deals to usher in liberal democratic rule. Unions have lost some of their power in an era of unruly transitions to — and away from — democracy. Globalization has also restricted some trade unions' traditional power bases, leaving some to question whether they have any role to play.

The UGTT was a political force in the country before the country even existed, helping lead and organize the independence movement that freed Tunisia from French rule. During the long period of dictatorship under the regime of former president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the union played a dual role: loyal part of the regime apparatus and protector of political life under authoritarian rule. The role was an uneasy one, and the union was pushed by its more activist members to join the nascent uprising from 2010 to 2011.

Like all national institutions, the UGTT faced pressure to reform following the revolution. Its efforts culminated in a national conference held in the city of Tabarka in December 2011. This congress selected a new executive board, including unionists with long histories inside the organization as well as some more militant rank-and-file members. Thirteen new members were elected to the leadership, a record for the organization. Throughout 2012, tensions rose between the governing "Troika" of the CPR, Ennahda and Ettakatol and other political forces in the country. The UGTT took up the mantle of opposition, calling for two national strikes during the transition process. The conflict polarized the rank-and-file and some Ennahda-affiliated trade unionists left the movement. The February 2014 ratification of the new constitution helped heal some if not all of these rifts. The strength of the UGTT, as well as their failure to build a robust Islamist alternative, led many Ennahda trade unionists to rejoin the organization.

These overlapping roles as independence-era champions, revolutionary leaders and vanguard of civil society often leave the union struggling to do its most basic job: provide better lives for its membership.

The members of the union span the working and middle classes and are concentrated in the public sector. Economic malaise following the revolution, exacerbated by several assassinations and terrorist attacks, has led to continued high unemployment, and a call for increased flexibility to hire and fire from business leaders, and for potentially shrinking the public sector from budget-conscious politicians. Yet it remains unclear to what extent the UGTT has a plan to deal with any of these issues.

The UGTT can claim several victories on behalf of workers. It has reduced some aspects of the corrupt labor brokerage system that functioned as a patronage network for the old regime. It has reduced the number of employees on short-term, insecure contracts, which often required employees to sign their own resignation letter upon hiring. Successful negotiations raised the minimum wage in the public sector.

In an interview I conducted in July 2015, UGTT Deputy Secretary General Belgacem Ayari laid out an ambitious agenda for the union. It included revising the labor code to come into compliance with international standards, introducing new clauses for gender parity, making it more difficult for employers to lay off workers, and representing more workers in small and medium-sized industries as well as those in the informal sector.

But these accomplishments pale beside the continuing and growing economic problems facing Tunisian workers. The UGTT struggles with its inability to increase employment or to bring about real change in economic development policies in the country's struggling interior. The January

protests starkly illustrated the mounting frustration with the failure of the UGTT to address this economic stagnation.

These failures have led internal critics of the UGTT to question its political focus. As Adnen Hajji, a longtime UGTT activist from the country's industrial heartland, said, "The current situation is catastrophic. … The UGTT has changed its direction. … It is switching its role to a political one, which is sad."

A similar tone is echoed by others across the political spectrum.

In a January interview, Mohammad Lakhdar Laajili, a member of parliament from the Ennahda Party who sits on a committee for regional development, stated, "The challenge is unemployment as well as local and international investment. …We had an article for positive discrimination for the interior regions but have failed to implement it." When asked if long-standing issues of corruption in job placement in the interior region had abated following the revolution, Laajili said, "Of course not."

One of the main problems the UGTT faces is that so few of those protesting in the nation's interior are actually members. As Ayari reported earlier this month, the UGTT's strength is in the public sector.

The vast majority of impoverished Tunisians are either not working — with unemployment levels at more than 40 percent for young people in the interior — or working in the informal sector. While the informal sector includes black market activities, such as drug smuggling and human trafficking, much of it is more benign. Selling small goods without a government license, smuggling cars or industrial parts across the Algerian border to avoid taxes and tariffs, and agricultural work outside the official structures could all be described as the "informal sector" or "parallel economy."

In January, Mustapha Baccouche of the business federation UTICA said that "the parallel economy could grow to exceed legal commercial activity. … We need to bring it into the legal economy." Much of this parallel economy is concentrated in the interior region, along the border with Libya where smuggling is common. But efforts to legalize and formalize these workers has been a challenge for both the union and the business community.

The UGTT therefore faces a stark choice about its future political role. If the union decides to keep its energy and attention focused on its own members, many of whom are middle aged and middle income, the institution will separate itself from the great mass of unemployed youth who helped drive the revolutionary project. On the other hand, the union could recognize these members as the future of Tunisian labor and take a more explicitly class-based role. However, to do so would likely open it to accusations of political partisanship and further alienation from the business community and center-right parties, including Ennahda.

As the union continues to grapple with its role in post-revolutionary Tunisia, the leadership balances its, sometimes conflicting, commitments to the state and its membership. However, if the UGTT fails to connect with disenfranchised youth and unrepresented workers, the recent protests will unlikely be the last.

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How Tunisia's military has changed during its transition to democracy

By Sharanbir (Sharan) Grewal, Princeton University.

Five years after the Arab Spring, only Tunisia remains on the path to democracy. To explain the Tunisian success story, scholars often point to the Tunisian military, which, unlike other militaries in the region, supported its country's revolution and subsequent transition to democracy. Having been sidelined in the police state of now-ousted leader Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the military had little incentive to stand by or return to Tunisia's authoritarian past.

While much ink has been spilled on how the Tunisian military has influenced the democratic transition, little has been written on how the transition has influenced the military. New research published for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace finds that the long-marginalized Tunisian military has begun to see its position improve after the revolution. These changes point to a gradual restructuring of the polity away from Ben Ali's police state and toward one in which the various security apparatuses are more evenly balanced. This rebalancing may have important implications for Tunisia's capacity to confront its grave security threats, for the prospects for security sector reform, and for the likelihood of democratic consolidation.

When Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba, came to power in 1956, the coups he saw in Egypt, Syria and Iraq encouraged him to keep his own military weak and counterbalanced by the police and National Guard. This strategy was tenable in Tunisia, as there was a largely peaceful independence movement, no national army to inherit from the colonial era, and few external security threats throughout most of the 1960s and '70s.

The marginalization of the military intensified under Tunisia's second president, Ben Ali. A military general himself, Ben Ali briefly flirted with the military upon coming to power, but a fictitious military coup attemptconcocted by the envious police and ruling party in 1991 pushed him to sideline the military once more. For the next two decades, Ben Ali privileged the police materially and politically, leaving the military underfunded, underequipped and far from political power. By the time he was ousted in the 2011 revolution, the budget of the Defense Ministry was barely half that of the Interior Ministry.

Since the revolution, however, the balance between the military and police is beginning to be recalibrated. Faced with severe security threats, Tunisia's post-revolution leaders have been forced to strengthen the armed forces. The Defense Ministry's budget has increased more quickly than any other ministry since 2011, growing by an average of 21 percent each year. If current trends continue, it is set to overtake the Interior Ministry's budget and consume the largest share of the government's budget in six to seven years. The military has also enjoyed a steady stream of new weapons contracts and international partnerships, especially with the United States, which tripled military aid to Tunisia in 2015.

Accompanying the army's growing military might is greater political influence. As Tunisia transitioned to a parliamentary system, management of the military shifted from the personalized rule of previous autocrats to a shared responsibility between the president and prime minister. The institutional rivalry between these two executives over the military led each to appoint security councils and a military adviser, inadvertently institutionalizing a larger role for the military in national security issues.

Another indicator of the Tunisian military's growing political importance is its number of appointments to traditionally civilian posts. During Ben Ali's 23-year tenure, only one military officer was appointed as a governor. In just five years after the revolution, 11 current or retired military officers have assumed governorships, some for multiple terms in different governorates.

As the military's power has increased, Tunisia's leaders have been keen to promote loyal officers. Privileging loyalists is not a new strategy, but the changing face of Tunisia's political leadership has spelled a changing demographic composition of the top brass. Prior to the revolution, senior officers most often hailed from Tunis and the Sahel — the wealthy coastal region, which includes Sousse, Monastir and Mahdia, from which Bourguiba and Ben Ali hailed. These areas amounted to just 24 percent of Tunisia's population yet claimed nearly 40 percent of the officers promoted to the Supreme Council of the Armies under Ben Ali.

However, Tunisia's post-revolution leaders gained much of their support from the marginalized interior. In the wake of Egypt's July 2013 coup, these leaders, especially President Moncef Marzouki, ensured the military's loyalty by reshuffling the top brass to bring in officers from these historically underprivileged regions, signaling the end of the favoritism of Tunis and the Sahel.

Perhaps the sharpest break with the Ben Ali era has been the entrance of retired officers into Tunisia's robust civil society. Retired officers have capitalized on the newfound freedom of association to form a number of civil society organizations, lobbying the government and shaping the public debate over the military and its needs.

Retired officers provided guidance during the drafting of the 2014 constitution, consulted presidential candidates on defense policy, and successfully lobbied for transitional justice for officers caught up in the fabricated coup attempt of 1991. These retired officers in civil society are now pushing for a number of reforms to make the military more effective, among them a comprehensive defense policy to be produced by the Ministry of Defense then approved by the parliament.

While three terrorist attacks in 2015 put this issue on the back burner, Defense Minister Farhat Horchani recently renewed his pledge to produce a white paper on defense policy with the help of civil society, parliament and international partners.

These developments suggest that the long-marginalized Tunisian military is becoming a force in its own right. "Without a doubt, things have improved," said retired chief of staff of the armed forces Gen. Said El Kateb. "Ben Ali relied on the police. Now, each institution has seen its capabilities enhanced. The military has importance, the police has importance, the national guard has importance. Each has a unique mission to fulfill."

This rebalancing among Tunisia's security apparatuses — assuming it continues — could have major implications, foremost among them the strengthening of the military's ability to counter terrorism. Second, this rebalancing could spell the relative weakening of the police's lobbying power and potentially an opportunity to pressure the Ministry of the Interior toinitiate internal reforms.

Those interested in democracy may naturally be wary of the growing influence of the military in the new Tunisia. In the short to medium term, however, a military coup is unlikely given that the police and National Guard will remain powerful counterbalancing forces to the military.

The potential threat to democracy in Tunisia is less a coup emanating from the armed forces and more that the current president, Beji Caid Essebsi, could coopt the strengthened military and security forces to repress Tunisians on his behalf, allowing him to govern autocratically.

Growing disillusionment with the transition and a yearning for a strongman to impose order make this a distinct possibility, but the strength of Tunisia's civil society and the commitment of its major political parties to consensus and compromise give hope that this scenario will remain just a possibility.

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The uprisings that weren't

How cronyism and lack of accountability are holding Morocco back

By Merouan Mekouar, York University

In January, Morocco moved to ban the use of voice-over-IP (VoIP) applications under the pretext that widely used applications such as WhatsApp, Viber and Skype were not properly licensed with the Moroccan Telecommunications Regulatory National Agency. Angering citizens who rely on the technology to work, communicate with their relatives abroad or simply keep in touch, the unexpected decision encouraged many to join a large "dislike" campaign of the major telecom companies' Facebook pages, share videos and memes mocking the decision and boycott events sponsored by the corporations.

In September 2015, the Moroccan government prevented Swedish retailer IKEA from opening a newly completed store outside of Casablanca. The project, which cost millions of dollars and was to employ hundreds, had been in the works for more than a year, and many middle class Moroccans were looking forward to the do-it-yourself European box store. The arbitrary decision came after rumors spread that the Swedish government intended to recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in the disputed Western Sahara and was suddenly reversed six months later.

What explains these erratic and unpopular decisions? The recent behavior of Morocco's government suggests that it has not yet overcome the structural flaws of many autocratic regimes. The constitutional reforms that seemed to have allowed the country to move past the protests of 2011 have not generated fundamental changes. Instead, the past five years witnessed the development of an increasingly erratic governing style ill-equipped to deal with the country's serious political, economic and social challenges. Above all, the reforms have failed to generate mechanisms of accountability that might check the power of the monarchy and rationalize policy-making.

The wide range of grievances expressed during the heyday of the 2011 uprisings remain unresolved. The most unaddressed of all is the predatory involvement of the King's entourage in the economy, widespread corruption, economic inequalities and misappropriation of public funds. The Moroccan government and the palace have continued to engage in a "politics of ignoring." Such issues are banned from the media, and placed determinedly outside the realm of legitimate political discourse. Nonetheless, in an era of pervasive social media it is difficult to keep knowledge from a mobilized public.

This has resulted in a series of unpopular political decisions that have been seemingly gratuitous and disconnected from local societal dynamics, and that may ultimately prove disastrous for the stability of the country. Fromgranting a royal pardon to a convicted pedophile to canceling a major international soccer tournament under the dubious pretext that the contest would bring an Ebola outbreak, the governments decisions have repeatedly frustrated large parts of the population for no obvious political gains. In the last few months for instance, the government has intensified its repressive campaigns against pro-democracy activists, particularly investigative journalists and human rights campaigners accused of "undermining state security" or "failing to report foreign funding." It has also used heavy-handed tactics against traditionally supportive constituents, such as the medical community, and is planning to reinstitute French as the main language of education – a policy deemed unacceptable by many conservatives in the country.

The apparent mismatch between governmental policies and public opinion is the result of the structurally unequal distribution of power and political prestige in Morocco. On the one hand, the King is able to use his considerable financial and political prerogatives to conduct ambitious infrastructure projects such as the Noor Project, the world's largest solar plant inaugurated in February 2016 or the transformation of the capital city's riverfront. These

projects reflect positively on the monarch, perpetuating the palace's image as the only effective institution in the country. On the other, the elected government is not only forced to accept these decisions – as well as the budgetary constraints that accompany them – but it is also blamed for all the unpopular decisions needed for everyday governance such as pensions reforms, the end of subsidies of staple products or the reform of the medical and educational sectors.

While the new constitutional text adopted few months after the start of the Arab uprisings in 2011 shields the palace from criticism by making the person of the king "inviolable," the government is left in the uncomfortable position of bearing the responsibility of everyday governance without the freedom to shape the country's strategic policies. As a result, the elected government, constrained both by the palace and the preferences of its constituents, is unable to develop coherent domestic strategies and often forced to improvise ad hoc policies that fail to address the country's structural challenges.

Without the practical application of the democratic ideals enshrined in the new constitution, the country may find itself unable to address the challenges of its future.

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The mixed record of Morocco's February 20 protest movement.

By Adria Lawrence, Yale University

On Feb. 20, 2011, tens of thousands of Moroccans took to the streets in over 50 towns to demand freedom and democracy. In the euphoria that followed the initial protests, 40 civil rights groups and political organizations came together to support the youth of the newly named February 20th movement, which continued to organize nationwide protests in Morocco's major cities and towns. King Mohammed VI responded to the movement's demands on March 9, promising far-reaching constitutional reforms, including an independent judiciary, better rule of law, and an elected government that reflects the will of the people. He appointed a committee to draft constitutional reforms, and on July 1, 2011, they were approved in a nationwide referendum; 98.5 percent of voters favored the changes, according to the Ministry of the Interior. In November of 2011, parliamentary elections brought a new government to power, headed by the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), a moderate Islamist-oriented party that had not previously played a leadership role in parliament.

Were the Moroccan protests successful?

Five years later, how should we think about the consequences of the Arab Spring for Morocco? Were the Moroccan protests successful? Along a number of dimensions, the answer appears to be yes. First, the February 20th movement managed to organize sustained, mass mobilization. The protests that began in February reached their peak in April, a remarkable achievement when we consider that the protests in nearby Tunisia crested with the Jan. 14, 2011, overthrow of President

Ben Ali, less than a month after the self-immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi triggered the initial Arab Spring protests. Protests in Morocco persisted despite the absence of a dramatic achievement such as regime overthrow. They took place in a country where mass protest had historically been tolerated only when it criticized other states and international actors, not the Moroccan regime itself.

