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From Mobilization to Counter-Revolution

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Project on Middle East Political Science

Contents

Introduction 3
Marc Lynch, POMEPS & George Washington University

Waves of Democratization, Waves of Disillusionment 5
By Charles Kurzman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Taking Time Seriously: Temporality and the Arab Uprisings 7
Jillian Schwedler, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Late Populism 12
Steffen Hertog, London School of Economics

Why Unarmed Revolutions Topple Some Dictators but Not Others 18
By Daniel P. Ritter, University of Nottingham and the London School of Economics and Political Science

In Defense of Ideology: Notes on Experience and Revolution 19
By Sune Haugbolle, Roskilde University

Arab Transitions and the Old Elite 25
By Ellis Goldberg, University of Washington

How Tunisia's Ennahda Turned from Religious Opposition Movement into Consensus-Seeking Political Party 30
By Rory McCarthy, University of Oxford

Five Years After the Revolution, More and More Tunisians Support Democracy 32
By Michael Robbins, Arab Barometer, University of Michigan, Princeton University

Elite-led Protest and Authoritarian State Capture in Egypt 34
By Neil Ketchley, Brasenose College, University of Oxford

Why Two Islands May Be More Important to Egyptian Regime Stability than Billions in Gulf Aid 37
By Laurie A. Brand, University of Southern California, and Joshua Stacher, Kent State University

They have a Gun in One Hand and the Media in the Other 39
By Amy Austin Holmes, American University in Cairo

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Dilemma between Religion and Politics 42
Khalil al-Anani, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies

Abdel Fatah al-Sissi in the Age of the Trickster 44
By Walter Armbrust, University of Oxford

From Co-optation to Crackdown 51
Courtney Freer, London School of Economics

Adding Insult to Injury 56
Lisel Hintz, Cornell University

Why Turkey's Authoritarian Descent Shakes Up Democratic Theory 61
By Jason Brownlee, University of Texas at Austin

Master Frames of the Syrian Conflict 63
By Reinoud Leenders, King's College London

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.

The Arab uprisings triggered a fierce regional countermobilization by threatened regimes and the elites who benefited from the status quo. This resurgent autocracy did simply restore the old order, however. It created new forms of populist mobilization and established new relationships among civil and military state institution. In May 2016, the Project on Middle East Political Science and Oxford University's Middle East Center convened a workshop to dig deeply into the new regional politics generated by the authoritarian reconstruction.

The effects and legacies of the Arab uprisings need to be placed into a broader comparative perspective in order to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions. It has become commonplace to assign the blame for the failures of the Arab uprisings to the problems of Arab culture, the unique nature of Islamist movements, or the distinctive pathologies of Arab civil society and political opposition movements. But as crushing as they may have been, were the failures of uprisings (such as Egypt's) to produce lasting democratic change really so unusual?

In his keynote presentation to the workshop, Mark Beissinger observed that some two-thirds of revolutionary episodes since 1900 had ended in the failure of the opposition to gain power and the survival of the incumbent regime. Of the third that succeeded, almost a third of these cases lasted in power only three or years or less.

It is all too common to see reversals of the gains made by popular uprisings. Indeed, relative successes like Tunisia's are the exception anywhere – not just in the Arab context. "Most new democracies fail," observes Charles Kurzman. Since the late 18th century, the pattern has been "waves of democratization leading to waves of disillusionment."

As Beissinger trenchantly noted at the workshop, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 — like Egypt's in 2011:

> *[W]as spectacularly successful in mobilizing millions of citizens to the streets in order to evict a corrupt and repressive regime, and it was spectacularly unsuccessful in institutionalizing substantive change in its wake. Once it gained power, the coalition underpinning the revolution unraveled and its leaders became engulfed in factional squabbles over the redistribution of property, leading to gridlock. Within two years of the revolution, those whom the revolution evicted from power had won their way back to political office through the ballot box, undermining any sense that a revolution had ever occurred. The main legacy of the Orange Revolution when viewed from the vantage point of today was to set the stage for the societal disappointment that helped precipitate a new revolution in 2013-14.*

Political change is hard. It is almost always partial, nonlinear, and unsatisfying. Elites may be driven from political office, but they do not so easily lose their wealth, social capital, or international connections. Real political change always faces resistance from the powerful social and political forces which benefited from the previous order.

But for all of this, it's wrong to simply say the Arab uprising failed.

The uprisings have caused profound changes to the region's politics, some for the better and some for the worse. As Jillian Schwedler astutely argues, the declaration that the uprisings are over should be understood as a political narrative which aims to demoralize and demobilize challengers and to normalize the new order. Egypt's military seized power from an elected President with significant elite-led mobilization, restored parts of the old elite to power, and cracked down relentlessly on the Muslim Brotherhood and political activists. It rules uneasily over a young and restless population which has seen the power of the streets, has little condidence or interest in its political institutions, and is suffering from a collapsing currency and unaddressed economic problems. Barely five years into the process, it is far too soon to know with certainty which of these outcomes will ultimately prove more significant.

The essays collected in this volume range widely over the Middle East, surveying the methods and modalities of the autocratic backlash. Rory McCarthy shows how Tunisia's Islamist party Ennahda adapted to the autocratic era by dividing party from movement. Courtney Freer explains how the Gulf states cracked down on Islamist movements. Reinoud Leenders traces the rhetorical and physical violence of the initial response to the Syrian uprisings. Walter Armbrust evokes the figure of the trickster in the capture of Egypt's transition. Neil Ketchley shows how the Egyptian state engineered the June 30 protests. Amy Austin Holmes traces ongoing moments of popular resistance to autocracy in Egypt. Sune Haugbolle argues for the importance of ideology in understanding the post-uprising events. Lisel Hintz analyzes the rhetorical strategies of Turkey's crackdown on the Gezi Park protests. Steffen Hertog details the political economy of the surviving regimes and the fate of their distributional bargains.

These diverse and challenging essays show profoundly that the challenges which produced the Arab uprisings remains unresolved. How those grievances present themselves in the near future will be shaped by the political, institutional, economic and rhetorical choices now being made by the region's resurgent autocrats.