Second, the protests did not lead to violence. The monarchy, unlike its counterparts in Bahrain and Syria, chose not to brutally repress the demonstrators, and the protests did not give way to the civil violence that has threatened or undermined stability in other parts of the region since 2011.

Third, the February 20th movement forced the king to respond: he promised reform, changed the constitution, and allowed a new party to form the government; the PJD continues to lead a coalition government, with newelections scheduled for October 2016.

For these reasons, Morocco looks like a pretty successful outcome, particularly in comparison with other states in the region. Indeed, there has been much discussion of a "Moroccan Exception," referring either to the kingdom's overall stability or to the king's savvy move to defuse protest by offering constitutional reforms. The monarchy advertised its reforms as evidence of Morocco's gradual movement toward democratization, an alternative to the authoritarian stasis or instability that prevailed elsewhere.

Foreign leaders praised the king's moderate approach. A year after the Arab Spring, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Morocco "a leader and a model," commending the regime for "holding free and fair elections, empowering the elected parliament, taking other steps to ensure that the government reflects the will of the people."

Was Morocco really a model of peaceful progress toward democracy?

If the reforms had actually empowered parliament and led to a democratic transition, there would be little reason to doubt that the Arab Spring in Morocco was remarkably successful. But our assessment of Morocco's fate five years later should be informed not only by government claims, or by comparing Morocco to other states in the region, but also by asking whether or not the February 20th movement made progress toward its goals. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, who have written extensively on nonviolent resistance, argue that an important metric of movement success is the achievement of campaign objectives.

By this measure, the Arab Spring in Morocco has been an abject failure. Moroccan writer Laila Lalami and independent journalists such as Ahmed Benchemsi, have torn apart the notion of a "Moroccan Exception," arguing that this claim better reflects successful public relations by the monarchy and its foreign supporters than it does the real political situation in Morocco.

The key demand of the February 20th movement was a "king who reigns but does not rule." In interviews with activists during the fall of 2011 and winter 2012, I learned that they envisioned a genuine constitutional monarchy, like England or Spain. If the king could be persuaded to democratize from above, Moroccans would be able to increase their rights while avoiding the violence and instability that has so often accompanied regime overthrow in the Arab world — not just since the Arab Spring, but after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and after the coups that overthrew monarchs in Egypt, Libya, and Iraq during the immediate postcolonial period.

Only Tunisia has fared well after regime change, and it is smaller, wealthier, and has higher rates of literacy than its North African neighbors. "Who is to say we will be like Tunisia?" one activist told me, "We could end up in a civil war, like Syria. It is better to let the king take the lead." The promise of constitutional monarchy — regime change without instability — shaped the February 20th movement's objectives.

The hope that the king would limit his power helps to explain why his promises of reform proved effective in reducing the size of the protests. Many Moroccans

thought that he ought to be given the chance to make meaningful reform, although core activists worried that the king would not voluntarily give up power without continued pressure from the street. Their fears proved well founded. Even as leaders in France, the United States, and elsewhere praised the king for his tolerance and willingness to democratize gradually, Morocco was arguably becoming *less* democratic.

What changed after the Arab Spring protests?

The first sign that the monarchy was not serious about increasing the voice of the people came from the process of constitutional reform itself; activists criticized the regime for appointing a commission, rather than seeking to represent opposition voices, in constructing the constitutional amendments.

Second, the reforms themselves did little to alter the balance of power between the elected parliament and the king and his court (known in Morocco as the *makhzen*). The king retained his prerogatives and parliament remained a neutered institution with a severely fragmented party system that includes over 30 parties. The most important change was a requirement that the king select the prime minister from the party with the most votes, a change that did little to address the parliament's overall weakness.

Third, once the reform process had played out, and media attention was no longer focused on Morocco, the state began a campaign of outright repression of protesters and regime critics. Over the past four years, February 20th activists and independent journalists have been detained and arrested for criticizing the reforms and the regime.

Two years ago, Ali Anouzla, editor-in-chief of the independent online newspaper *Lakome*, which the monarchy has blocked, was arrested for publishing an article that linked to an article in the Spanish newspaper *El País* that discussed a video posted by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Anouzla was charged with providing material assistance to a terrorist group, defending terrorism, and inciting terrorist attacks. Anouzla, now out of jail on conditional leave, still faces these charges. His case demonstrates how the regime has masked its use of repression by claiming to be fighting terrorism.

The regime's crackdown has been savvy, with few outright attacks on protesters. Instead, activists and journalists have been harassed, brought up on minor charges, and jailed for brief periods. These acts appear to be intended to silence criticism and discourage further contentious action in the kingdom.

Morocco five years later

Morocco in 2016 is stable. It is a reliable ally of the United States. It has taken steps to develop its economy and improve the well-being of Moroccans. It is not even close to resembling the most brutal of regimes the Arab world has seen. There are thus many reasons to appreciate the state of affairs in Morocco today.

But it is important not to mistake stasis for progress.

The biggest winner of the Moroccan Arab Spring was the monarchy itself, asI thought it might be on the first anniversary of the Arab spring. The February 20th movement's objective — a monarch constrained by democratic procedures — has not been achieved. Instead, the king paid lip service to democratic aspirations while quietly shutting down critical voices.

Today, the king's power appears more assured than ever. Some February 20th activists say that Moroccan politics has returned to the pre-2011 era, but in fact, circumstances are far less promising for democratic reform now than they were before the Arab Spring. First, the very fact that the regime survived unchanged makes it appear less vulnerable than it was before. Second, the regime has made opposition harder by targeting dissidents and limiting the independent media. Finally, pressure for democratization is unlikely to come from outside Morocco.

The relative importance of Morocco to the United States and France has risen as other allies have fallen or proven less reliable. The United States needs a stable ally in North Africa and does not want to put pressure on the monarchy.

Although stability in Morocco appears assured in the near term, a new article of mine, forthcoming in the *British Journal of Political Science*, suggests that targeted repression may lay the groundwork for future protests. In surveying Moroccan youth, I found that many protest leaders came from families that had experienced repression in the past. They were the sons and daughters of dissidents imprisoned during the era of the current king's father, Hassan II. Their family's experiences of repression left a lasting legacy. When the opportunity arose, these youth were already organized and ready to take to the streets. The repression of the past five years may similarly come back to haunt the regime in future years.

In the long term, the smart way to prevent renewed — and potentially more serious — protests, given that the king's promises of reform were hollow, is for the regime to begin taking meaningful steps toward a constitutional monarchy in which power is more evenly shared with an elected parliament.

By sharing power, the king and the government would also share responsibility for economic growth and development. Dismal employment and growth prospects were a key motivator in 2011, and while the government has taken serious steps to improve the economic situation, growth has slowed and youth unemployment remains high. Democratization alone won't solve these problems, but giving the country as a whole a greater stake in decision making may make it less likely that, the next time around, the king himself is held accountable for the country's challenges.

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What does an amended constitution really change about Algeria?

By John P. Entelis, Fordham University

The Arab Spring came and went with little notice in Algeria. To be sure, all the conditions extant in those Arab countries that underwent violence-induced regime change – political oppression, social alienation, economic marginalization, cultural disillusionment – were equally present in Algeria. These accumulated grievances found expression in nationwide protests and large-scale mobilization of cross sections of Algerian social groups. Yet each and every one of the civil uprisings were effectively contained through a combination of coercive force and sociopolitical incentives intended to pacify immediate demands.

Among the regime's promises made at the time were reform of the political system through significant constitutional changes intended to democratize politics, enhanced transparency and institutionalized rule of law. It was assumed that such constitutional engineering would simultaneously resolve economic, social, cultural and political grievances. Given the opaque nature of Algerian politics, it was no surprise that it took nearly five years before a draft of an amended constitution was made public. It is now ready for parliamentary approval with implementation scheduled for early 2016.

A close reading of this document and a review of the contested politics surrounding its composition, consultation and content suggest that the amended constitution neither promotes the rule of law nor codifies basic democratic principles. Rather, it serves to reinforce the authority of the state at the expense of civil society. Constitutional engineering in Algeria is but another instrument by which an embedded military-industrial complex constructs a legal scaffold to maintain and perpetuate the authority of the state.

Limited consultation among the regime elite

From the outset, the top-down process of constitutional engineering was conceived, constructed and communicated by a small group of regime elites with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika at its head. With little input from civil society, Bouteflika's constitutional committee single-handedly defined what it believed was necessary to articulate a putatively democratic document without fundamentally altering the balance of power.

Formal approval is in the hands of the rubber stamp parliament instead of a national referendum as has often been used for previous instances in which the government has sought a popular mandate for controversial initiatives like Bouteflika's 2006 "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation" that provided blanket amnesty for those involved in human rights violations during the country's 1992 to 2000 bloody civil war.

The independent print media has been particularly critical of the cabal nature of the consultation and decision-making processes involving high level government officials tasked with formally approving the amended constitution. Particularly galling has been the direct participation of Gen. Ahmed Gaid Salah, the army chief of staff and vice minister of defense, in the deliberations. Gaid Salah is among Bouteflika's "power brokers" who unilaterally decided to certify the amended constitution in a meeting on Dec. 14, 2015. This same group — which included Bouteflika, Gaid Salah, Minister of State and presidential counselor Ahmed Ouyahia, Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal, Minister of Justice Tayeb Louh, Vice Minister for National Defense Tayeb Belaiz, and presidential adviser Boualem Bessaïeh — will most likely also be the body that determines the presidential succession as Bouteflika's precarious health makes it unlikely that he will serve out his fourth term to completion in 2019.

What's new, what's not

The new constitution has added numerous amendments, many procedural in nature and others directed at enhancing economic efficiency and transparency. The most "radical" changes, or the lack of changes, are political in nature even if presented as culturally and linguistically inspired. Almost all respond directly to what the government perceived as the principle motivations for the Arab Spring protests.

These proposed amendments include: the recognition of Tamazight as a national and official language along with Arabic and the creation of an Algerian Academy of Berber Language tasked with consolidating its new status as an official language; employment equality for women and men; recognition of youth as a dynamic force in the country's development; freedom to demonstrate peacefully and freedom of the press; only single Algerian nationality qualifies a citizen for public or political positions; dual nationality is no longer recognized in such instances (Art. 51); two-term limit for the presidency of five years each; presidential nomination of a prime minister from the majority party in parliament and of cabinet members after consulting with the prime minister; and the establishment of an independent electoral commission (*Haute Instance Indépendante de Surveillance des Elections*) to monitor all elections in a transparent and impartial manner.

While there has been much debate about creating the post of vice president given the president's uncertain health, no such position has been included in the new constitution.

Each of these newly inscribed constitutional rights is directed at assuaging the discontent so evident among Berbers, women, youth, civil society activists and political opponents, who have long felt that basic democratic freedoms and opportunities have been denied to ordinary Algerian citizens. Yet given the way this document has been conceived, communicated and constructed, almost

all of the discontented groups remain unconvinced that the rhetoric of the state, now imbued in an amended constitution, will in fact be translated into political action.

Contentious politics

Discontent and skepticism about the constitutional promises emerged almost immediately after they were announced in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Criticism was directed at the excessive duration of the deliberations, with the full text of the document only appearing in late 2015 and the absence of a truly open debate process as the nearly five years of preparatory discussions occurred behind closed doors. Once made public, criticism shifted to the document's content itself. While the official media praised its "democratic" character, the new constitution received criticisms from a broad range of ideological orientations, including Louisa Hanoune on the extreme left, Ali Benflis a perennial presidential contender and former prime minister, and Ali Fawzi Rebaïne's AH54, a minor movement of political opposition. Even Amar Saadani, secretary general of the ruling FLN party of which Bouteflika is head, has taken issue with article 51, which disqualifies dual citizens from public positions, as have all overseas Algerians living in France, Canada and elsewhere.

Democratic transition on hold

The new constitution identifies a series of principles that are immune to further amending or changes including the country's Arabic, Muslim, republican and democratic character. To these "unchanging" principles, the proposed amendments have now added a two-term limit for the president. Unless you're an incorrigible gambler, you would not bet against future amendments to this two-term limit principle given the multiple iterations of the Algerian constitution since 1963. Amended versions came out in 1976, 1986, 1989, 1996, 2008 and 2016, so it's unlikely this most recent iteration will be the last.

Key questions remain. Given the current political, security and socioeconomic crises facing the country, does the regime still have the capacity to co-opt opposition and buy social peace in the manner and style once considered "routine" for regime elites? Does the latest iteration of constitutional engineering substitute for previous co-opting strategies or simply represent a continuation of past practices? Is the pressure for fundamental institutional reform from high-profile individuals sufficiently comprehensive and sustained to transition Algeria from its current "competitive authoritarian" mode of governance to a genuine democracy? Finally, does the demilitarization of the Algerian polity now underway serve as a fundamental precondition for the advent of law-bound government, or is civilian rule as devoid of democratic propensities as its military counterpart?

A glance at one measure of law-bound government, Bouteflika's one-sided electoral victories — winning by 73.79 percent in 1999, 85 percent in 2004, 90.24 percent in 2009, and 81.53 percent in 2014 — suggests competitive authoritarianism in Algeria remains alive and well. Such "victories" also reaffirm the general distrust shared by masses and elites toward constitutional engineering as an instrument of democratic legitimacy.

While Algeria may have escaped the worst excesses of the Arab uprisings, the multiple challenges that it has confronted in the past five years since those events remain unchanged. Indeed, given the drastic reduction in hydrocarbon-generated revenues, the regime will have difficulty sustaining both its coercive mode of societal control and its strategy of buying off opposition through rapid infusion of public spending on basic goods and services including raising salaries of state employees and expanding public housing construction. The ongoing civilian-military struggle over who will control the upcoming presidential succession further fuels the uncertainty surrounding Algeria's ability to maintain its outlier status as a stable, secure and successful polity amidst the revolutionary violence that surrounds it.

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Are we seeing Palestine's spring at long last?

By Nathan J. Brown, George Washington University and Daniel Nerenberg, George Washington University

Five years ago, as crowds of Egyptians, Tunisians, Libyans, Syrians, Bahrainis, and Yemenis rose up to demand the fall of their regimes, Palestinians were often seen as sitting out the upheaval. Only now is it apparent that events in Palestine do fit into a broader regional pattern — institutions have decayed; authoritarianism anchored in security services more nakedly dominates governance; youths show signs of political alienation; and political activists show far greater success at challenging existing authorities than in replacing them.

Why the protests failed

Back in 2011, attempts by Palestinian activists to jump-start their own uprising fizzled. It was not for lack of trying. Whereas all other protest movements in the region sought isqat an-nizam (the fall of the regime), Palestinians sought inha' al-inqisam (the end of the division between the West Bank and Gaza) and later al-'awda ila Filastin (return to Palestine). On March 15, Palestinian youth rallied against the split and organized demonstrations in Gaza and the West Bank. On May 15, protests turned their attention to marching on Israel's borders from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and within the West Bank and Gaza. Both efforts attracted much attention but led to little follow-through.

The failure of the protests is easy to explain: first, Palestinians have little faith in revolution as a means of ending the five decades-long occupation. Neither the mass-led first intifada, the armed second intifada, successive rocket salvos from Gaza nor the recent spate of stabbings and car rammings have led Palestinians to believe in the promises of revolutionary activity, or risk the high costs.

Second, the Palestinian national leadership in 2011 was – and still is – deeply divided, weak on legitimacy and incapable of guiding Palestinians on tactics, let alone grand strategy.

Third, Palestinians had no clear target for protests; disaffected by the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas and Israel protesters could not agree on which regime to undo.

Palestinian leaders and institutions have lost legitimacy

But if Palestine's rulers in Ramallah and Gaza won the battle of 2011, they may now be losing the war. It is just not clear who, if anybody, is winning. Deep changes are at work in Palestinian society and politics.

In a recent paper for the Carnegie Endowment, we show how official Palestinian institutions and leaders have lost their moral legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian people. The PLO, the Palestinian Authority, Fatah and even Hamas — the movements and institutions that have emerged over decades to speak on Palestinians' behalf and lead them — have lost their moral claims in the eyes of their own people. They are seen as ineffective and even co-opted; while those who head them continue to occupy positions of authority, they can no longer lead.