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Waves of Democratization, Waves of Disillusionment:
The Arab Spring in Historical Perspective

By Charles Kurzman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Most new democracies fail. They dissolve into civil wars, or are overtaken by coups or collapse under authoritarian bureaucrats and demagogues. They fade into obscure paragraphs in history books. Who remembers the Iranian constitution of 1906 or the Ottoman parliament of 1909, for example? Who remembers the Azerbaijani parliament of 1918 or the Egyptian revolution of 1919 or the Kuwaiti council of 1921? Perhaps the Arab Spring will suffer a similar fate – to be forgotten or dismissed for not having lived up to its hope.

But the hope was real. "The power of the people is greater than the people in power," wrote Wael Ghonem (2012), the new-media activist who became the face of the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Wiki-revolts, aggregating millions of contributors, constituted Revolution 2.0.

> Thanks to modern technology, participatory democracy is becoming a reality. Governments are finding it harder and harder to keep their people isolated from one another, to censor information, and to hide corruption and issue propaganda that goes unchallenged. Slowly but surely, the weapons of mass oppression are becoming extinct. (Ghonem 2012:292-3)

How misguided that optimism came to seem; the following year, a coup installed a military junta, and the year after that, the leader of the coup installed himself as president.

But this has been the pattern since the late 18th century: waves of democratization leading to waves of disillusionment.

After the Ottoman uprising of 1908, for example, which forced constitutional limits on the power of the sultan, the population was euphoric. "In every corner of the Ottoman lands," an Istanbul newspaper effused, "hundreds of thousands of people -- Muslims, Christians, and Jews, whole families, men, women, and children -- have held unimaginable and indescribable celebrations, holidays, and feasts for the past 10 days. This joy will not disappear from the nation's heart til the end of days" (Kurzman 2008:9). One year later, after the military had replaced the prime minister and ordered parliament to limit freedom of the press, assembly, labor rights, the joy was gone, one pro-democracy intellectual reported.

> Enough with the blame! Blame belongs to nobody, or everybody... the blame belongs to you, me, and them... the blame belongs to the time and the place... the blame belongs to those who don't understand, and to those who are doomed not to understand.... Come close, I want to entrust you with a secret, and then I'll be quiet: My friend, sometimes there are surroundings that are ill-omened, like a graveyard. No intelligence, no wisdom, no talent can live there. There the living lie and the dead wander about. (Tunaya 1959:64)

Supporters of democracy expressed similar sentiments in other failed democracies of the period as well (Kurzman 2008:20):

> Already, as in a nightmare or a frightening dream, we can imagine that the darkness overhanging us is the shaggy chest of the shaft-horse, and that in another moment the heavy hoofs will descend. (Russia)

> These ruins of a cemetery are not our Iran. These ruins are not Iran, where is Iran?

> The fight is a hopeless one and a thorough waste. (Mexico)

> Days of slavery await us. (Portugal)

> Imagine an iron house having not a single window, and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won't feel the pain of death. Now if you raise a shout to awake a few of the light sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn? (China)

Look at eight prominent waves of democratization since the late 18th century (from Kurzman 1998:52):

> 1789-1802: 10 countries, sparked by the French Revolution
>
> 1810-1930: Spain and 8 former colonies
>
> 1848-1851: 6 countries in Europe, plus parts of Germany and Italy
>
> 1905-1913: 6 countries beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1905
>
> 1918-1922: 10 countries gaining independence after World War I
>
> 1945-1960: numerous countries in liberated Europe and decolonized Africa and Asia
>
> 1973-1988: Portugal, Greece, Spain, Philippines, and numerous Latin American countries
>
> 1989-1991: Numerous Communist countries and African countries

Until the mid-20th century, only a handful of democratic revolutions managed to survive more than a few years, if that long. Since then, with the emergence of relatively stable democracies in parts of Europe and the Americas, and in some other countries as well, we have come to expect democracy to "stick." But that is the historical exception.

Direct statistical tests of this history will soon be possible with a new dataset on revolutionary situations, which Mark Beissinger of Princeton University unveiled at POMEPS's recent conference at Oxford University.

Whiggish social science makes democratic reversals all the more unexpected and disappointing for us academic observers. If democracy is the fruit of long-standing social processes – the spread of education, global communication, rising incomes and networks of trade – then we expect political institutions to evolve with the same slow pace of change, or perhaps to catch up to the "predicted" level of democracy in a burst of surface tension.

This form of causal analysis trips over the fundamental mismatch between generally slow-moving socio-economic factors and the rapid ricochets of democratic trajectories.

The lesson I propose is that our roller-coaster emotions at the coming of the Arab Spring were not just the product of an ideological commitment – the belief that Arabs could have democracy too – but also the product of a theoretical commitment – the belief that political outcomes have long-term or at least medium-term causes.

That theoretical commitment led many observers to identify the causes of the uprisings immediately after they occurred, and to consider it a failure that they had not foreseen them (Kurzman 2012). In the years since, they have had to walk back some of those explanations, as the dependent variable has shifted.

An older, alternative approach to democratization is to take the pessimistic view that experiments in popular governance generally fail. This was the view of James Bryce, perhaps the leading scholar of democracy in the early 20th century. His masterwork, *Modern Democracies*, was published in 1921, in the thick of the post-World War I wave of democratizations. By his count, 10 new states "have given or are giving themselves democratic constitutions," doubling the number of democracies in the world over the past 15 years. In Bryce's openly racist view, these recent democratizations were absurd: "It is as if one should set a child to drive a motor car" (Bryce 1921:575, 501-2). Fifteen years later, none of those new democracies

had survived. (Though, contrary to Bryce's expectations, most were wrecked by non-democratic "adults" ramming into them, not by immature drivers running off the road.)

Betting on democratic failure has generally been a winning strategy. Many of today's non-democracies have had experiments with democracy (or partial democracy), and most of today's stable democracies experienced several failed attempts before generating self-perpetuating democratic institutions (and even some of those institutions often look shaky).

In historic perspective, the Arab Spring looks like the latest in a centuries-long series of cautionary tales for the study of democratic revolutions. It is imprudent to try to tame these events in a net of causal explanation before they are done thrashing.