The "peace process" that gave birth to the PA works only now in the area of security coordination between PA forces and Israel; in Gaza, Hamas has lost standing but similarly retains control through security forces and political controls that silence other voices.

The new moral vanguard

There is leadership in Palestinian society, but it takes new forms. Since Israel began construction of a wall in 2003, a robust civil society rooted in the discourse of international law has acted independent of Palestinian institutions — and with great effect. Groups like the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the Palestinians Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (also known as Stop the Wall), the Popular Struggle Coordinating Committee (PSCC) and, most vocally, the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement serve as a

loosely organized network of the new moral vanguard, pitching ethical standards to a diverse audience of consumers, laborers, politicians, educators, artists, farmers, and business leaders.

The new moral vanguard is in no position to unseat the official leadership — nor does it wish to — but the new leaders' emphasis on international law has made an indelible mark on resistance discourse.

The future of Palestine

Where are the decline of the old institutions and the rise of a diffuse new moral vanguard leading Palestinians? That is not clear for two reasons — and the despair with the current situation and the desire for something to change means that not everybody is unhappy that the direction is unclear.

First, there has been a shift in Palestinian attention from national strategy and ends to shorter-term tactics. The whole raison d'être of the Palestinian national movement for generations; the effort to build a Palestinian state no longer exercises its former hold. Yes, there is some debate among Palestinians about ultimate goals and strategy, with the two-state solution and diplomacy losing their prominence. But nothing is clearly replacing them.

While we cannot deny that there is some growing interest in various one-state alternatives somehow combining Israelis and Palestinians, what seems more significant is the tendency to defer questions of solutions in favor of developing tactics that can improve the Palestinian position — such as new forms of resistance and boycott.

A new generation of Palestinians that is not cowed by memories of the tribulations of the last uprising is stepping forward. It is already having deep political effects but seems uninterested or unable — at least for now — in leading Palestinians toward any particular strategic goal.

Second, the new forms of politics seem to avoid institutions, at least the ones that exist. Rights-based activists are justifiably concerned that official leadership institutions might coopt and defang their initiatives, much like Jibril Rajoub, a Fatah strongman, did when he championed — and eventually abandoned — the Palestinian effort to eject Israel from FIFA.

Activists have been careful to avoid linking with the PA, PLO, or any of the factions for the preservation of their own autonomy, but they pay a price: with a set of movements that operate outside of official structures, Palestinians will find it difficult to develop strategies, make decisions that bind skeptics or negotiate authoritatively. Like other activists in the Arab world, Palestine's vanguard seems adept at challenging official structures, but incapable of supplanting them.

Only hints of actual change

The current wave of contention — a low-grade and unorganized series of violent attacks against Israeli soldiers, police, and civilians — reflects a tremendous political malaise: leaders are devoid of strategy, incapable of stopping the violence or guiding it toward a specific end; institutions are anemic; and rights-based activists continue their struggle with little chance of undoing the many regimes they oppose.

The result mirrors the status of contentious politics across the Arab world five years after the Arab Spring: robust but diffuse activism, stubborn but tested authoritarianism and only hints of actual political change.

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How Bahrain's crushed uprising spawned the Middle East's sectarianism

By Justin Gengler, Qatar University

Bahrain's mostly forgotten uprising of February 2011 marked the turning point in the so-called Arab Spring. This is true both in the sense that mass demonstrations there were the first to be stamped out successfully by a besieged government, but also because Bahrain witnessed the beginning of, and in many ways supplied the impetus for, the fateful slide away from broad-based opposition movements into the poisonous sectarian and other factional conflicts that have since escaped beyond the Arab Gulf to consume a greater part of the Middle East and North Africa.

The Shiite- and secularist-led protests begun in Bahrain on Feb. 14, 2011, and the ensuing counter-mobilization by the state's mainly Sunni supporters, presaged the sectarianism which would consume so much of the region in the following years. This sectarianism would be driven by political instrumentalization of latent social group divisions, foreign military intervention, and unwitting entanglement by local forces in the broader regional competition for influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Bahrain is thus notable as the first failed revolution among the Arab uprisings, yet far more significant is why its protest movement failed, and what lessons can be drawn from Bahrain's experience.

The perennially contentious politics of Bahrain, a tiny island kingdom in the generally placid waters of the Persian Gulf, are often overlooked as sui generis and so offering little by way of wider insight. This distancing of Bahrain from the broader narrative of the Arab uprisings should not be taken at face value, however. For beneath the notion of Bahraini exceptionalism lies a rhetorical battle of supreme political significance, between those who see in Bahrain an important case of citizen protest in a region not known for political opposition, and those whose who would deny the genuine popularity and legitimacy of the country's February 2011 uprising.

There are, of course, distinctive aspects to Bahrain's experience. Apart from Syria, the country features the region's only remaining ruling ethnic minority in the face of a Shiite Muslim majority. Bahrain is a nominal oil exporter that long ago ran out of oil. Its regime is also a product of conquest by a foreign power — the ruling Al Khalifa family and its Sunni tribal allies — rather than of internal political consolidation such as describes the other Arab Gulf nations.

Bahrain thus developed a different type of rentier state than in other Gulf monarchies. Bahrain is an oil-dependent welfare state that does not possess sufficient oil revenues to provide for the welfare of all its citizens, Sunni and Shi'i, nor has a particular political or normative interest in doing so. Rather than attempt to buy universal political support through financial patronage, Bahrain has resorted instead to a more economical (and politically expedient) ruling strategy: to extend a disproportionate share of state largesse to a core Sunni tribal support base, whose members then have a direct economic-cum-political stake in defending against challenges to the system.

Before and after the uprising, Bahraini Shiites are far less likely than Sunnis to obtain jobs in the public sector, and they are almost entirely disqualified from police and military service. Moreover, those Shiites who do hold government jobs fill lower ranking occupations on average compared to equally-qualified Sunnis. Public services in the highly-segregated neighborhoods and villages where a majority of Shiites reside tend to be inferior to those in Sunni-dominated areas. Finally, Shiite citizens are systematically underrepresented in Bahrain's elected lower house of parliament due to rampant electoral gerrymandering. In the last fully-contested election in 2010, for example, the average Shiite-majority districtrepresented about 9,500 electors, the average Sunni district only about 6,000.

Not surprisingly, this stark inequality in distribution of economic and political resources has fomented widespread disaffection punctuated by outright revolt among those second-class citizens left out of Bahrain's implicit ruling bargain. This includes, importantly, many Sunnis of non-tribal pedigree who share most of the same grievances articulated by the mainstream Shiite opposition: a lack of public housing and affordable land, wasteful corruption, and the dilution of Bahraini identity and nationality through the government's decade-long program of naturalizing foreign Sunnis for service in the police and military.

For Bahrain's rulers, then, the critical task has always been to ensure that these two constituencies — marginalized Shiites and similarly aggrieved but usually apolitical Sunnis — do not join together in a socially cross-cutting movement in pursuit of substantive reform. And, fortunately for the Al Khalifa but unfortunately for the region, Bahrain has relied to this end on a potent tool: the cultivation of distrust, fear, and even hatred between its two sectarian communities. Even before February 2011, government opposition had been made synonymous with an Iranian-inspired project to take control over the country in the manner of post-2003 Iraq. Afraid of being made pawns in a wider Shiite conspiracy, ordinary Sunnis have been loath to add their dissenting voices, and those who dare to do so are targeted for special retribution.

Beyond the utter undoing of Bahrain's social fabric, this sectarian stratagem has had the equally disastrous effect of exporting the country's internal political conflict abroad. The swift labeling of the February 14 uprising as an Iranian-backed coup attempt, followed by the decisive military intervention by Saudi Arabia to end mass protests, transformed a fundamentally domestic event into a new regional cold war. Incited by governments to take up the fight against the Shiite enemy, many Gulf Sunnis ultimately accepted the challenge in places like Syria, Iraq, and later Yemen, including severalBahraini nationals who would assume important positions within the Islamic State group.

However, rather than elicit diplomatic pressure from the United States, Britain and other allies with an interest in resolving Bahrain's domestic dispute, the regionalization of the conflict paradoxically afforded Bahrain an even freer hand to act internally. For now the West required the Gulf states' support in combating the very terrorist forces they helped create; and the price, in addition to long-coveted new military hardware, was to butt out of local politics. Five years after the uprising, then, all of Bahrain's opposition leaders remain in prison, opposition parties remain outside of parliament, and no serious political dialogue — to say nothing of political reform — is being entertained.

Yet there are signs that outside pressure of a different sort may soon demand some compromise from Bahrain's rulers. Where the international community has equivocated, the global oil market has come calling without regard for political convenience. Having run a fiscal deficit each year since 2011 and facing a potential shortfall of more than $13 billion — nearly a third of GDP — in 2015-2016 alone, Bahrain has followed the lead of other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations in beginning to scale back the financially onerous economic subsidies enjoyed by citizens on goods ranging from meat and fish to gasoline and electricity. At the same time, GCC governments have announced plans to raise new sources of non-oil revenue through previously-unthinkable excise and value-added taxes. And the reaction by Bahrain's supposedly "opposition-less" parliament has been anything but.

On Jan. 11, the Bahraini cabinet announced a 40 to 60 percent increase in gasoline prices to take effect within mere hours. The following day, lawmakers stormed out of parliament in protest, some threatening to resign. An emergency session held a week later ended in similar chaos, with a bloc of MPs refusing to hold regular sessions until the ministers of energy and finance appeared before the chamber for interpolation. According to the chairman of the parliamentary committee tasked with quizzing the ministers, "MPs want the government to realize that they are not puppets and should have a say in what should be done to tackle the financial crisis."

To be sure, if there is any issue with the potential to galvanize Bahrainis in spite of the sectarian barriers erected over the past five years, it is the state's gradual

introduction of taxation and simultaneous withdrawal of welfare benefits that citizens have come to expect and depend upon since the beginning of the oil era, and whose retrenchment impacts individuals irrespective of sect or tribe. In Bahrain and elsewhere, Gulf leaders appear confident that this unilateral revision of the longstanding social contract between citizens and rulers can be implemented without a corresponding alteration of the political power structure. One wonders how far ordinary citizens will agree.

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Five years after Arab uprisings, security trumps reforms in Jordan

By Curtis R. Ryan, Appalachian State University

Prior to King Abdullah II's visit to Washington last week, President Obama signed the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act, increasing U.S. military support to Jordan to $450 million and reaffirming the depth of the alliance. The additional funding is meant to shore up Jordan's border security and help it deal with challenges such as refugee flows and the rise of the Islamic State. So much has changed from five years ago, when Jordan was squarely focused on internal challenges and questions of domestic reform rather than external security threats.

On Jan. 14, 2011, Jordanian opposition forces marched in a "Day of Anger," drawing as many as 15,000 protesters in what organizers argued was the largest demonstration in Jordanian history. A leader of Jordan's Islamist movement afterward wrote that the "Jordanian Spring" had begun. There would be other demonstrations to follow, almost every Friday in Amman and in other towns and cities throughout 2011 and 2012. Now, a mere five years later, that all seems like the distant past — to the relief of many regime loyalists but much to the chagrin of those in Jordan's opposition who had hoped for far greater reform and change.

Detractors sometimes refer to Jordan as the Hashemite Kingdom of Boredom — implying that, among other things, nothing much happens there. Although this has always been an inaccurate portrayal of Jordan and its politics, many Jordanians presently might prefer that appellation over the chaos that characterizes most of their neighbors. Syria remains aflame in a devastating civil war. Iraq remains a semi-sovereign state attempting to rebuild itself in the wake of the U.S. invasion and occupation, and both states have lost lives and territory to the Islamic State.

Compared to other Arab states, Jordan's relative stability and security stand in stark contrast. For most Jordanians, it is also a welcome distinction. But that should not be mistakenly conflated with acceptance of the status quo. Jordan has had its own unique experience during the Arab Spring years, and today there is a pervasive sense not of finality or of conclusion, but rather of waiting to see what is in store for the Hashemite Kingdom.

Like their counterparts in other Arab countries, Jordanian demonstrators marched against the government, calling for change. But while Egyptian and Tunisian demonstrators

called for the overthrow of their regimes, Jordanian protesters demanded the ouster of the prime minister and his cabinet, not the toppling of the monarchy. Protesters got their wish, as the king dismissed the government in a country used to fairly frequent turnover in prime ministers and cabinets.

But the Jordanian version of the Arab Spring continued. Protesters continued to march and demand more significant change. At moments, the opposition looked like it would coalesce into a large and broad-based national movement. But fissures very quickly appeared as different movements were sometimes working together, sometimes at odds.

Jordan's traditional opposition of leftist parties and Islamist activists — including the Muslim Brotherhood and its related political party, the Islamic Action Front — called for reform, democratization and a constitutional monarchy. But other movements also emerged, including a new opposition based especially among East Jordanian tribes.

A group of tribal leaders and an influential organization of retired military officers each criticized the state and the policies of the monarchy in particular. Youth-based and tribal-linked movements collectively calling themselves Herak (the Movement) were harshly critical of the economic development strategies pursued by the regime.

They demanded that the regime restore the formerly larger state role in providing public sector employment. But many Herak activists also echoed the traditional opposition in calling for greater democratization. New and old forms of opposition stressed the problem of corruption, which many associated with the neoliberal development strategy of shifting Jordan's large public sector toward ever more privatization.

Beneath all this remains a subtext of identity politics. Although often depicted as a dichotomy between the Palestinian-Jordanian urban centers of the private sector and the largely East and tribal Jordanian towns dominating the public sector, the reality is far more complicated.

Identity lines are not always as stark as they appear, but they do matter. In times of political stress, the lines can come into focus very quickly, especially when manipulated by cynical elites who have an interest in turning otherwise legitimate public demands into identity politics issues, undermining them as truly national issues. Many youth activists and reformers consciously eschewed the old school and knee-jerk tendency to open up such intra-ethnic fissures, but such divisive tactics are often used by others to divide the opposition nonetheless.

Meanwhile, the regime argued that the Arab Spring was not just a challenge, but also an opportunity to push through a reform process that had lain dormant in the preceding 10 years. New national committees and commissions were established to propose reforms and revise the constitution. The regime pushed through new laws on elections and political parties, it amended the constitution, established a constitutional court, an anti-corruption commission and an independent electoral commission, and it invited international expertise and international observers to help with newnational parliamentary elections in 2013.

The regime suggested that Jordan was moving toward parliamentary governments, and MPs were consulted prior to the naming of a new government, which turned out to be a new term for the incumbent government of Prime Minister Abdullah al-Nsour. For many in the regime, Jordan was and is a model for the rest of the region to follow and even emulate. The king himself issued a series of discussion papers on various aspects of the reform process.

Critics, in contrast, argue that all the reforms still amount to limited and cosmetic change. Power remains concentrated in the monarchy. Parliament remains weak and is drawn from heavily gerrymandered districts. The prime minister and cabinet are royal appointees rather than members of an elected parliament. And corruption remains a major concern for almost all Jordanians.

Although most of these critics remain deeply unconvinced about the depth of reform in the kingdom, they have been

divided by other largely external events. Jordan's political debates would be difficult enough without its regional setting, but its political geography leaves it especially vulnerable to conflicts across its borders — and Syria, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia provided no shortage of challenges.

The "story" of Jordan and the Arab Spring is therefore not just one of a domestic struggle between a regime and its often-divided opposition. It is also a story of Jordan in the crossfire of regional disasters from the Syrian civil war to the rise of the Islamic State. Added to these concerns, Jordan is also home to at least 630,000 Syrian refugees and about 600,000 additional Syrians not officially registered as refugees — all in a country of less than 7 million people. Dealing with the refugee crisis and addressing the real fears of militancy and terrorism from the Islamic State are almost all-consuming for the regime and the state.

Many opposition forces have pulled back, essentially waiting for Jordan to survive this latest set of regional challenges, before pressing harder for an agenda of greater domestic change. This importantly implies a loyal opposition, although one that has still not acquiesced to the status quo.