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Taking Time Seriously: Temporality and the Arab Uprisings

Jillian Schwedler, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Questions of temporality lurk behind every analytic framework, and studies of the Arab uprisings are no exception. As scholars, we always make choices about where to begin and end our analyses, sometimes adhering to common frameworks for periods and epochs, and sometimes suggesting innovations. More than a technical and practical consideration for research design, choice of temporal register plays a powerful role in our scholarship, but one that is often acknowledged only in passing or left entirely recognized. In my current book project on political protests in Jordan—a project that addresses the uprisings but is not about them—I examine in one chapter the ways in which multiple temporal registers shape our understanding of what is happening in the course of a protest or series of protests, and how we fit those understandings into a "big picture" (including our choices about precisely what that big thing is). Choosing a temporal register can have profound political implications for the analyses we produce, in that it operates to recognize, authorize, or critique some practices, actors,

events, and power relations, while obscuring or ignoring others.

But the politics of time is not merely analytic: the groups, individuals, and agencies involved in protests embrace and generate their own understandings about what is happening, and those choices impact their actions on a practical level. That is, when a protest event happens,[1] actors create, adopt, and adapt different narrative understandings about the event, the intentions of others, the level of threat, and the target of the challenge, to give just a few examples. Actors are diverse, some present at the event and other constituting near and distance audiences: they may include, for example, the police, the army, the cabinet, the head of state, the media, political parties, activists, participants, bystanders, foreign governments, international aid agencies, foreign corporations seeking to investment opportunities, makers and marketers of security technology and hardware, and so on. Actors often do not even agree on what is happening, [2] and those disagreements are exacerbated when actors hold different temporal registers.

Many narratives, discourses, analytic frameworks, best practices, and so on, are anchored in specific temporal registers. They shape, and are shaped by, what actors do and what they understand to be happening. They create some possibilities and foreclose others. They mark the stakes of conflicts. Was Trevon Martin's death about the few minutes in which two individuals encountered each other one evening? Was it about the racial politics of policing? About communities struggling to provide security where state agencies are seen to have failed? About neoliberal exclusions that create new hierarchies and exclusions? About centuries of racism deeply embedded in the fabric of American society? These arguments compete not only analytically but also by locating an "event" in very temporal registers. More importantly, the contradictory interpretations of the same events call for radically divergent political responses.

Temporal registers are particularly central to understandings of contentious politics: riots, revolutions, revolts, protests, uprisings, marches, sit-ins, strikes, and so on. In 2001, Doug McAdam and William H. Sewell, Jr. urged scholars of contentious politics to pay more attention to time. Their primary concern was that "[c]ertain temporal rhythms have been emphasized at the expense of others."[3] They identify four temporal registers at work in much scholarship, corresponding to long-term, medium-term, short-term, and shifts in "cultural epochs," what Charles Tilly termed "repertoires of contention." Their typology is suggestive rather than exhaustive, but their brief discussion underlines the need to consider temporal registers as a core dimension of both methodology and epistemology.

Scholarly Temporalities

I have argued elsewhere that scholarship on the Arab uprisings has predominantly adopted analytic frameworks that emphasize the life-cycle of the uprisings: that is, when each of the uprisings began, how it evolved, whether or not it turned violent, whether there was regime change, and so on.[4] The uprisings are widely acknowledged to be part of a larger phenomenon—what the media insists on calling the "Arab Spring" but scholars more commonly refer to as "the uprisings"—but many analyses examine them as separate cases, taking each uprising as discrete and treating them as comparable units suitable for comparative

1 Here I refer to protest events that are readily recognized, like those of the Arab uprisings. However, an extensive literature explores other kinds of protest actions that are barely visible, extremely small, or entirely private. Temporalities matter no less to analyses of these smaller acts. But I advance the discussion and concepts that follows with specific reference to visible public acts of protest that take the form of some sort of collective assembly or action.

2 Two seminal illustrations are the 1950 film Rashomon by Akira Kurosawa, and Christian Davenport's Media Bias, Perspective, and State Repression: The Black Panther Party (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), which invokes the notion of a Rashomon effect: contradictory interpretations of the same event by different people. Neither explicitly explore temporality, however.

3 Doug McAdam and William H. Sewell, Jr., "It's About Time: Temporality in the Study of Social Movements and Revolutions," in Ronald R. Aminzade et al, eds., Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 89-125.

4 Jillian Schwedler, "Comparative Politics and the Arab Uprisings," *Middle East Law and Governance* 7 (April 2015): 141–152.

analysis. Each uprising is contained within a single state unit, and the focus is on the arc or trajectory of the cycle of protest. Leaving aside the strengths and weaknesses of the life-cycle approach that I have discussed elsewhere, here I want to draw attention to the fact that for this approach in which the uprisings are the unit of analysis, the temporal register is medium-term: the uprisings are part of discrete protest cycles, whose beginnings, middles, and ends can be identified (even if scholars disagree on what those are). A single cycle can last days, months, or years, but it constitutes a clear "unit" of analysis, the object of scholarly inquiry and the framework within which analytic questions emerge. Asking the question, "Why did some states experience uprisings while others did not?" implicitly adopts just such a life-cycle temporal register.

Exemplary of this approach is *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform,* by Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds. They adopt two comparative frameworks. The first examines each state as a discrete entity with its own uprising, and the second compares the collection of the Arab uprisings with other collections of uprisings, notably those of Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They seek to explain why the uprisings resulted in "failed transitions" to democracy, their temporal register structured by the widely discussed teleology of the transitology literature. The comparisons are built across two different arcs (between individual uprisings, and between regional waves of uprisings), but both are life-cycle frameworks that embrace the middle-range temporal register. This approach is also adopted in most media analyses, where comparing the uprisings is taken as matter-of-fact, as common sense. My aim is not to disparage this temporal register so much as to bring it into the light and to explore its implications.

A smaller collection of scholars (and some journalists) have situated the uprisings in long-term temporalities, those that bring into view processes of change that span decades or even centuries: colonialism, industrialization, capitalism, state formation, urbanization, neoliberalism, and so on. From a long-term temporal register, the uprisings are episodes or segments of other stories of historical change or political processes. Two examples of this approach are John Chalcraft's *Popular Politics: The Making of the Modern Middle East*, and Adam Hanieh's *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*. The former situates the uprisings in a framework of a century of revolt and rebellion in the region, set against state-building, colonialism, and evolving imperial interventions. The latter situates the uprisings in a framework of capitalist and neoliberal projects that led to a major shift in the region's political economy and growing inequality, the effects of which are managed through repression. For long-term temporal registers, a core question might be, "What explains the outbreak and timing of the Arab uprisings?" The answer is to be found outside of the lifecycle of the uprisings themselves, in a larger context of changing power relations and political change.

Short-term temporalities are even less common in the scholarly literature on the uprisings, although works on the micro-dynamics of Egypt's 18 days, for example, take us in for a close view. Adopting McAdam and Sewell's category of transformative events, I would argue that the initial acts of the uprisings—within as well as across cases—were akin to such acts of protest as the taking of the Bastille and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. For those who participated in or witnessed them, those acts become transformative events in that they are "interpreted as *significantly disrupting, altering, or violating the taken-for-granted assumptions governing routine political and social relations.* [5] In so doing, they serve to dramatically ratchet up (or down in the case of demobilizing events—for example, the Tiananmen Square massacre) the shared sense of uncertainty (with its partisan variants, "threat" and "opportunity") on which all broad episodes of contention depend" (McAdam and Sewell: 2001: 110).[6] The temporal register is minutes, hours, days.

Youssef El-Chazli's extraordinary micro-examination of what transpired on January 25 in Alexandria—not

5 For example, see Wendy Pearlman, "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 2 (June 2013): 387-409.

6 Italics original.

Cairo—gives us just such a view, taking us inside a single day and allowing us to witness the very transformation of what Alexandrians understood to be happening. He follows them as the move across space and through time, giving voice to the moments when they began to recognize and then believe that their mobilization—along with the ones happening elsewhere in Egypt, which they followed through news via mobile phone—was fundamentally transformative of the Egyptian political scene; *they* had agency, *they* made it happen.[7] The taking of the Bastille, as Sewell notes, "created hitherto unimagined categories of political action" (106). Today revolutionary action in the sense of citizens rising and mobilizing against a state is imaginable because of the French Revolution; popular revolution has become part of an existing repertoire of contention, one that regimes as well as citizens know. But the awareness of historical precedents does not mean that peoples everywhere feel that such an opportunity is there for the taking. Just as taking the Bastille helped transform the self-understandings of French subjects into citizen, the early days of the Arab uprisings were necessary to make imaginable actually thinkable, even possible—even if those who "started" that mobilization could not have hoped for the result (although they may have). In this way a short-term temporal register may be connected to a re-articulation if not radical reimagining of a medium-term temporal register—the shift in cultural epoch posited by Charles Tilly. A single event can fundamentally transform the horizon of what people believe is possible.

New Horizons for a New Middle East

Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that parts of the region are experiencing their "Terror," but it seems inadequate to suggest there is, in any way, a "going back" to what was before, try as regimes may to turn back the clock. Repressive regimes may again thrive and endure, but the uprisings cannot un-happen (and the regimes are not now in any way stable). The uprisings ushered in a new temporality for many people, one that resulted in a rupture in their understanding of what is possible, how processes change, and their role—an active one—in that history.

The idea of a transformative event as a short-term temporality that opens a new temporal register—a new future becomes possible, a new founding—underlines the extent to which questions about time and temporalities are central not only to scholarly analyses but to political actors. Scholars and political actors alike all ask themselves and others, "What is happening?" but the answers are contingent on what time horizon the actor considers.

I am not arguing that we should uncritically adopt the analytic frames, temporal registers, or narratives of those engaged in the uprisings. To the contrary, we need to recognize those sometimes-contradictory frames in order to fully grasp what the uprisings mean. We may well want to identify the ways in which other actors—for example, regimes—are refusing those new horizons, or at least struggling to extinguish them. Here I would like to draw attention to the scholarly work that has adopted the middle-range temporal register—that of the life-cycle—and argued that the uprisings have failed or are otherwise over. Not all scholars adopting a life-cycle approach reach that conclusion; many stress that the uprisings are ongoing or that their full impact will not be known for many years. But a significant number do declare that the uprisings have failed. We may agree (or not) that the transformative-event phase of the uprisings have passed, but the scholarship that concludes "failure" does not acknowledge or even consider the extent to which the new horizons are still embraced by many. If the numbers of those holding on to such new temporal registers are diminishing with time, as they may well be, that change in itself would be a worthy topic of scholarly inquiry.

But declaring the failure or end of the uprisings is doing political work. "Failed transitions" arguments align with the same temporal registers that repressive regimes are peddling. It is a temporality that silences, obscures, erases, and even denies those who continue to struggle, those who

7 Much of this will appear in El-Chazli's dissertation, which he has not yet defended. But a preview of this excellent work is his piece, "A Geography of Revolt in Alexandria, Egypt's Second Capital," on the role of urban space in the uprising, available here: http://www.metropolitiques.eu/A-Geography-of-Revolt-in.html.

refuse to accept that the time of the uprisings is over. And it is not merely that people in the Arab world continue to embrace the revolutionary temporal register, the new horizon: people across the region continue to take to the streets, in large and small numbers, despite declarations by regimes and scholars that their uprisings have failed, that they are over. They struggle through their words and actions to extend the time of the uprising, to hold on to a temporal register fundamentally at odds with the one that the regime aims to force them to accept.

The leaders of the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh) have been peddling their own temporal register, one that anchors their struggle not as a consequence of the turmoil of the Arab uprisings, or even of the Iraq war, but of colonialism. The references to the unmaking of the Sykes-Picot Agreement may invoke eye-rolling among western politicians, but that temporal frame resonates: it calls for an end to a century-long period of western and foreign intervention into (and domination of) much of the political, social, cultural, and economic life of the Middle East. The Islamic State also operates within an even longer temporal register, that of the return of the Caliphate. It might not be a stretch to argue that the core dispute between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State was one of temporality: al-Qaeda rejects the Islamic State's claim that the "time" of Caliphate's return is now. For those who find the Islamic State's mission so compelling that they leave their families and communities to join the group in Syria (or elsewhere), part of the appeal seems connected to a temporal register: being part of an historic processes for the Islamic world, and one that immediately refuses the temporality of the post-industrial, neoliberal, capitalist, consumerist world. If one believes that the Islamic State truly marks the return of the Caliphate, what Muslim would not want to be a part of it? Explanations that "recruits" are motivated by the prospects of the Islamic State providing material goods such as a job, a wife (or husband), and so on, fail to recognize that the pull is not what one gets now, but one's participation in what they believe is a profound historical transformation and religious obligation.