The opposition is divided, in part, over Jordan's role in the Syrian war. Many in Jordan's traditional leftist opposition supported Assad, while Islamists supported rebel forces, and secular liberals found both sides wanting. Meanwhile, Jordan's oldest opposition force — the Muslim Brotherhood — has divided into two different groups, each claiming the mantle of the original. One is more internationalist, hawkish and wants to maintain links to counterparts in Egypt and to Hamas, while the other is more domestically oriented, dovish and seeks to create more of a moderate Islamist and consummately Jordanian, rather than regional, version of the movement. Both sides now struggle over the support of rank-and-file members.

Opposition elements of all types — leftists, liberals, Islamists, the Herak and others — are all in varying degrees of stasis. They have not vanished, nor have any of the main grievances that brought people to the streets in the first place in 2010 and 2011. Protests do still occur, but are more likely to focus on single and specific issues, such anti-nuclear activism, environmentalist efforts to save Bergesh Forest or the wide-ranging coalition against buying gas from Israel. Other forms of protest have proven more volatile, especially those over economic issues, such as lifting fuel subsidies, that hit people hard at a time when the cost of living is outrageously high.

Many Jordanians – regime supporters and regime critics alike – agree that Jordan's safety must come first, and they value the stability and security that Jordan has maintained thus far in the Arab Spring period. But most issues that started the entire regional process remain unresolved. Jordan has taken initial reform steps, but the rest of its story remains unwritten. Questions regarding the depth of reform and change remain at the forefront of the agenda for all the country's many opposition elements and reform activists. Events of the last few days underscore Jordan's often competing reform and security challenges. Parliament passed the latest electoral law, but even as debates continued, the long feared ISIS threat seemed to emerge within Jordan itself, as security forces battled militants in a counterterrorism operation in the northern city of Irbid.

Jordan's challenges are severe, and while its opposition may be divided and less vocal as the country faces domestic and external threats to its stability, it has not been silenced. In the five years since the start of the regional "Arab Spring," the kingdom has avoided the revolutions and civil wars that have rocked much of the region, but Jordan's key challenges going forward will continue to include engaging in deeper levels of domestic political reform, stabilizing and making more equitable its aid-dependent economy, dealing with its massive refugee crisis, and confronting the challenges of Islamic State militancy both within Jordan and across its borders.

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Lebanese protesters united against garbage... and sectarianism

Bassel F. Salloukh, Lebanese American University in Beirut

Protests initiated by "You Stink" activists against Lebanon's garbage crisis and the government's infamous corruption and dysfunction continue to grow. What insight can this garbage crisis and mounting public frustration provide us about not only the country's sectarian political system but also broader regional trends?

Political scientists have long debated how best to engineer durable peace and democracy in post-conflict, plural societies. Lebanon is an example of a consociational political system in which the political elites of the various sectarian groups govern based on a predefined but static power-sharing agreement. Recent scholarship on post-conflict power-sharing agreements has highlighted the institutional variations between corporate consociation, which considers sectarian identities unchanging and constitute the main markers of political identity and, alternatively, liberal consociation, which regards political identity as malleable and shaped by institutional design, namely electoral law and federal structure. Consequently, these different power-sharing systems affect the incentive structures driving political identification and mobilization in post-conflict societies in different ways.

With its emphasis on predetermined sectarian identities, Lebanon's brand of corporate consociationalism is a textbook case of how not to engineer post-conflict power-sharing arrangements. As my co-authors and I show in our new book, "The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon," the key to Lebanon's resilient corporate consociational political system is a sectarian political economy and ideological hegemony that has been reproduced through a complex ensemble of institutional, clientelist and discursive practices.

In typical clientelist sectarian fashion, the garbage crisis exploded when disagreements over commissions and profit shares among members of the sectarian/political cum economic elite surfaced. The public soon discovered that the cost of garbage collection in Lebanon far outstrips that of any other country in the region. Much like other sectors of the Lebanese economy — especially electricity, telecommunications, customs and port facilities, T-bills, stone quarries, maritime properties, and government contracts — garbage collection and waste management, it turns out, is primarily a medium to siphon off state resources into the sectarian/political elite's ever-growing coffers. To be sure, other postwar sectors have had a far more damaging effect on the economy and public debt. However, the symbolic indignity of this particular episode has underlined the insouciance of a postwar sectarian/political elite bent on deploying the state's public finances and the country's resources to serve their private fortunes and those of their business partners, without the slightest regard for people's well-being, the country's aesthetic capital or environmental health.

Demonstrations organized by You Stink soon attracted other civil society groups and ordinary citizens fed up with the sectarian political system and the country's economic nosedive. A massive rally in Martyrs' Square on Aug. 29 protesting the sectarian/political elite's monopoly over political and economic life drew Lebanese citizens from different sects, classes, ages and regions. It assumed the air of an anti-sectarian carnival of national conviviality, with people determined to creatively express their national, rather than sectarian, affiliations. You Stink activists followed their words with deeds, entering the Environment Ministry and organizing a peaceful sit-in to demand the minister's resignation.

Using the democratic logic of accountability — a foreign concept in the lexicon of Lebanon's institutionally entrenched and clientelist sectarian system — the activists contended that since the environment minister had failed to resolve the garbage crisis, he should tender his resignation. Not so by the logic of the sectarian system, however. The Interior Ministry's riot police stormed the

building and evicted the protesters. Having placed the country on political pause for years awaiting the fog of the region's geopolitical battles to clear, the sectarian/political elite converged to condemn You Stink's bravados and reassert their power.

Indeed, we should not underestimate the sectarian system's political economy and ideological hegemony: Too many people continue to benefit from the sectarian system's neopatrimonial networks. The system distorts their incentive structures, creating an environment of general lawlessness that protects all types of criminalities. The sectarian/political elite possess substantial institutional, material, legal and para-legal coercive capabilities. Their ideological hegemony, albeit not immune to challenge, remains strong, cemented by a network of corporatist institutions deployed to produce disciplined and docile sectarian subjects. Their ability to mobilize crowds in the name of the sect still outnumbers those of civil activists, at least for now. Their strategy vis-a-vis the protesters and sit-ins includes a combination of containment, infiltration, counter-mobilization, disinformation and, ultimately, brute force. Their aim is to turn this latest challenge to their sectarian political economy and ideological hegemony into a late summer ephemeral nightmare.

And yet this is precisely why the struggle against Lebanon's sectarian system must be invariably creative and protractive — a series of ever-growing practices of resistance rather than a lightning strike. Indeed creativity is the hallmark strategy of You Stink and other groups, as they demand accountability, rule of law, a new electoral law and respect for basic civil rights. Another mass rally was held Sept. 9 to maintain the momentum of the protests, and many activists have gone on a hunger strike to force the resignation of the environment minister.

Some might contend that Lebanon is a regional outlier, that its sectarian contests are idiosyncratic, the consequence of an entrenched corporate consociational power-sharing agreement and a stubborn overlap between domestic and geopolitical contests. However, recent developments in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria seem to suggest that, unless the current regional trend is reversed, Lebanon may actually be the future of the Arab world rather than its past. Popular uprisings and the sectarianization and spread of geopolitical battles unleashed by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq are consecrating tribal, ethnic and sectarian identities as the main markers of political mobilization and identification across the region.

This shift has nothing to do with a resurgence of traditional primordial sentiments. The invention or reinvention of ethnic, tribal or sectarian identities underway in the Arab world is instead driven by specific structural, situational and geopolitical factors. Be that as it may, these new identities may soon become reified, presumed by their adherents as unchanging, primordial givens. More ominously, prospective post-conflict political pacts may replicate Lebanon's experience by institutionalizing corporate, predetermined rather than liberal, self-determined power-sharing consociational arrangements, with all the former's instability and reproduction of sectarian and ethnic identities.

Despite this worrying regional trend, the anti-sectarian protests underway in Lebanon suggest that the institutionalization of corporate consociational power-sharing arrangements is not an irreversible process. Similar protests in Iraq are also an indictment of the failure of the post-Saddam sectarian/political elite to manage their own power-sharing arrangement, a direct result of the central government's corrupt and sectarian policies. Demonstrators in Lebanon and Iraq are rallying behind the same set of basic demands: political accountability, institutional reforms, better living and economic conditions, and an end to the squandering of public resources along sectarian clientelist lines. In sum, they want a reorganization of the political order that moves beyond narrow chauvinistic sectarian calculations and opens up space for anti-sectarian actors in an inclusive civil state.

Whether they are gathering in Beirut or Baghdad, these protesters are risking life and limb to show that there are always better alternatives to established corporate sectarian orders and those nascent institutions currently

being constructed. Though demonstrators may be struggling against far more powerful and more organized opponents, and the resurgent sectarian regional tide is operating against them, their opposition to the sectarian system's disciplinary and illicit practices helps demystify its ideological hegemony, slowly but surely liberating more and more people from its shackles. Perhaps one day their efforts and sacrifices, like the ones of those who came before them and will undoubtedly follow, will sweep away the political garbage created by sectarianism and build fairer and more accountable political orders.

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Failed states and civil wars

Why the United States hasn't intervened in Syria

By Steven Heydemann, Smith College

On March 17, Syria's uprising will enter its sixth bloodstained year. The country that existed before the uprising is gone. Its people have been ravaged and dispossessed. Its economy destroyed. Its terrain laid waste by its own leaders and their international patrons.

Syria today has become a case study in the globalization of violence, subject to the predations of a multinational stew of mercenaries, warlords, bandits and thugs. Its sovereignty has been fatally compromised, bartered away by a regime whose survival has always been its sole raison d'être. The armed opposition fights on, still fragmented, still poorly served by its political leaders, still outgunned and more desperate than at any time in the past five years. As this grim anniversary approaches, Russia and Iran have assured the regime's survival — at least for now — even as the devastation they have wreaked bleeds into the Levant and across the Aegean into Europe.

There is no shortage of causes for Syria's erasure as a state. The brutality with which the Assad regime has pursued its own survival looms largest but it by no means stands alone. The Islamic State, aided and abetted by the Assad regime, has absorbed large pieces of Syrian territory into its so-called Caliphate. Syria's fractious opposition, dependent on its regional patrons and captive to the personal ambitions of its leaders, is certainly complicit in the destruction of its homeland. So too are the neglect and incoherence of the "Friends of Syria" group established in 2011 to coordinate international support to the opposition under the leadership of the U.S. and its Western allies. Despite President Obama's declaration in August 2011 that it was time for Assad to step aside, the administration's calculus of interests, constraints and costs quickly led it to view Syria and Syrians as expendable.

Was Syria's collapse inevitable once the Assad regime moved to crush a national protest movement, setting in motion a downward spiral of escalating violence? Was there anything the United States, in particular, could have done to mitigate the conflict, shift the trajectory of the uprising and help bring about a meaningful political transition along the lines set out in the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012? If such options were available, as former senior figures in the Obama administration have acknowledged publicly after leaving office, why did the United States not pursue them?

What has been most evident in the administration's approach to Syria is a deep cognitive bias against risk. For the president and his advisers, the possibility that U.S. actions might have negative consequences has consistently loomed larger than the actual and visibly negative effects of inaction. Even as Syria's conflict escalated and the costs of inaction have mounted, the administration's risk calculus has remained static. White House staff have consistently viewed the payoffs from action as uncertain, the potential benefits as low and the likely costs as unacceptably high. Senior officials, including Obama, regularly justify their approach on the grounds that engagement would inevitably lead to mission creep, drawing the United States into an Afghan-style quagmire — a view reinforced by administration concerns about the difficulty of controlling the cascade effects that often follow what begin as limited interventions.

Given its intense risk aversion, the administration has pursued a minimalist approach in dealing with the Syrian conflict. Apart from its air campaign against the Islamic State, it has directed most of its efforts and a majority of its resources to mitigating the war's humanitarian effects. It has done far less to address its principle cause — the behavior of the Assad regime. Instead, its aim has been to contain the Syrian conflict and keep violence within Syria's borders.

The conflict, however, has not cooperated. Violence has metastasized, spilling millions of desperate refugees

outward. Regional actors and radicalized fighters have flowed inward, transforming a local insurgency into a "mini world war."

In rejecting engagement, the legacies of failed interventions weigh heavily on the Obama administration. Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the experience of Libya, where the removal of Moammar Gaddafi and the subsequent collapse of the Libyan state happened under Obama's watch, stand as object lessons for the administration in the limits of military power and the disastrous consequences that U.S. interventions can unleash.

The administration's reliance on "lessons learned" from past interventions, moreover, is not simply an ad hoc justification for avoiding engagement in Syria's messy conflict. Historical analogies have played a major role in defining the principles that guide his approach to Syria. As expressed in his final State of the Union address, these include setting a high bar for determining when U.S. interests are at stake, restraint in the use of military force, burden sharing, the need for local actors to lead in solving local problems and skepticism about the capacity of the U.S. to build nations.

An intellectually honest critique of Obama's Syria policy has to acknowledge the legitimacy of his skepticism and the validity of the lessons he has drawn from the experiences of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Too often, U.S. interventions have not been effective. In many cases they have done more harm than good. The United States does regime change badly. Why should Syria be different?

Certainly, Syria bears some resemblance to Iraq and Afghanistan, but the differences are significant, as well. Unlike Syria, neither Iraq nor Afghanistan experienced a national uprising that sought a peaceful process of political transition. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States achieved regime change through direct military interventions. In Syria, "boots on the ground" in the sense of a large-scale U.S. military presence has never been a serious option. American intervention has never been sought by the Syrian opposition or recommended by credible voices in the United States. Syrian opposition activists have requested U.S. support, not participation in combat operations.

Advocates of a more assertive U.S. policy in Syria have sought to empower local moderates, shift the military balance of power on the ground and facilitate a negotiated political transition that would preserve state institutions, leave in place elements of the Assad regime that did not have blood on their hands, and guarantee the security of minorities, including the Alawi community.

Did such moderates exist? Did the United States know enough about them to justify providing support? Would U.S. support for the armed opposition have made a difference? On these critical issues administration claims have been stunningly inconsistent and — as former U.S. ambassador to Syria Robert Ford acknowledged after resigning his post — at odds with the empirical evidence.

At different times, the White House has claimed to know too little about the opposition and too much. It has characterized opposition fighters as untrained do-gooders and ruthless fanatics. Yet for at least the first phase of the uprising, as the White House was well aware, a majority of the armed opposition consisted of a highly dispersed and decentralized network of local civil defense "battalions" that operated alongside of and at times in coordination with larger, more mobile franchise battalions made up largely of defectors from the Syrian army. Foreign fighters were barely present. Extremist ideologies were held by a small minority of opposition fighters — at most.

While the opposition's lack of coherence has made it harder to deal with, the fighters succeeded in pushing the combined might of the Assad regime to the point of regime collapse, not once but three times: in mid-2012, again in mid-2013 and in the summer of 2015. Each time, external intervention from the regime's backers, unmatched by comparable support to the opposition, tipped the military balance back in the regime's favor, forestalling conditions that might have forced the regime into negotiations.

Even after large-scale Iranian intervention in 2013 to prevent the regime's fall, the armed opposition continued to gain ground. By mid-2015, opposition gains had pushed the Assad regime into such a precarious position that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his military to intervene. It was only well into the uprising, and in response to the failure of the United States and its allies to respond to appeals for assistance, that the armed opposition underwent a process of radicalization. Even then, as late as January 2014, moderate battalions affiliated with the Free Syrian Army defeated and pushed the Islamic State units out of positions they had seized across opposition-held areas of northern and eastern Syria, contradicting narratives about the unchecked extremism of the opposition.

Because it misread processes of radicalization, the White House missed low-risk opportunities to check the growth of extremist groups like Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State. It viewed rising extremism as revealing something essential and intrinsic about opposition fighters, seeing their affiliation with extremist groups as an expression of the fighters' ideological commitment to jihadist worldviews. Instead, as numerous interviews with fighters make clear, radicalization was instrumental rather than ideological. The absence of support from the West created incentives for Syrian fighters to auction their support to the most extreme bidders, regardless of their worldviews.

Syrian fighters followed resources, not beliefs. Affiliation did not always signal loyalty. Compliance did not always imply commitment. In such cases, more robust U.S. support for moderate armed groups might well have stemmed processes of radicalization that were principally instrumental and not ideological. Even now this option, which has never been seriously tested by the administration — its "train and equip" program was a Rube Goldberg contraption designed to fail — could make a difference in shoring up the moderate opposition.

What about sectarianism? Did Syria's sectarian make-up doom it to follow Iraq down the path of sectarian polarization, extremism and territorial fragmentation? Did demographics and history determine Syria's fate? Only if we accept that these conditions are the causes of violence — a product of the "ancient hatreds" and not its effects. In the Syrian case, however, the evidence points in the opposite direction: polarization, extremism and fragmentation are the effects of escalating violence, not its causes. Participants in the uprising, as well as forthcoming research by Princeton political scientist Kevin Mazur, highlight the regime's instrumental use of violence to exacerbate sectarian tensions. Recent survey data reflect the impact of sectarian polarization in Syria after years of conflict, but also the extent to which Syrians continue to express tolerance and a desire for cross-sectarian compromises in the name of peace.

Despite deep flaws in the assumptions underlying the administration's policy, advocates of engagement inevitably run up against the ultimate defense of inaction: Syria just isn't worth it. Supporters of the administration's approach regularly fall back on the claim that the Syrian conflict is simply not central to U.S. strategic interests. Politically, they note, Syria has always been an adversary to the United States. Economically, its ties to the United States are trivial. However wrenching the conflict might be, the United States has little at stake in its outcome.

The only basis on which such a claim can stand, however, is to adopt an anachronistic, rigid conception of state interest — a conception the administration knows is inadequate in an era of hyper-globalization and increasingly porous state borders. Does the United States have an interest in preventing atrocities and supporting international mechanisms, such as Responsibility to Protect? Is it a matter of interest to the United States whether Iran consolidates its position as regional hegemon in the Arab east? Should the stability of Syria's neighbors matter to the United States? Is the stability of the European Union in America's interest? Does the United States have an interest in preserving a liberal international order that constrains authoritarian regimes such as Russia and Iran, including by raising the costs of aggression, whether in Syria or the Ukraine? As freedom of movement within the E.U. erodes, a global network of authoritarian regimes

emerges to weaken liberal norms and institutions globally, and while the Arab state order unravels, it is increasingly clear that what is at stake for the United States in Syria was never simply about U.S.-Syrian relations. It is sadly ironic that the president's commitment to inaction has undermined his vision of an international system in which military restraint and a smaller U.S. footprint would produce a more stable and peaceful international order.

What, then, are some of the preliminary lessons learned from the Syrian conflict? In the short term it is not too late for the incoming president to engage the United States more assertively in efforts to move the Syrian conflict toward a negotiated transition, on terms that increase the likelihood of a durable settlement that will not force Syrians to return to the brutal dictatorship of the Assad regime, or expose them to the equally brutal predations of the Islamic State.

What this will require is not direct military intervention but a willingness to apply American resources more forcefully toward a diplomatic outcome that meets the minimum requirements of all relevant actors — including security for all civilians regardless of sect. Without a willingness on the part of the United States to match Russian resolve and support the demands of the Higher Negotiations Committee, this round of the Geneva talks is unlikely to fare better than the last, missing what may be one of the final chances to preserve Syria as an integral state.

In the long term, the futility of containment and costs of inaction certainly rank high among the lessons learned from the administration's failure in Syria. Effective strategy requires flexibility and a willingness to adapt as conditions change. Getting historical analogies right and not over-learning the lessons of the past are important. So too is the imperative of taking on board and weighing appropriately the potential "multiplier effects" of regional conflicts on the stability of the international system. It is imperative to establish criteria to determine when U.S. interests are sufficiently at stake to justify the use of force, either direct or indirect. Strengthening the institutions and mechanisms that expand the range of tools, both diplomatic and military, that are available to the United States to forestall humanitarian catastrophes like Syria and prevent governments from engaging in slow-motion genocide should be a paramount priority for the next U.S. president.

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The surprising ways fear has shaped Syria's war

By Wendy Pearlman, Northwestern University

As negotiations continue in Geneva, international observers and analysts struggle to comprehend the violence of the Syrian conflict. But how do Syrians themselves make sense of the horrors that have befallen their country? Since 2012, I have carried out open-ended interviews with more than 250 Syrians in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. The people I meet vary by age, class and region, but the large majority oppose the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Despite their differences, I find that their individual stories coalesce into a clear collective narrative. This narrative highlights many themes, from hope to resilience to crushing disappointment with a world that has abandoned them. One of the most central themes, I argue in a new article for Perspectives on Politics, is the overwhelming role of fear in shaping the lived experience of politics. I identify four different types of fear, each of which has different sources and functions.

Syrians' stories about life before 2011 call attention to a silencing fear that served as a pillar of the authoritarian regimes of Hafez al-Assad and then Bashar al-Assad. People consistently describe a political system in which those who had authority could abuse it limitlessly and those without power found no law to protect them. As one man explained: "We don't have a government. We have a mafia. And if you speak out against this, it's off with you to bayt khaltu — 'your aunt's house.' That's an expression that means to take someone to prison. It means, forget about this person. He'll be tortured, disappeared. You'll never hear from him again."

In this pre-revolutionary Syria, an omnipresent security apparatus brought threat of punishment to the street level. A lawyer described a world in which "a single security officer could control an area of 20,000 people holding only a notebook, because if he records your name in it, it's all over for you." Undercover spies and pervasive surveillance led parents to warn children not to speak because "the walls have ears."

"Nobody trusted anyone else," a rural dentist noted. "If anyone said anything out of the ordinary, others would suspect he was an informant trying to test people's reactions." A drama student joked, "My father and brothers and sisters and I might be sitting and talking . . . And then each of us would glance at the other, [as if to think] 'Don't turn out to be from the security forces!'"

Some people so internalized intimidation that they carried this propensity for self-censorship and silence beyond the homeland. A Syrian in exile since childhood noted: "When you meet somebody coming out of Syria for the first time, you start to hear the same sentences. That Syria is a great country, the economy is doing great. … It'll take him like six months, up to a year, to become a normal human being. To say what he thinks, what he feels. … Then they might start whispering. They won't speak loudly. That is too scary. After all that time, even outside Syria, you feel that someone is recording."

The spread of peaceful protests across the Arab world in 2011 helped launch a dramatically distinct experience of fear as a personal barrier to be surmounted. Syrians who participated in demonstrations explained that, aware of state violence, they never ceased to be afraid. However, they mobilized a new capacity to act through or despite fear. A mother told me that "no amount of courage allows you to just stand there and watch someone who has a gun and is about to kill you. But still, this incredible oppression made us go out … When you chant, everything you imagined just comes out. Tears come down. Tears of joy, because I broke the barrier. I am not afraid; I am a free being."

It is easy for rationalist-minded political scientists to underestimate the importance of this emancipatory, emotional moment. When I asked Syrians about their first demonstration, many insisted that the exhilaration of coming together with others to demand change was simply "indescribable." A writer recounted her entry into protest as the transformative discovery of a sense of self

that had been subjugated: "I felt the barrier of fear inside. The first time I broke through it, I was in a demonstration. Others were shouting and I joined them. I started to whisper, *freedom*. And after that I started to hear myself repeating, *freedom*, *freedom*, *freedom*. And then I started shouting *freedom*! My voice mingled with other voices. I thought: this is the first time I have ever heard my own voice … I wanted to feel this freedom forever. And I told myself that I would never let anyone steal my voice again."

The Assad regime responded to peaceful protests with severe repression. As the opposition took up arms, the regime escalated to artillery, airpower and chemical weapons. United Nations investigators judged Assad's assaults to constitute crimes against humanity. For civilians enduring war, inescapable violence ushered in a new experience of fear as a semi-normalized way of life. On the one hand, physical danger generated profound and visceral terror. On the other, danger was so relentless that it became the backdrop of the day-to-day. As one man shrugged, "We are all mashrua' shaeed, martyrs-in-the-making."

Syrians told me about children who distinguish between missiles by their different explosions, militants who need the sounds of bullets to sleep at night and doctors who planned their schedules around spikes in casualties anticipated for certain days of the week. An activist commented that people either accept the potential of dying at anytime or flee the country, provided that they have the means to escape.

Finally, the protraction of violence has produced yet another kind of fear: the nebulous trepidation of an uncertain future. This fear and uncertainty has proven decisive across many of the Arab transitions. Syrians I meet follow each new crisis, from the Assad regime's use of newly horrific weapons to the rise of the Islamic State, and lament the fate of a revolution that now fights tyranny on multiple fronts. Nearly all expressed despair with the foreign agendas distorting what began as a popular groundswell for dignity. "Many countries have interests in Syria and they are all woven together like threads in a carpet," a Free Syrian Army commander shook his head. "We don't know where this is leading. All we know is that we're everyone else's battlefield." The 20-somethings who led demonstrations count lost comrades with a pain tinged with depression, even guilt. "I belong to the revolution generation, and I'm proud of that," one young woman explained. "We tried our best to build something. We faced a lot, and we faced it alone. But we lost control. We don't know what is useful anymore."

Others identify a fear of losing themselves as individuals as they become extensions of a conflict with no end in sight. "Myself, as a person, I forget her features," one woman explained. "We're tired and can't bear any more blood. We're afraid. We're afraid for Syria." Many people's most urgent fear is for their loved ones: children who have lost years of schooling, family scattered among Syria and several other countries, and relatives who have been arrested and never heard from again. A Syrian colleague articulated this fear in reaction to the January 2014 revelation of photographs evidencing systematic torture in regime prisons. "The most difficult part of the torture pictures," he told me, "is not the decomposed flesh, the starved bodies … or even the knowledge that the torture is both widespread and systematic. These things have always been elements of our Syrian reality. What is so difficult that I do not think we have the strength to overcome is the fear that some of these pictures may show us the body of someone we know and we hope is still alive."

Syrians' testimonials of fear provide a humanistic lens on what revolution and war mean to many who have lived it and been transformed by it. Apart from offering insight into rebellion, these voices also offer a chance to bear witness to rebellion in action. In describing how they have experienced the Assad regime before and since 2011, citizens are transforming its power from something too menacing to be named into something whose naming renders it contestable. When a state uses fear to silence subjects, their talking about that fear — articulating its existence, identifying its sources, describing its workings — is itself a form of defiance and an assertion of the will to be free.

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Yemen, five years gone

By Stacey Philbrick Yadav, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

The past five years in Yemen offer a bleak opportunity to reckon with failure. When protests began in January 2011, many Yemenis dared to hope for meaningful political change. Today, after the collapse of a poorly designed political transition and a year of ferocious war, the country's urban areas have been rendered unlivable, 21.2 million people are in need of immediate humanitarian aid, residents of Yemen's largest city live under siege conditions, and a civilian population with close to 2.5 million internally displaced persons is effectively trapped as the result of a naval and air blockade.

Yemen's horrific conditions today directly follow from the systematic conceptual and political failures of those who designed and administered the plan for a managed transition from the regime of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. This Gulf Cooperation Council plan directly contradicted the primary goals of the 2011 uprising. After sustaining an 11-month uprising against prodigious odds, Yemenis found themselves shackled to a transitional agreement designed by a coterie of monarchs to protect the vested interests of a plutocratic elite.

It is safe to say that five years on, the GCC transition plan has fully failed – for many of the reasons about which Yemeni activists warned from the outset.

A central organizing slogan of the 2011 popular uprising in Yemen was "No tribes, no parties — our revolution is a youth revolution." Although it was catchier in Arabic, it is easy enough to see that the popular protesters rejected the partisan landscape, including the formal opposition, as a whole. Those protesters were not a marginal or elite phenomenon. They included hundreds of thousands of diverse Yemenis, not only in the capital, Sanaa, but also in rural areas who flocked to local "change squares" across the country.

Yemen has the youngest population in a very young region. It's clear why Yemenis might take issue with an ossified political class that had delivered little in the face of two decades of encroaching authoritarianism dressed in parliamentary clothes. Indeed, from the vantage of 2016, the whole of the 2000s reads as a record of the regime's gradually tightening grasp over the only node of opposition it could effectively manage and suppress and its failure to deal with the escalating crises of insurgency (in the north), secession (in the south) and episodic acts of extremist violence.

Yet the transitional agreement invested in precisely that partisan political class, crafting a transitional government composed of members of the former ruling party and a handful of allied opposition parties known as the Joint Meeting Parties. This left the bulk of the population unrepresented, with "outreach" efforts mandated by the transitional framework only partially and imperfectly undertaken. The parties, for their part, created more distance between themselves and their members by suspending internal democratic practices when their constituents wanted more accountability. Major insurgent and secessionist groups were left out of the new governing coalition, and the security-sector reforms necessary to successfully combat violent challenges to the transition were late arriving and similarly incomplete.

The National Dialogue Conference played a pivotal role, both signaling Yemen's political unraveling and contributing to it. Marred by obstructionism, it unfolded in a climate of increasing everyday violence. While the NDC was far more inclusive than other institutional components of the transitional framework, that inclusivity only cast into bolder relief how few voices were included in the substantive processes of transitional governance. In effect, the NDC provided groups with a voice but no real role in decision-making. When the NDC proved unwieldy, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi simply worked around it with more manageable — but still less representative and wholly unaccountable — working groups.

After the NDC's conclusion, participating Yemenis were sent back to their corners in order to await the real work of governing, much of it done bypresidential appointees and, in some cases, ad hoc committees. The release of a plan for federal districting by one such committee is often cited as the proximate cause of the war, as the draft was categorically rejected by the Houthis and their armed takeover of Sanaa soon followed. But it also speaks to fundamental tensions produced by a transitional framework that sought to contain "spoilers," without mechanisms to ensure accountability to large sections of the population.

The current war's consequences will be far-reaching in ways that require Yemeni and international actors alike to rethink some of their assumptions about who and what matters in Yemen and why.

The organized political parties — already substantially challenged during the uprising and transition— are now arguably irrelevant. The goal of "restoring the Hadi government," as such, has increasingly given way to other imperatives for all concerned. Going into this war — the first five months of which, the head of the Red Cross concluded, caused as much destruction as three years of war in Syria — Yemeni lives and livelihoods were already precarious, as the country ranked last or at the bottom of the region in a whole host of human development indicators, and it was already struggling with the effects of pervasive insecurity during the transitional period.

That said, the scale of destruction of infrastructure, housing and resources produced by 11 months of open war means that an already impoverished population will struggle to account for an internal displacement crisis and to secure the most basic of needs in at least 10 governorates that are experiencing a Phase 4 food emergency and are on the edge of famine. None of the current factions in Yemen's internationalized civil war show the willingness to prioritize these first-order civilian needs. Instead, there is evidence that both the Saudi-led coalition backing President Hadi and the Houthi-Saleh alliance control access to resources and the movement of goods and people. Most damning is that fact that the region with the least violence and greatest food security is Hadramawt, under the local control of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) since April 2015. All parties, from the members of the Saudi-led coalition and its U.S. and British allies to the Houthis themselves, should be able to coalesce around the rejection of this condition. Instead, internally displaced Yemeni people are finding shelter in Mukallah under AQAP governance.

It is hard to envision an end to this war that either side — assuming there are only two, which is true only at the very broadest level — would consider a victory in military terms. The window for victory for the Saudi-led coalition has already passed. Ground forces aligned with the Houthis and Saleh loyalists — mainly irregular forces, albeit with some heavy weapons — have held a coalition with clear air and naval superiority at bay for nearly a year. Yet even in the unlikely case that either of these two groups managed to secure a military victory, there is little reason to believe that the Yemen they would inherit would be one that they could govern in any real sense. At the same time, many Yemenis will be loathe to turn to international actors to resolve this crisis, given the role of the United Nations and the GCC in laying the foundations for the conflict to begin with.