So where does this leave us? Do we agree that the uprisings were what McAdam and Sewell call transformative events? I think so. But "what the uprisings mean" is not a simple matter of getting the story right, or of developing better, more parsimonious, or more robust explanations. Whatever one's methodological or epistemological commitments, we could all improve our analyses by systematically incorporating questions of time or temporality into our analyses.

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Late populism:
State distributional regimes and economic conflict after the Arab uprisings

Steffen Hertog, London School of Economics

The Arab world's wealth distribution regimes are central for understanding both the Arab uprisings and the region's subsequent failures to reform their economies and find a new social contract. This note will briefly outline the notion of an Arab "variety of capitalism" characterized by the central role of a distributive state whose interventions lead to a deep, and at least in parts unintended, segmentation of business and labour markets into insiders and outsiders. It will explain how this model has led to economic stagnation and contributed to the uprisings of 2011 as well as how it has hobbled economic adjustment after the uprisings, both under anciens and new regimes. Its pessimistic conclusion is that distributional institutions in most Arab countries remain very sticky, having created powerful vested interests not only in business but also in society at large that undermine the negotiation of a new "social contract" – a concept that many are talking about but no one seems to be able to map out in any detail.

The note draws on the author's ongoing work on defining an Arab variety of capitalism as well as joint work on Arab welfare state legacies with Ferdinand Eibl.

Background: distributional regimes in Arab world

It might be hard to believe, but in a number of critical areas Arab countries stand out as development successes compared to their developing world peers: since independence, most Arab countries have increased school enrolment and improved basic health provision at a rate that is the envy of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America. Figure 1 below shows that both resource-poor and resource-abundant MENA countries have witnessed much more significant drops in infant mortality than their sub-Saharan Africa peers, reaching a compound annual reduction rate of about 4 percent, compared to SSA's 2 percent (note: the World Bank's definition of MENA is used here; figures would be very similar of only Arab countries were included.) MENA's comparative improvement on the human development index, which includes life expectancy, school enrolment and GDP per capita, is similarly impressive (figure 2).

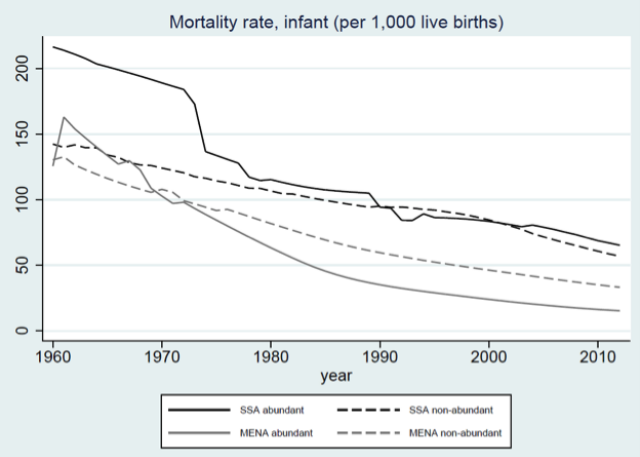

Figure 1: Infant mortality rates since 1960, MENA and sub-Saharan African countries

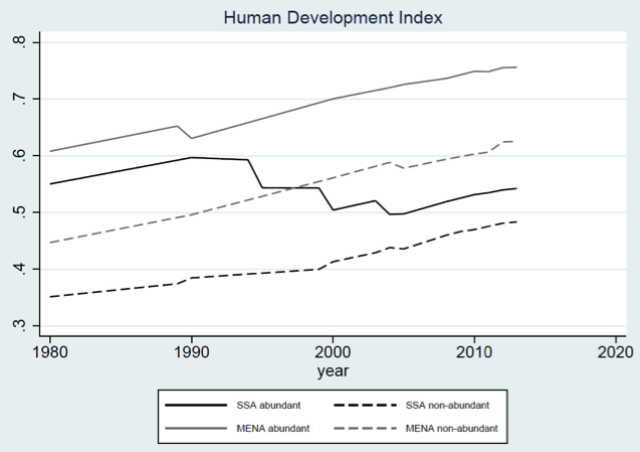

Figure 2: Human development index since 1980, MENA and sub-Saharan African countries

Authoritarian-populist republics like Algeria, Egypt, (pre-war) Syria and Tunisia have achieved particularly good human development scores considering their modest levels of wealth (figure 3).

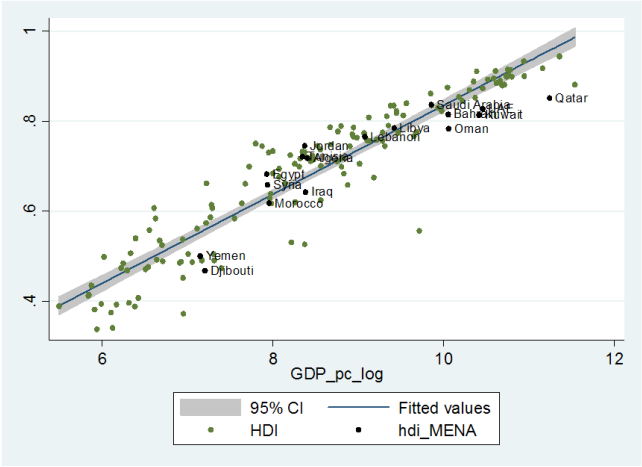

Figure 3: Human development indicator for Arab countries (2010)

The rapid improvements have been enabled by the fast post-independence growth of Arab states and their infrastructural power. Arab states have become deeply involved in economy and society also in other ways, many of them reflecting an ambition to build and materially protect an indigenous middle class.

While Arab governments' ambition to provide might have led to solid coverage of basic services, most Arab states have pledged much wider material guarantees to their citizens – typically beyond their fiscal and administrative capacity, especially once economic growth started stalling in the 1970s. The result has been a rigid insider-outsider division in which some benefit from Arab governments' relative generosity while others remain excluded.