In light of serious allegations that coalition forces have been deliberately targeting Yemeni civilians and have used prohibited cluster munitions, several countries are now publicly questioning arms sales to Saudi Arabia and considering ways to promote greater accountability through the United Nations. British members of Parliament have called from the floor of the House of Commons for a halt to weapons sales, Germany has backed out of a weapons deal and Canadian support for existing deals is wavering. Recently, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), who serves on the Foreign Relations Committee, called on his colleagues to consider the same.

While such moves might help to bring about more serious negotiations to end the war, any internationally brokered post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction process

will have to contend with the same issues of inclusivity and accountability that were neglected in the 2011 transitional agreement. This time, however, the stakes will be higher, as planners will have to face the dual challenge of demobilizing militias and serving a polarized and devastated society. Until that time, the war goes on.

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Why Libya's transition to democracy failed

By Frederic Wehrey, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

To visit Benghazi these days is to enter a stricken city, a city at war with itself. The site of the first protests in 2011, the courthouse and nearby buildings, are a no-go zone, a shambles of twisted iron and spilled concrete pocked by heavy caliber rounds. Those who gathered there in the heady days of the revolution are now on opposite sides of a conflict that has torn apart families, killed or wounded thousands, and displaced many more. All the while, the Islamic State moved in. Its black banners now flutter from ruined rooftops; its fighters hurl taunts in Tunisian-accented Arabic and blare recorded sermons across the front lines.

How did this happen?

The ultimate blame must lay with Muammar Gaddafi himself, who bequeathed Libyans a country without a state. Leaders of the new Libya found it hard to break free from the pull of an exploitative, hyper-personalized reign that pitted communities against one another and atrophied institutions, the sinews of governance. Of course Libyan actors carry responsibility; incompetence, petty vendettas, and an unabashed lust for power all played a role. So too did ambivalence and meddling by outside powers. A confluence of fateful missteps during and after the revolution set the country on downward spiral that will probably take years to reverse.

The revolutionaries were divided among themselves from the start. It was always a highly localized insurrection; neighborhoods and towns rose up bereft of unifying leadership or a shared vision. The fault lines were many: between communities enriched by Gaddafi's rule and those marginalized by it; between Libyans who returned after decades abroad and those who stayed; between technocrats who had accommodated the regime and worked to reform it, and Islamists who languished in its prisons; between defected army generals and younger civilian fighters; between women who challenged the old patriarchy and conservatives who sought to enforce it.

Outside military support sharpened the fissures: Factional militias jostled for weapons shipments and training from competing patrons. The revolution's fragile governing coalition, the National Transitional Council, proved powerless to bridge these divides and at any rate was overtaken by local forces and events on the ground. Whatever plans it had developed for the post-Gaddafi period, with outside help, dissolved on first contact. The fall of the capital proceeded pell-mell. Advancing militias seized airports, ports, armories and ministries as spoils to be converted into political power later on. Still, in those first several months after liberation, it was possible to be guardedly optimistic.

The United States returned to Libya, but with a narrow mandate and an overly optimistic assessment of the country's transition needs. "There was this sense that Libya had a lot going for it, that given its oil wealth and small population, this would not be a strictly bottom-up affair," one former White House official told me. Haunted by Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration was desperate to avoid a nation-building imbroglio and a militarization of America's presence in Tripoli. The Libyans themselves feared a creeping occupation and were highly divided about how much Western assistance they wanted. Even the nominal troops at the American Embassy for security required calming assurances to Libyan leaders.

Much of the U.S. effort was focused on bolstering civil society, education and a free media, what one diplomat termed "nation-building by proxy." No doubt it was inspiring to watch the blossoming of voluntary associations, clubs, charities, and media outlets, unfettered by government control. And the United States and others did their best to nourish these groups. Yet the impact of aid was destined to be limited, given the absence for so long of meaningful people-to-people contacts between the United States and Libya under Gaddafi. Moreover, many of the Libyan civil societies, whose dual-citizen leaders gathered in marble hotel foyers eager for outside support, rarely penetrated beyond Tripoli or Benghazi. But perhaps most damningly, the absence of early Western assistance on the security front left the activists vulnerable to violence by militias and extremists.

Using elections as a marker of success

The United States ceded much responsibility to the Europeans and United Nations. But without a stabilization force, the United Nations mission was, by its own admission, ill equipped to handle the challenges of rebuilding the hollowed-out security sector and especially dismantling the well-armed militias. It focused instead on the preparing the country to vote for a national legislative assembly. For the country's transitional leadership and for the United States, so much was tied to those elections; too much, in retrospect. "We got distracted by the elections as a success marker," an American development worker at the time told me. "Rushing the elections was a grave mistake," admitted one former senior UN official in Libya.

And rushed they were. The transitional leadership decreed that elections would take place 240 days after liberation — for a country that had not held national voting in more than half a century that is light speed. Some veteran scholars of democratic transitions warned at the time, almost prophetically, that holding elections in Libya so soon after conflict would lead to a relapse of civil war. When elections did happen, on July 7, 2012, they took place amid acts of armed coercion by federalists, tribal fighting in towns in the west and south and rising extremist violence in the east.

Still, turnout was relatively high and Western observers deemed the voting fair and transparent. Few within the NTC or in the West were naive enough to think that elections would themselves resolve the country's yawning divides. But the great hope was that the country's elected government would have stronger legitimacy to tackle growing lawlessness and insecurity. In fact, the new legislature, the General National Congress, entrenched and solidified factionalism.

Growing militia power

The contest for security institutions — for the monopoly of control on force — proved Libya's undoing. The NTC had at various times tried to dissolve the militias. At the same time, bereft of the ability to project its authority it began subsidizing militias, placing them on the nominal control of the ministries of interior and defense. But these ministries were themselves captured by competing political factions. The result was a swelling of militias — beyond the number that had fought in the revolution — and the formation of a localized, highly divided and hybrid-security sector that existed in parallel to the decrepit army and police.

The new elected government were unable to resolve the most pressing question of whether to preserve and reform the remnants of the old military or undertake a wholesale

remaking of the security structure that privileged younger revolutionaries. Even worse, figures within the GNC developed a symbiotic relationship with outside militias, who began threatening elected authorities over passage of a lustration law, kidnapped the prime minister, and seized oil facilities. Mindful that government could not even protect its own buildings or personnel, the United States, Britain, Turkey and Italy planned for the overseas training of a purportedly neutral army, the so-called general purpose force. But it was too little too late. Those trainees that returned found there was no military structure to join; they were put on indefinite leave or melted back into the militias.

Egypt's shadow over Libya

Another major shock to Libya occurred at the regional level. The rise of now President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi in neighboring Egypt and the subsequent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood cast a long shadow over Libya. It sharpened a conspiratorial paranoia that had taken root in Libyan politics. This polarization was already well underway, fueled in part by the spread of highly partisan media funded by influential Libyans abroad. But after the crackdown in Cairo one started hearing the term "deep state" muttered fearfully and with greater frequency within Libya's Islamist and revolutionary circles. For their part, the ex-technocrats and officers, eastern tribes, federalists and some liberals started looking approvingly at Sissi as an exemplar for restoring order and, less nobly, excluding their opponents from power.

Nowhere was the "Sissi effect" felt more acutely than in Benghazi. Here, a wave of assassinations against military officers, police, judges and activiststerrorized the populace. Buoyed by this groundswell, Gen. Khalifa Hifter, a former Gaddafi-era military officer, launched Operation Dignity in May 2014, with the stated goal of evicting Islamist militias from Benghazi and restoring security. Less obvious was Hifter's desire to restore the primacy of the old officer corps within the security sector over the younger revolutionaries and Islamists. He forged alliances with a wide array of groups, included western Zintani militias with whom he had clashed in late 2011. Many of them eyed him warily but saw a utility in joining his campaign to undermine their local rivals.

Hifter and his allies made a number of threats against the GNC and vowed to bring their military forces to Tripoli. These threats, along with losses in elections for the follow-on legislature to the GNC, spurred a counter-movement to Dignity, the so-called Dawn movement, which began with a military attack by Misratan, Islamist and western militias on Tripoli's airport to evict the Hifter-allied Zintanis.

Dueling factions backed by regional powers

What followed was the effective division of the country into two rival governments: one in the east, based in Tobruk and Bayda and allied with Hifter, and one in Tripoli, backed by a constellation of Misratan, Islamist and western militias. Regional military intervention sharpened the conflict. The UAE and Egypt backed General Hifter forces with airstrikes, weapons and special operations; Qatar, Turkey and Sudan backed elements of the Dawn coalition.

Enter the Islamic State

The ensuing war has brought Libya untold humanitarian and financial ruin, spreading to the central oil fields and the southern periphery. In Benghazi, the struggle created new space for extremists by making allies of disparate Islamist militias whom Hifter had lumped together. Worse, the fighting has taken on a vicious, communal quality between families and neighborhoods. Forced displacement, torture and summary executions are widespread on both sides.

Amid personal and tribal divisions, the Dignity campaign has stalled. For their part, power brokers in Misrata and Tripoli continued to play a dangerous game of shipping weapons to Benghazi's battle lines, where the distinctions between their favored militias and more radical groups like Ansar al-Sharia and, increasingly, the Islamic State, has blurred.

The Islamic State has seized on the vacuum to implant itself in Sirte, in surrounding towns in the so-called oil crescent, some neighborhoods in Benghazi, the environs of Derna, and Sabratha and Tripoli in the west. Fortified by an influx of foreign fighters and defectors from Ansar al-Sharia, it seems determined to disrupt the formation of the new government by cutting off oil revenue and attacking its fledgling security forces. The Dignity and Dawn fighting has enabled its spread; each side seems more focused on the other, and each has cynically accused the other of collusion with the Islamic State.

A unity government under stress

Under great pressure from the West and their respective regional backers, representatives from the two sides recently signed a U.N.-brokered agreement to form a unity government. But the new government faces enormous political and security challenges in taking office in Tripoli and exerting its authority. A key stumbling block remains control over Libya's military and specifically the continued role of Hifter as commander-in-chief of the Libyan National Army, which Dawn factions fiercely oppose. Another is the fragmentation and devolution of power within the Dawn and Dignity camps, so much so that they exist in name only. This not only opens door for spoilers and rejectionists, it complicates U.S. and other Western efforts to channel military aid in the fight against the Islamic State through a cohesive chain of command. It simply does not exist.

But perhaps most troubling has been the spread of a profound disenchantment with the revolution's early promise, a despair that extends not just to democracy, but to politics itself. Along with the country's ruptured social fabric, it is an affliction that will be difficult to remedy.

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Looking beyond the state

What the Arab uprising protesters really wanted

By Mark R. Beissinger, Princeton University, Amaney Jamal, Princeton University, and Kevin Mazur, Princeton University

The 2011 popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia that removed long-standing autocrats occurred in rapid succession, with Egyptian demonstrators explicitly drawing inspiration from the example of their Tunisian counterparts. This caused some observers to locate the cause of the uprisings in trends common to both societies and the Arab world more generally, such as the growth of social media or a "youth bulge" in the population. However, the post-revolutionary divergence between Egypt and Tunisia — to say nothing of the violence in places like Libya and Syria — has made implausible the notion that some shared characteristic is driving the countries of the "Arab Spring" along a common, upward trajectory.

The contrast between Egypt and Tunisia today is stark; while the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize last week for shepherding the country towards democracy, the Egyptian government is dominated by the military and its first democratically elected leader sits in jail, awaiting his death sentence.

How, then, are we to understand the divergence between these revolutions, which occurred in the same region, at roughly the same time and made essentially the same demands?

On the one hand, it is impossible to read post-revolutionary outcomes directly from economic or social circumstances preceding an uprising. Revolutionary processes regularly overwhelm and sideline their progenitors, a fact of which the liberals and leftists initiating the Iranian revolution in the 1970s are sorely aware.

On the other hand, the societal groups participating in a revolution do not emerge out of thin air, but in response to social conditions and political opportunities. Understanding which social groups lead the challenge against a standing government can provide insight into how toppled leaders ruled (or misruled) their populations and help identify the segments of society that leaders of post-revolutionary governments must focus on to address the needs of their citizenry.

In a recently published article, we investigate which segments of society participated in the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions and the conditions impelling their participation. The participants differed in many respects across the two countries and we have developed a historical argument to explain this divergence. The Egyptian uprising was a relatively narrow middle class revolt, whereas the Tunisian uprising constituted a broader cross-class coalition. The ways in which Egyptian and Tunisian leaders managed domestic and international pressures in the 1990s and 2000s created the grievances and opportunities to act on them that fueled both revolts.

Our research suggests that neither the Tunisian nor the Egyptian revolution resulted directly from the flowering of new democratic ideals, as economic issues were more important than political freedoms for participants in both uprisings. Using unique survey data available from the second round of theArab Barometer study — a set of nationally representative surveys about political life, governance, and political, social, and cultural values administered in 2011 in eleven Arab countries — we show that most Tunisians and Egyptians who participated in the uprisings identified demands for improving the economic situation as the most or second most important reason for the uprisings, with desires for political freedoms coming in a distant second place in both countries (see Table 1).

Despite their similar motivations, the segments of society propelling each revolution differed. A full 55 percent of Egyptian protesters came from middle class occupations, compared to only 30 percent in Tunisia. Workers, students and the unemployed constituted 57 percent of the Tunisian demonstrators but only 19 percent of the Egyptian demonstrators. Moreover, participants in the

Table 1: Reasons for Participation in Protests

	Egypt			Tunisia		
	Most important	Second most important	Either	Most important	Second most important	Either
Demands for improving the economic situation	38%	30%	67%	58%	19%	77%
Demands for civil and political freedom	18%	11%	29%	21%	29%	50%
Demands for authority not to be passed down to Gamal Mubarak	22%	16%	37%	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Combating corruption	18%	38%	56%	15%	45%	60%
Replacing the incumbent regime with an Islamic regime	2%	4%	6%	6%	5%	11%
Sample size	n=96	n=97		n=191	n=191	

Source: Arab Barometer

Tunisian Revolution were considerably younger than the disproportionately middle-aged participants in the Egyptian Revolution, with the youngest age group (18 to 24 years old) overrepresented in the Tunisian uprising relative to their share of the total population, while those nearing middle age (35 to 44 years old) were most overrepresented in Egypt. Finally, civil society association members had a greater presence in the Egyptian Revolution than the Tunisian Revolution, while Tunisian revolutionaries were significantly more likely to rely on the internet as a coordinating device than Egyptian revolutionaries.

These differences in the social composition of protesters can be explained by the different strategies taken by the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in the decades preceding the revolutions. Both regimes were forced by fiscal crises to reform their public sectors and by international pressure to take steps towards political liberalization. The ways in which they did so shaped popular grievances and the capacity of citizens to act on them, in turn shaping the different patterns of individual-level participation in the revolutions that eventually broke out in both countries.

In Egypt, the regime dismantled welfare protections for the middle class and co-opted rather than overtly repressed the opposition. This created conditions conducive to an urban revolt by the established middle class, fueled by economic grievances and led by civil society organization.

In Tunisia, by contrast, the regime adopted a more repressive approach to its opposition that, combined with neo-liberal economic policies, undermined civil society organization and activated regional and generational grievances. These techniques created the basis for a cross-class alliance that was spearheaded by the young and began in the provinces, slowly spreading to the capital.

Our analysis may be something of a disappointment for believers in thepower of democratic ideals to chart a nation's course. Who participated in the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions was more a function of how state policies impacted different social categories than individuals' ideological orientations or ideals. What's more, participants in the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions were united in identifying economic grievances, rather than demands for more political freedom, as the primary reasons for participation in the uprisings.

However, our conclusions are consistent with most social science findings about the political trajectory of countries that have successfully democratized. Writing almost 50 years ago on the paths taken by Western democracies, political scientist Dankwart Rustow observed that, "Democracy was not the original or primary aim; it was sought as a means to some other end or it came as a fortuitous byproduct of the struggle." The demands Egyptian and Tunisian demonstrators placed on their governments, and the ways each state responded, were

paramount in determining the course of the revolutions. That the Egyptian and Tunisian demonstrators held similar views — while one state has made major steps towards democracy and the other looks as autocratic as ever — underscores the fact that the ideals of the citizenry are not the primary factor impelling or sustaining democratization.

Major trends affecting the entire Arab world, such as the rapid increase in the youth population and the diffusion of social media, have proven no panacea for ridding the region of autocratic rule. Though consistent with most democratization studies, this fact offers little solace to observers of the Egyptian political scene or to the vast majority of Egyptians hoping for a more responsive government. A slightly more optimistic reading of our results suggests that the policies states put in place can prevent societal demands from spilling into open conflict. The government of Tunisia, so far at least, appears to be channeling the struggle of their citizenry in this manner.

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When it comes to democracy, Egyptians hate the player but Tunisians hate the game

By Michael Robbins, University of Michigan and Princeton University

Many hoped the protests associated with the Arab uprisings would unleash a democratic wave in the region, sweeping out autocrats who had withheld political voice from generations of Arabs. Yet rather than producing liberalized polities, with the possible exception of Tunisia, the uprisings primarily led to either devastating civil conflict or the resurgence of authoritarian regimes.

How have these events affected how Arab publics think about democracy? Has the nearly universal failure of the uprisings to yield democracy lead citizens to give up on democracy as a system of governance? My forthcoming article in the Journal of Democracy, argues that the uprisings had a surprisingly small effect on attitudes of ordinary citizens toward democracy — likely because the uprisings were not really about democracy in the first place. However, it also finds some notable shifts in public opinion, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia.

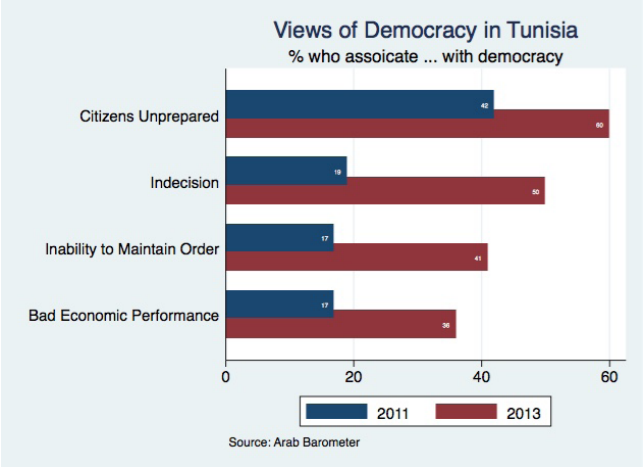
With one key exception, the results from nationally representative surveys conducted by the Arab Barometer in nine countries reveal that relatively few people across the region changed their desire for democracy since the Arab uprisings. In 2011, at least three-quarters of citizens in each country said that a democratic system that includes public freedoms, equality of political and civil rights, and accountability of authority is a good or very good political system. In 2013, two years after the uprisings, the results were virtually unchanged: at least 80 percent still held this view.

Not only do most Arab citizens say that democracy is a good system, but the majority also agree that, despite its problems, democracy is in fact the best political system. In both 2011 and 2013, at least two-thirds of respondents in all countries rated democracy as the best system, and only Iraq and Yemen exhibited discernible changes.

Measures of commitment to democracy tell a similar story. At the time of the Arab uprisings, fewer than half of the citizens associated democracy with potential problems such as weak economic performance, instability, indecision and citizens' unpreparedness. In the years that followed, attitudes changed little in all but one country.

The birthplace of the Arab uprisings — and the place where democratic reforms have been the most substantial — is the exception to this pattern. Two years after the uprisings, Tunisians were twice as likely to say that democracy is bad for the economy compared to 2011 (36 percent vs. 18 percent). Soon after the initial protests, only 17 percent of Tunisians said that democracy led to instability compared with 41 percent in 2013. Tunisians also became two-and-a-half times more likely to say that democracy is indecisive (50 percent vs. 20 percent) and 50 percent more likely to say their fellow countrymen were not prepared for democracy (60 percent versus 40 percent) during this period.

While most Tunisians retained faith in democracy as the best system, they also had growing doubts about it.



In certain respects, Egyptians and Tunisians followed similar paths in the wake of the Arab uprisings: both countries held free and fair elections in which Islamist parties claimed victory and led democratic governments. So why did Egyptians, unlike Tunisians, hold fast to their democratic ideals?

The answer rests in who people blamed for the state of their country after the revolutions. Egyptians held the party in power — the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party — and its ideology accountable for the challenges they endured following the revolution. In June 2011, fewer than half (43 percent) of Egyptians said they trusted the Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, just over one-third (36 percent) of Egyptians favored giving religious leaders influence over decisions of government, a question commonly used to measure of support for political Islam. These findings suggest that the electoral dominance of the Brotherhood in the post-revolutionary period was not grounded in ideological support but rather in organizational strength and a lack of credible alternatives. Citizens were so unenthusiastic that in the first free and fair elections they had ever experienced, roughly half of the electorate stayed home rather than vote for any of the candidates on the ballot.

The transitional period in Egyptian politics served to further weaken the appeal of the Brotherhood and its ideology. By April 2013, in the last months of Mohamed Morsi's presidency, support for political Islam had dropped dramatically from 2011 levels; about half as many citizens (19 percent) favored giving religious leaders say over government decisions compared to just two years earlier. Similarly, trust in the Brotherhood fell to 20 percent.

In contrast, views of political Islam and Ennahda, the main Islamist party, remained unchanged in Tunisia. Soon after the Jasmine revolution, just one in five Tunisians favored political Islam, compared with 24 percent in 2013. Over the same period, trust in Ennahda fell only slightly, from 40 percent to 35 percent, a fraction of the 23-point decline in trust for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

So why do Egyptians hate the player but Tunisians hate the game?

Most likely, this difference is due to the nature of the transition in each country. In Tunisia, Ennahda won the largest share of votes of any party but was unable to form a government without the cooperation of two other parties,

resulting in a relatively weak governing coalition that was slow to respond to the challenges facing the country. Instead of blaming Ennahda or its political ideology for the failings of the new government, Tunisians blamed the democratic system that produced a weak and largely ineffectual coalition.

Egypt followed a different path. After victory in the parliamentary and presidential elections, the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies sought to consolidate their power and increase the role for religion in the state. After Morsi temporarily declared himself to be above the law in November 2012, Islamist parties passed a new constitution without support from secular or minority interests. During this period of political polarization, Egyptians blamed problems with the transition on the specific government in power instead of on the democratic process that produced it. The result was a steep decline in support for political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood but no change in the desirability of democracy as a system.

Returning to the broader survey results, why did the uprisings have minimal effect on attitudes toward democracy across the region? One reason may be how citizens think about the protests. In 2013, respondents were asked to identify the three main causes of the Arab uprisings. In six of the nine countries surveyed, fewer than half name "civil and political freedoms and emancipation from oppression" — elements critical to a democratic governance — as one of the three most important impetuses for the protests. Rather, citizens were far more likely to link the uprisings to state corruption or economic outcomes. By implication, few citizens across the region appear to have directly attributed the changes brought about by the uprisings — whether good or bad — to democracy itself.

Additionally, the lessons following the Arab uprisings did not seem to diffuse widely across borders. Although there is clear evidence that diffusion played a role in the initial spread of the demonstrations in 2011, publics in the region appear to have been less affected by subsequent events in Egypt or Tunisia. Instead, reflecting on the limited reforms that took place in their own countries, relatively few citizens across the region updated their beliefs about democracy.

Although the protests and their aftermath have had profound effects on the regional environment, by and large, Arabs have maintained faith in democracy. For proponents of democracy, this finding offers a glimmer of hope. Although this system of governance is unlikely to take root in the region in the near future, most Arab publics remain supportive of democracy.

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Did the Arab uprising destroy the Muslim Brotherhood?

By Steven Brooke, Harvard Kennedy School and University of Louisville.

This time five years ago, crowds swelled, regimes shook and the Muslim Brotherhood stood poised to become the biggest winners of the Arab uprisings. Long a force on the ground, the Brotherhood soon translated that strength into political power in regimes across the Middle East. But parliaments and presidencies proved tougher to navigate than opposition — and now the Islamist ideological project is trapped between the roiling violence of the Islamic State and the stultifying oppression of revived autocracy. Protesting has become a means and an end. Meanwhile, the Islamic State's explicit rejection of politics in favor of brutal violence looms as a potent alternative model for those disgruntled by a lack of progress.

Still smarting from a harsh crackdown that ran through the 2010 legislative elections, the Brotherhood officially joined the Jan. 25 uprising only once it tipped against then-Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. As the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took control, the Brotherhood was among those pushing hardest for early elections, betting that their existing grass-roots networks gave them an edge over their less-organized competitors. Their bet seemingly paid off, as the Brotherhood ran off an impressive string of victories in constitutional referendums and parliamentary and presidential elections. Yet this political domination crested in the summer of 2013, when Egypt's military ousted the Brotherhood and set about reestablishing its hold over the country.

There are a number of efforts underway to use these events to revisit andrethink what we knew about Islamist groups and consider what we gotwrong. At least in the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, what these past five years have driven home to me is the extent to which their mission has become politicized, in the sense that electoral participation and success is their organizing principle. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hasan al-Banna, famously described the Brotherhood as "a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, an economic company and a social idea." But amid the tumult of the Arab uprisings, this broad, societal mission telescoped into a narrow, electoral one.

Early on, the Brotherhood tried to create a firewall, separating a party striving for power from a movement dedicated to social change. While in theory the Freedom and Justice Party was supposedly independent from the movement, in practice the two were indistinguishable: leadership and membership overlapped, messaging aligned and resources merged.

This politicization was a movement-wide phenomenon, but two examples from the realm of social-service provision illustrate what it meant in a daily context. Prior to the uprisings, the Brotherhood had been wary of explicitly leveraging their wide network of charities for political gain (indeed it was against the law). But this changed after Mubarak fell, as the Brotherhood bent their entire social-service network to the purpose of turning out and persuading voters. While this met with some resistance, particularly from those activists who were wary of squandering their hard-earned social capital for fleeting political gains, the pull of politics proved too strong.

Two examples capture this point. First, in most hospitals in Egypt, one receives a ticket and then waits until a doctor is available. In one of the Brotherhood's hospitals I visited, there was a life-size campaign sticker of the Freedom and Justice Party's leader Mohamed Morsi's face placed on the ticket window at eye level, creating for visitors the effect of receiving care from Morsi himself. Second, in early 2013, Egyptians witnessed a massive social-service project, "Together We Build Egypt," under the combined auspices of the FJP and the Brotherhood. Despite denials, the campaign effectively erased any line between the group's social and charitable endeavors and their political ambitions. Volunteers clad in FJP vests swarmed across

the country, while under FJP and Brotherhood banners, Egyptians crowded to receive sharply discounted and free medical care from party personnel.

This mobilization was the stuff of pure politics, and the Brotherhood was great at it. Indeed, in the immediate context of 2011-2013 Egypt it would have been more exceptional if the Brotherhood had resisted the urge to leverage all its assets for electoral success. But this politicization raised fundamental questions about what, exactly, the Muslim Brotherhood represented, and how it was different from alternatives. For the Brotherhood, the explicit politicization of all corners of the movement suggested a shortcut around the gradualist, bottom-up process of Islamization that al-Banna had laid out. And for Egyptians, if receiving medical care from the Brotherhood came with expectations of electoral support, then the Brotherhood became basically indistinguishable from its political competitors (who did the same thing, just not as well).

Repeated political successes allowed the group to avoid confronting these questions, but the events surrounding the summer 2013 military coup forced a reckoning. By the time the military presented the Brotherhood with an ultimatum, the group had effectively backed themselves into a corner. After framing each election or referendum as a crisis requiring mobilization of not just the *political party* but the entire *movement*, it was effectively impossible to concede that that harvest was little more than a bargaining chip. Politics had monopolized the mission of the organization, and the party had overwhelmed the movement. In the moment of crisis, the Brotherhood calculated that it was worth risking the movement to save the party, and in the end they lost both.

The reverberations of this decision are likely to echo for years. Most immediately, the Brotherhood's entire religious and social service network is slowly being uprooted, in part because it played such a demonstrable role in the group's political success. The intellectual consequences are no less serious. The Brotherhood still remains unable to articulate a *raison d'etre* beyond continued street protest in support of a return to the status quo ante: that Morsi be reinstated, the military return to the barracks, and that Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi and his comrades be held accountable. The Brotherhood is effectively in a holding pattern because they cannot articulate the movement's mission *without reference to electoral politics*. Protesting has become a means and an end.

What does this all mean for how we study the Brotherhood? Avi Spiegel makes the point that academic researchers should do more to conceptualize and measure Islamist "success" without reference to electoral politics. I think this is a worthy goal and that there is much work to do on this point. But we should also beware the opposite — automatically assuming that there exist realms of Islamist activism that can be detached from the influence of politics. As we extend and revisit our pre-Arab-uprising understanding of Islamists, it is worth keeping in mind the extent to which the Brotherhood acted like a normal political party.

Among the revelations of the past five years has been the extent to which the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has allowed, if not encouraged, an electoral logic to pervade all corners of the movement. An irony, of course, is that the group's commitment to electoral politics was a serious question prior to the uprisings. But now the Brotherhood, and the academic researchers who study them, will have to puzzle over what political Islam means when the political is disallowed.

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The Arab uprisings as international relations

Marc Lynch, George Washington University

The story of the Arab uprisings of 2010-11 has typically been told as a series of loosely related national stories, happening simultaneously but whose successes and failures were essentially determined by internal factors. Over the past few years, political scientists have made great progress evaluating the success or failure of each country's uprising in terms of country-specific qualities such as types of domestic institutions, the nature of opposition movements, the wise or poor decisions made by leaders and access to oil revenues. The comparative politics literature on the uprisings has demonstrated real theoretical progress, sophisticated empirical analysis and useful — if too often ignored — policy advice.

This comparative politics approach to the uprisings has always been problematic, though. The Arab uprisings began in transnational diffusion and ended in transnational repression and regional proxy wars. Put simply, there is not a single case in the Arab uprisings — with perhaps, as Monica Marks argues, the very partial exception of Tunisia — in which international factors were not decisive to the outcome. It is remarkably difficult to accurately explain the course of events in Egypt, Yemen or Libya without reference to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar or Iran. However, with but a few notable exceptions, the academic literature on the uprisings has been dominated by comparative analysis and country case studies, with international factors included as one among several variables, if at all.

This seems odd. Why has there not been an efflorescence of international relations scholarship comparable to the impressive outpouring of comparative politics scholarship on the Arab uprisings? And if there were, what would it look like? To begin rectifying this gap, the Project on Middle East Political Science teamed up with Danish scholar Morten Valbjørn of Aarhus University to bring together nearly two dozen American, European and Arab international relations scholars in May. The result of the workshop was an astonishingly rich set of essays from a wide range of theoretical perspectives, which are now available for free download here as a special issue in the POMEPS Studies series.

It is generally accepted that the uprisings themselves were very much a region-wide phenomenon. For all the accumulated grievances and internal politics that characterized the situation in each Arab country circa late 2010, it is difficult to conceive of each simultaneously erupting in protest without the highly publicized example of successful uprisings overthrowing long-entrenched dictators in Tunisia and Egypt. There is now abundant evidence and an increasingly sophisticated theoretical literature detailing the diffusion and demonstration mechanisms by which the Arab uprisings spread. The initial uprisings, then, clearly cannot be understood without an appreciation of their regional and international dynamics.

Then, consider the outcomes in most of the key countries that experienced turmoil in the early days of the Arab uprising. The military coup that ended Egypt's attempted democratic transition July 3, 2013, received massive support from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states—aid which replaced Qatari backing for Mohammed el-Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood-led government. Morocco, Jordan and Oman received significant Saudi financial assistance to resist popular pressure for change. Bahrain's uprising was crushed with the support of Saudi and other GCC military forces. Qatar and the Arab League pushed successfully for an international military intervention in support of Libya's rebels, which ultimately decided Moammar Gaddafi's fate. Yemen's transition was carefully managed by a Gulf Cooperation Council plan that installed Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi as president in place of the long-ruling President Ali Abdullah Saleh, while granting the latter immunity from prosecution. The resurgence of the Arab security state has been a transnational phenomenon. None of these outcomes can be explained solely through domestic factors.