The most important field of intervention has been the labor market, where Arab states have retained a stronger role both as regulator and, crucially, as direct employer (see figure 4). The shares of public in total employment across core Arab countries in Maghreb and Mashreq mostly lie between 20 and 40 percent, far above those in richer Latin America, where they range from 4 to 15 percent (OECD 2014, 61), sub-Saharan Africa, where they range from 2 to 9 percent (Monga and Lin 2015, 138), or East Asia and Pacific, where they mostly lie below 5 percent (Packard and Van Nguyen 2014, 16).

International polls show a continuing strong preference for public sector employment among Arab citizens. On average, only about a fifth of respondents in a 2010 Gallup poll had a preference for private employment, with figures ranging from 8 percent in Yemen to 35 percent in Morocco.

A majority of citizens, however, remains excluded from state employment, which is often seen to be allocated in intransparent ways. As formal employment in the private sector remains miniscule, the default option for most remains the badly paid, precarious informal sector. The growth of this sector has again been driven by state intervention that is intended to protect the middle class, but which deters formal hiring. Formal labor market regulations in the Arab world are perceived as particularly heavy by local firms and the World Bank classifies the "difficulty of redundancy" in the Arab world as the highest worldwide.

A large informal sector also exists in other developing countries. But different from most other developing economies, the "insider" group on the labor market mostly consists of public employees (figure 5). This setup makes for a relatively large and protected insider group, but also crowds out state resources for more inclusive and growth-oriented policies.

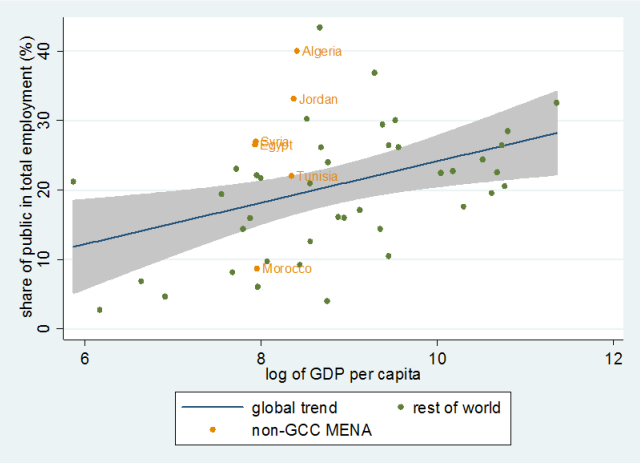

Figure 4: Public employment shares in international comparison
Source: ILO, national sources

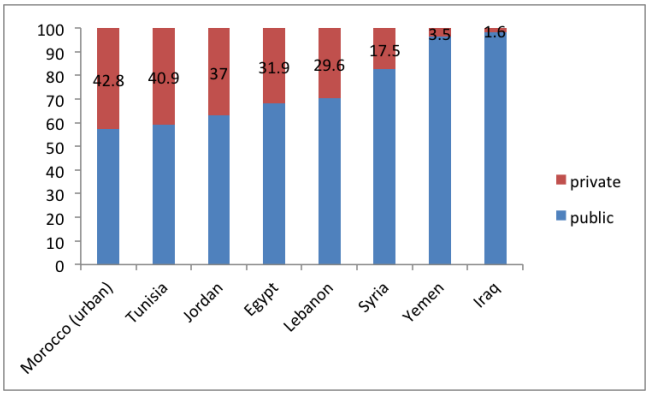

Figure 5: Distribution of formal employment, percent
Sources: Gatti, Morgandi, and Grun 2013, 148; Gatti et al. 2014, 90

Insider-outsider dynamics are also at play in Arab business, the top tiers of which are typically state-dependent cronies, protected through layers of heavy regulation as well as discretionary subsidies and credit allocation – themselves often distorted legacies of earlier periods of statist development (Chekir and Diwan 2015; Diwan, Keefer, and Schiffbauer 2015; Nucifora, Rijkers and Freund 2014). Most other businesses, particularly smaller firms, remain outsiders whose property rights are uncertain and whose interests are not represented in the policy-making process.

Segmented labor markets and private sectors are not unusual, but state intervention is particularly deep and the segmentation is particularly rigid and hard to overcome. Firms in MENA on average are older; there are fewer firm entries and exits than in other world regions (World Bank 2009; Gatti, Morgandi, and Grun 2013). The dispersion of value-added within sectors is particularly high, which reflects lack of competition (World Bank 2009, 103). On labor markets, informality typically lasts longer, labor turnover is lower, and exits from public employment are almost unheard of (Gatti, Morgandi, and Grun 2013, 52, 153; Gatti et al. 2014, 187). In other words, when you are in, you are in, and when you are out, you are truly out: deep formal and informal state intervention and protection result in low mobility between segments.

Arab capitalism has provided more widespread distribution of state resources than most other developing country governments, benefiting a relatively broad middle class, a phenomenon described as "precocious Keynesianism" by David Waldner (Waldner 1999). Yet the system remains deeply exclusive for those outside of this coalition. Non-contributory and universal social safety programs such as cash benefits, micro-credit, workfare and training programs are weak in the Arab world, even in comparison with other developing countries (Loewe 1998). Expenditure on them only amounts to an average of 0.7 percent of GDP across the region and they are deeply fragmented and badly targeted (Levin, Silva, and Morgandi 2012)data, and country-specific analysis; and (b. Given that such universal social safety mechanisms can increase educational and labor market mobility, this weakness critically contributes to the stasis of Arab economies. The only universal benefit on which most Arab states spend large amounts are energy subsidies, which are regressive as they disproportionately benefit richer households.

Rigid insider groups in business and labor market create vested political interests that make economic reforms to reduce segmentation difficult. Encompassing interests or marginalized groups that could push for inclusive reforms have particularly little space to organize in Arab world's authoritarian context.

Why did mass distribution not prevent the 2011 uprisings?

Most Arab states have been repressive, but in developing world comparison also relatively generous to their population. Why didn't this generosity prevent the uprisings of 2011? While much work remains to be done on this question, it is clear that there was a disconnect between expectations and performance, and frustration with the (often unintended) inequalities created by the region's insider-outsider systems.

While Arab states have gone to great lengths to provide, popular expectations of provision in the region have also been particularly high (figure 6) – arguably a legacy of populist policies that have promised universal public services and employment to the masses since the age of Nasser.

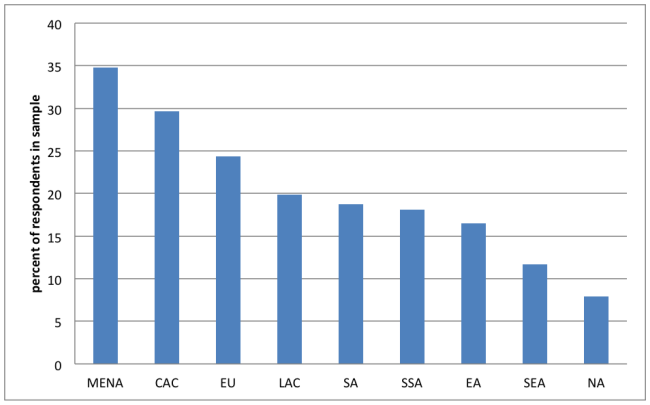

Figure 6: Preferences for government provision

Note: Respondents were asked 'Government responsible that everybody is provided for?' on a 10-point scale. Percentages in graph represent share of those who 'agree completely.' Source: WVS Wave 6.

Given these high expectations, material exclusion and inequality and the highly visible "winner takes all" business cronyism in the 2000s has been grating for many ordinary citizens – even if average levels of inequality in the region remain on a middling level in global comparison.

As we would expect, levels of trust in government and large business across the region have been low across the region, particularly so in the "post-populist" republics that have witnessed revolutions (figures 7 and 8).

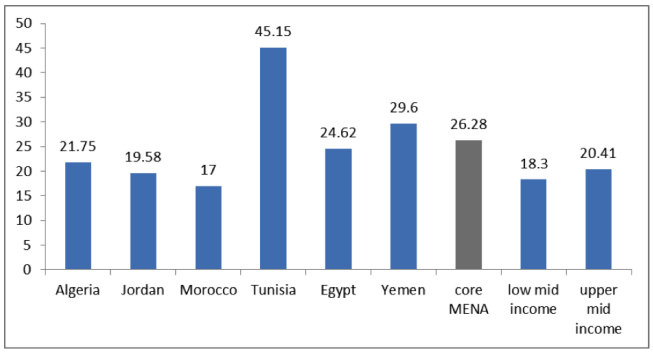

Figure 7: Respondents with "no trust at all" in government
Source: World Values Survey, 6th wave

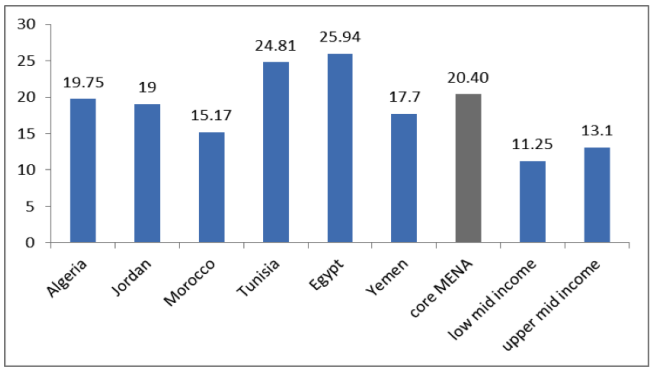

Figure 8: Respondents with "no trust at all" in large companies (WVS)
Source: World Values Survey, 6th wave

Given Arab states' over-stretch, broken promises, meddling and favouritism, and the deep insider-outsider divisions in business and labor, it is unsurprising that citizens have felt betrayed by political and business leaders. While the elites leading the revolutions cared deeply about questions of political freedom, it is clear that material issues played an important role in the mass mobilization that tipped the balance in cases like Egypt or Tunisia.

What happened to distribution?

The first reaction of Arab rulers to the popular challenges of 2010 and 2011 was not to reform, but to step up distribution along the established model, despite the fiscal strains that Arab states already were under. Rulers pledged additional public employment and reversed partial subsidy reforms. And in cases where rulers were replaced, new ruling elites did exactly the same. Since 2011, some energy subsidies have been cut in a piecemeal fashion, but only under enormous fiscal pressure and without building a comprehensive social safety system to compensate. In the absence of such systems, public resistance to subsidy reforms has been strong. No ruler has yet dared to substantially change public employment policies.

As trust is in short supply and state capacities are stretched, negotiating a new social contract has been very hard. Instead, vested interests in business and the public sector stick to any tangible entitlement they have. The tiny size of formal private employment means that organic

linkages between citizens and business are weak, providing little scope for a class compromise in which both business and workers would benefit from growth of the private economy.

But without reducing in subsidies and public employment, there will be no resources to improve public services, provide universal social safety or invest in economic development. Without lowering barriers of entry to the private sector, there will be no growth and job creation. Lowering barriers to entry however itself requires better regulation of business, which in turn calls for a stronger and more agile state – not the slow-moving and opaque Arab bureaucracies that have resulted from decades of over-employment.

This anti-development equilibrium of low capacity and vested interests has led Arab states even further down the route of unequal and exclusive distribution after 2011. In Tunisia, the most powerful interest group is the national union UGTT, which represents mostly middle aged, middle class government employees – not the informal sector whose rage fuelled the revolution. The UGGT has contributed to elite-level political pacts that have prevented Tunisia from backsliding into autocracy. In the economic field, however, it has mostly focused on defending insider privileges, investing much of its energy in fighting successfully for fiscally unsustainable civil service salary raises. In the meantime, little has been done for improving the lot of informal workers. They themselves remain fixated on the public sector: protesters from marginalized communities have been asking for the provision of one government job per family, and unrest has been triggered by the removal of individuals from an official list promising government employment.

In Egypt, official unions are similarly rooted in the public sector, but much more toothless than the UGTT. New, informal unions have emerged before and after the 2011 uprising – but they too have only weak links to the huge informal sector, which remains marginalized and disorganized. Public expectations and demands again remain in the old populist mould: The first public protest after the July 3, 2013, coup that brought General Sisi to power was not about politics, but consisted of a group of masters and doctoral degrees holders demanding government jobs (it was violently dispersed). More recently, Sisi has been trying to tackle the thorny issue of public sector reform with a new civil service law issued by decree during his parliament-less interim reign. Reflecting how deeply anchored Egypt's distributional system is, this law was the only measure challenged post hoc by the supine new parliament elected in 2015.