And, of course, there are the wars. A Saudi-led coalition is six months into a grinding, bloody military campaign in Yemen designed to roll back the advances of Saleh and the Houthi movement. Libya's failed transition and spiraling war has been deeply shaped by external backing for its rival forces and episodic Egyptian military strikes. Syria's uprising has long since transformed into a horrific war fueled by massive direct and indirect intervention by multiple Arab states, Iran and Turkey.

The Arab uprising's initiation and outcomes, therefore, have been manifestly and profoundly shaped by international factors, with which international relations theory has yet to fully engage. This diverse group of scholars addressed a wide array of issues raised by reconceptualizing the Arab uprisings in terms of international relations.

Some of the contributors seek to bridge levels of analysis, focusing on traditional forms of statecraft, alliances and institutions. Sarah Bush and Etel Solingen examine the different forms of international pressure on the Middle East and the role that Western actors have played in blocking meaningful democratic change. Gregory Gause and Curtis Ryan highlight the ongoing centrality of regime survival concerns in shaping the foreign policies of Arab states, locating unusual new foreign policy gambits in the heightened or transformed sense of the threats to their rule. Erin Snider brings international political economy back into frame. Bassel Salloukh examines how the proliferation of weak and shattered states has changed the structural dynamics of the region's politics. Matteo Legrenzi explores new forms of regionalism and the prospect for greater institutionalization of state cooperation.

Others focus on the importance of ideas. Ewan Stein explores the relationship between the regime legitimization formulas and their regional foreign policies, while Lawrence Rubin similarly looks closely at how the ideational security dilemma created for these regimes by the Islamic State. Helle Malmvig evocatively asks how sectarian identity politics can be taken seriously without giving in to the cynical manipulations of powerful elites. Zeynep Kaya considers the efforts of Kurds to achieve genuine sovereignty. Stephan Stetter incorporates social evolution theory and political communications to assess the extent to which 2011 represented genuine change in regional affairs.

A final set of authors, led by workshop co-host Morten Valbjørn, reverses the sights by using the Arab uprisings to challenge international relations as a discipline. Pinar Bilgin investigates the parochialism of IR theory, manifested in its difficulty to incorporate the ways in which non-dominant actors conceive of their own security concerns. Nora Fisher Onar pushes for the serious inclusion of feminist and critical scholarship and a broader engagement with the emergent literature of "global international relations." This should not be seen simply as the metatheoretical prejudice of European and Turkey-based scholars: Their case for seriously incorporating human security and critical scholarship could hardly be more urgently relevant given the horrific and enduring human cost of the wars raging across Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

The thoughtful essays in this outstanding collection only begin to scratch the surface of what international relations theory should contribute to the study of the Arab uprisings. Much remains to be done with the implications of a perceived decline in U.S. power and commitment in the region, the potential emergence of new alignments between Israel and Arab regimes, the role of transnational networks in a system still structured by states, the possibilities raised by joint Arab military action in Yemen, the long-term effects of population displacement and human trauma caused by the region's wars and so much more. Download POMEPS Studies 16 International Relations Theory and a Changing Middle East for a remarkable survey of current thinking and a great introduction to the analytical debates to come.

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Rethinking Moderation, Attending to the Liminal[1]

Michaelle Browers, Wake Forest University

**This memo was prepared for the "Evolving Methodologies in the Study of Islamist Politics" workshop, January 29, 2016.*

There was, not so long ago, a rich debate in Middle East politics over moderation. More recently there seems to be what might be termed "moderation-thesis fatigue," as was well captured a year ago in a piece by Jillian Schwedler. Rather than asking about moderation per se (What is moderation? What can foster it? Inclusion? Cross-ideological cooperation?), at this moment when so many countries in the Arab region are experiencing instability, discontent and deep social divisions, we might inquire more immediately as to the fate those actors that the literature has *already* highlighted (even celebrated) as moderate: How have they fared, what role have they played, and what role might they yet play? However, I want to further suggest a rethinking of why it was that they were celebrated in the first place. Just as Stacey Philbrick Yadav notes "our inability to isolate Islamists as an object of analysis," I argue for the redescription of moderation—and, ultimately, an abandoning of the term altogether—by focusing on the go-between, in-between action performed by those individuals we often label as moderates, a category of action which I am suggesting we redescribe as *liminal*.

Theorizing Middles

Social and political analysis of moderates, middles and liminality is vast and varied. This is seen most clearly in the association of middles with both stability and with change. The former emphasizes those actors (typically identified as the middle class or ideological moderates) who stabilize by virtue of their stake in the status quo and/or their possession of ideas that valorize stability, encourage measured reform and discourage radical change. My own work leaned toward the latter sense in locating alternative visions among various in-between and go-between individuals who were thinking, acting, dialoging and building connections across ideological divides.[2] Many of these same individuals were important players in the growth of protest activity that brought us the Arab uprisings and the overthrow of heads of state in a number of countries, including Egypt. I was not alone in drawing attention to Egypt's middle actors[3] and moderates[4] — and many post-2011 works highlighted the importance of liminal spaces[5] and liminal actors[6] in explaining the uprisings and even in projecting further potentialities.[7]

Liminality has been associated with both reconciliation and with emancipatory politics, marking an in-between that allows for a mixing and mingling of things usually kept separate, a zone of contestation and transition that is open to alternative possibilities. Both aspects are found among those actors that scholars of Arab politics have highlighted as "moderate" or "middle." I focus here on

1 A much expanded (chapter length) version of this argument will appear in in *Critical Approaches to the Arab Uprisings*, ed. Amentahru Wahlrab, Michael McNeal and Matthew Weinert (I.B. Tauris, forthcoming). The research behind both iterations of this project was greatly facilitated by the Project on Middle East Political Science's Travel, Research and Engagement Grant.

2 Browers, Michaelle (2009). *Political Ideology in the Arab World: Accommodation and Transformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

3 Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2004). The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of the Egypt's Wasat Party." *Comparative Politics* 36(2): 205-228; Stacher, Joshua (2009). "The Brothers and the War." *Middle East Report* 250 (Spring): 2-9.

4 Baker, Raymond William (2006). *Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

5 Rumelili, Bahar (2013). "Modeling Democracy: Western Hegemony, Turkey and the Middle East," in Viatcheslav Morozov, ed, *Decentering the West: The Idea of Democracy and the Struggle for Hegemony*. Abingdon: Ashgate, 64-84.

6 Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky (2013). The Muslim Brotherhood: *Evolution of an Islamist Movement.* Princeton: Princeton University Press; Baker, Raymond William (2015). *One Islam, Many Muslim Worlds: Spirituality, Identity, and Resistance across Islamic Land*s. New York: Oxford University Press. However, neither Wickham nor Baker use the terminology of liminality.

7 Levine, Mark (2013). "Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings." *Middle East Critique* 22(3): 191-212.

Islamist liminars, while maintaining the need for study of those individuals playing similar roles in other ideological corners— and limit my focus to Egypt, in light of space and knowledge constraints.

Locating Egypt's Liminars

Liminars are found among the so-called "middle generation" of the Muslim Brotherhood—more a political generation in a sociological sense than age-cohorts—sometimes self-styled[8] as the reformist brothers or *ikhwan islahiyyun*. In the 1970s, many of these figures were involved the creation of *al-jama'a al-islamiyya* and active in student unions before joining the Brotherhood around 1975 to 1977. In subsequent years, many either left or were driven from the Muslim Brotherhood. Prior to the Egyptian uprising, some departed with Madi to form the Wasat party. Others had their membership suspended when they worked with other groups in the course of the uprising or became part of the handful of dissident parties established in the run-up to Egypt's 2011 parliamentary elections. Some remained within the Muslim Brotherhood, but were in Tahrir Square and working with other groups ahead of their organization. 'Abd al-Munim Abu al-Futuh remained within the Brotherhood until 2011, preferring to reform from within. He finally left (or was expelled) to run for president when it the Brotherhood claimed it would not seek the presidency, taking others with him.

Despite challenges from within and without, many of these reformist brothers were elected to Egypt's post-revolution parliament; but their foray into formal political institutions was short-lived, since that body was dissolved by the supreme constitutional court (whose judges were appointed by Mubarak) in June 2012. Although a Muslim Brother was ultimately elected to the presidency, Muhammad Morsi was no liminal actor and perhaps too few scholars have observed what many former Muslim Brothers from this trend have reported in writings over the past two years: that hardliners used their electoral success and their access to state institutions during their one year in power to purge their ranks of those internal dissidents that they have been struggling against since the 1990s.[9]

A number of these figures proved vocal critics of policies that took place or continued under the Morsi presidency. Before the military coup, reformist (former) Brother Haytham Abu Khalil asserted that the political crisis in Egypt was "a result of a floundering presidency," which was taking its orders directly from the Brotherhood (specifically from deputy supreme guide Khayrat al-Shatir), and lacked the "planning expertise" needed to govern effectively. Abu al-Futuh (and his Strong Egypt party) initially supported Tamarrud (Rebellion), which led the campaign to collect 15 million signatories to a call for early presidential elections. However, he immediately opposed the military's use of this popular movement to oust Morsi and take power and helped form the Third Square (*al-maydan al-thalith*) along with an ideologically wide range of actors and groups — a liminal space of protest to take place in Sphinx square, situated outside of both the military organized protests in Tahrir Square calling for a crackdown on "terrorism" and the Islamist protests organized by Morsi's supporters in Rabi'a al-Adawiyya square.

Many, too, have been arrested in the wake of Morsi's overthrow, including both Madi and Wasat Party deputy, 'Issam Sultan. The former was released in August 2015, while the latter still languishes in prison along with 'Ariyan and Biltaji. The Egyptian Current Party, which was led by former Muslim Brotherhood youth members and some youth from April 6, merged with Strong Egypt in October 2014, providing some hope that some liminars will not be so easily fractured by the regime's divide and rule tactics. At the same time, Strong Egypt, like all opposition forces, has had many members arrested, cannot receive any funds, and finds itself regularly shut out of or attacked by the Egyptian media. In the lead-up to the fifth anniversary of the January 25 revolution this group remained a voice for the opposition. But its ability to address the larger divides

8 Abu Khalil, Haytham (2012). *Ikhwan islahiyyun* (Reformist Brothers). Cairo: Dar Dawwin.

9 Woltering, Robbert (2014). "Post-Islamism in Distress? A Critical Evaluation of the Theory in Islamist-Dominated Egypt," *Die Welt de Islams* 54(1): 107-118.

in Egyptian society—let alone to stave off the deepening divisions within the democratic opposition--remains limited by the current political climate and repressive regime practices.

Much previous work has credited these individuals (along with other activists working outside of both state and traditional parties in Egypt) with doing much of the legwork of forging the broad- based oppositional politics prior in the lead up to 2011. I also identified a second group of Islamist go-betweens who did much of the headwork. This second category of liminars consists of older, more intellectual figures—many of whom began their politicization in Arab nationalist or socialist movements but have come in one way or another to be associated with an Islamicist ethos and are often grouped together under the heading of *wasatiyya*. They include the law professor Kamal Abu al-Magd, the former Judge Tariq al-Bishri, the journalist Fahmi Huwaydi, the writer and lawyer Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, Muhammad Ammara. Some consider Tariq al-Bishri's October 2004 call for disobedience to an unjust regime as the manifesto that galvanized the opposition. His name quickly circulated as a potential consensus candidate for president. He declined, citing age, though Salim al-'Awwa decided to run. Bishri was immediately tapped by the SCAF to lead the constitution writing process, as the revolution's first order of business. When Morsi put forth his infamous November 2012 constitutional decree that would have granted him broad powers as president, Bishri again spoke out critically.

Despite the failed experience of the Morsi presidency, the emergence of popular support for the military's removal of the country's first democratically president and the current climate in which calls for the "elimination" of Islamists are widely heard, these figures remain committed to democracy and dialogue. Those who subscribe to the participation-moderation thesis would expect inclusion to contribute to a further moderating of views and exclusion to their radicalization. Certainly, since the military coup, the lines between those who support the regime and those who support the Muslim Brotherhood have become much sharper. Nonetheless, these liminars continue to be the most consistent advocates for dialogue and reconciliation. The lawyer Kamal Abu al-Magd has been perhaps the most vociferous in calling for the establishment of reconciliation processes that would put the Brotherhood and the Sisi government in dialogue. Yet, his multiple efforts to mediate between the two, announced in the media, have been consistently rebuffed by both sides. And he has, in turn, become the object of critique by both: he has been criticized by the Muslim Brotherhood for suggesting they give up their claim to the presidency and renounce violence and he is criticized by the government for suggesting the release of at least some of the Muslim Brotherhood members currently imprisoned.

The motives of these figures was called into question before the uprising in Egypt. In the current climate, they are finding themselves not just suspect but threatened. In addition to arrests and intimidation tactics on the part of the Sisi government, the press has been used to sully their reputations, as their critical forays into the public are consistently met with vitriolic rejoinders and charges of slander, treason and the like. This past July, Kamal Abu al-Magd gave an interview in Tahrir that was critical of the political climate under Sisi and was viciously attacked in the media the next day, most prominently by 'Amr Adeeb on the talk show al-Qahira al-Yawm.[10] Interviews with some of the analysts at al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies revealed that many secular self-identified "liberals" and "democrats" view these liminars as as bad as the Muslim Brotherhood— or even worse (for providing a cover or enabling the Islamists). The fraught status of the *liminal* intellectuals and activists over the past five years seem to confirm Edmund Burke's claim for those who engage in moderation and compromise: the former "will be stigmatized as the virtue of cowards" and the latter as "the prudence of traitors."

Attending to the Liminal

Shortly after Egypt's military removed Muhammad Morsi from power, Egyptian political science professor and

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activist Rabab el-Mahdi identified "a wide and hard to bridge societal polarization" as the source of the current "catastrophe" and suggested that, absent a reconciliation process, Egypt could enter a phase "much worse than that of the police state under the rule of Mubarak." Another Egyptian political scientist, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, noted that reconciliation between the regime and the Brotherhood is essential if the bloodshed is to stop and the country is to avoid a civil war. Tens of thousands of Muslim Brothers members and thousands of other Islamist and secular activists have been imprisoned or are in exile. There have been more deaths in clashes with police, by acts of terrorism, and though torture or neglect in prison. Five years after the uprising in Egypt, many commentators are bemoaning the "collapse of the Egyptian center," the "pervasive distrust" and "wall of fear" among social groups in the country. The literature on reconciliation processes consistently points to local, homegrown mediators as key to long-term success. Deliberative models are increasingly touted as means of building trust and resolving crises. Much of the literature on democratic transitions and consolidation note the importance of centrist, moderate, or middle class forces. In O'Donnell and Schmitter's words: "the talents of specific individuals (*virtù*) are frequently decisive in determining the outcomes."[11]

What I am suggesting is that the "talents" that matter most are those of actors who are committed to working in the in-between and as go-betweens—that is, liminal actors who are willing to build connections, broker and engage across divides, to think and act independently of existing structures of power in order to pursue a not fully formed but in many respects salient vision of an alternative to authoritarianism, whether it emerges in the form of Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood or the military.

How can one expect to cast lines between the echo chambers absent Egypt's liminars, whether the so-called Islamic *wasatiyya*, the "reformist Brothers" and ex-Brothers, or other individuals whom we might associate with other ideological categories (and about whose level of "moderation" we might well disagree) but who clearly and consistently display a similar category of action as liminars on the Egyptian political scene? It is in those in-between spaces and via those go-between actors that alternative visions and communities are worked out. Of course, beyond this, we must consider not just liminal spaces and those who create and animate them, but the social structures in which these liminal spaces and individuals are embedded.

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11 O'Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe Schmitter (1986). Transitions from *Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

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