Even "fierce" states embroiled in civil wars have deepened their old-style distributional commitments: Post-Saddam patronage policies under rival prime ministers have resulted in a state that now reportedly employs 7 million individuals, about half the total adult population (More than 55 percent of the population of about 36 million is under 20). Including in ISIS-occupied areas, 8 million individuals rely on a government salary or pension. Iraq competes with much richer GCC countries for the highest share of government employees anywhere in the world. Current Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's recently attempted public sector salary reform has failed, despite a severe budget crisis.

In Syria, state employment has reportedly risen by 61 percent from 2010 to 2014. Out of a total workforce of 5.5 million, 2.1 million are state-employed, and the government has continued to pay salaries in occupied areas, to the very same people it bombs. Syria has become a brutal caricature of the populist-authoritarian systems of old.

On the business front, old patterns of segmentation similarly continue, even in the cases where hatred for ruling families' crony networks was a core driver of revolutionary rage. Tunisian and Egyptian attempts to prosecute old regime cronies have been half-hearted at best and many cronies remain well connected to the new ruling elites. In the absence of an independent business class, both governments have made attempts to lure temporarily marginalized old-school business tycoons back into their countries to invest.

The post-2011 trajectory of distributional policies challenges Steven Heydemann's argument that the basis of authoritarianism in the region is fundamentally changing as "market-oriented models of authoritarian governance" are introduced and support coalitions narrow along ethnic or sectarian lines. While the latter might be true politically, the record of economic policy tells a different story. It is true that no Arab state can quite live up to its populist promises, but they all continue trying, even if the social and economic results grow ever worse.

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Why unarmed revolutions topple some dictators but not others

By Daniel P. Ritter, University of Nottingham and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Over the last few decades, the world has witnessed the proliferation of a new type of revolution. Alternatively labeled "negotiated," "democratic," "electoral," "color," "nonviolent" or "unarmed," these revolutions largely eschew violent tactics and have become a distinguishing feature of contemporary international politics. Since Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last shah of Iran, was toppled in January 1979 as the result of unrelenting protests and strikes, authoritarian leaders and regimes in the Philippines, Chile, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Indonesia, Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia, Tunisia and Egypt — to mention a few — have met their political ends in similar fashion.

Although the long-term gains achieved in the wake of these and other unarmed revolutions have often disappointed their protagonists, their ability to unseat autocrats through the use of nonviolent tactics — sometimes referred to as "civil resistance" — constitutes a formidable social science puzzle in itself. How can we explain that highly repressive and seemingly all-powerful regimes sometimes collapse at the hands of protesters armed with little more than slogans and resolve? And, in a related issue, why do some attempts at unarmed revolution fail to oust despots, even though such movements may initially appear identical to their successful counterparts?

In my recent book, I suggest that an emphasis on discourses around democracy and human rights can help us understand why the shah in Iran, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt proved to be much more vulnerable to nonviolent challenges than did Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran, Moammar Gaddafi in Libya and Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Since the Iranian, Tunisian and Egyptian leaders had to a significant extent built their rule on close relations with the West — more specifically on the economic and political benefits generated by geopolitical rents — they found themselves forced to behave in a manner broadly acceptable to its Western patrons. They did so by transforming their regimes into "façade democracies," that is, a form of government that rhetorically embraces liberal Western values like democracy and human rights without any intention of actually living up to the corresponding obligations.

As long as the shah, Ben Ali and Mubarak jumped through the necessary hoops by publicly endorsing human rights or holding (not-so-fair) elections, Western leaders could turn a partial blind eye and maintain that while things were not perfect, at the very least the democratic world was not in cahoots with human rights-violating autocrats. Consequently, the three authoritarians built and maintained democratic façades in order to foster a respectable image for international audiences, charades that facilitated Western support and permitted them to benefit from sustained Western patronage.

However, this hypocritical commitment to the West's core values came at a price. Opposition factions in all three countries realized that their governments' embrace of these principles could be leveraged against them. Accordingly, human rights and pro-democracy activists sought to hold their leaders accountable by pointing to discrepancies between rhetoric and reality, often with the support of human rights organizations abroad. As a result, the three regimes were forced to repeatedly reaffirm their commitments to democratic principles, making them increasingly vulnerable to subsequent pressure and criticism.

Within this political and rhetorical context, I propose, the shah, Ben Ali and Mubarak could not muster the type of naked repression that may, at least temporarily, have saved their regimes once nonviolent, democracy-demanding protesters took to the streets in large numbers. Unwilling to demolish the democratic façades on which they depended, the three leaders vacillated, allowing the movements to grow dramatically until decisive

violence became virtually impossible. All three — and their domestic backers — knew how repression would be reported by Western media and, by extension, how such reporting would force Western leaders to act. Because, importantly, this "iron cage of liberalism" does not only trap dictators: When tens of thousands of unarmed protesters demand democracy, human rights, freedom and dignity on live TV, Western leaders *must* sympathize with their demands and, albeit reluctantly, abandon important allies in order to be on the right side of history (and the right side of the next election).

Rather than being intrinsically powerful, I suggest that nonviolent tactics are effective precisely because of their compatibility with the West's most cherished values. Indeed, an unarmed revolution is essentially the embodiment of Articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which address the rights to freedom of assembly, opinion and free speech. Any authoritarian government (or democratic state for that matter) that claims to protect these norms will struggle with the contradiction that comes from denying them to their own citizens on the grand scale represented by a nonviolent revolutionary movement.

Unlike a violent revolutionary challenge, the compatibility between nonviolence and democracy/human rights makes unarmed revolutionary movements existential threats to any dictator closely aligned with and dependent on the West. However, the counterpoint also holds: Tyrants free of this constraint can — and likely will — use uncompromising violence against their own citizens, a lesson that has been reinforced in bloody fashion by events in Libya and Syria since 2011.

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In Defense of Ideology: Notes on Experience and Revolution

By Sune Haugbolle, Roskilde University

An important question, for social science generally and for research on the Arab Uprisings in particular, is whether ideology and utopia play a role in shaping contentious politics today. I argue that they do, and my contribution here is therefore a defense of the continued relevance of ideology as a heuristic device.

The Arab uprisings have been seen both as post-ideological – because protesters initially agreed on confronting autocratic regimes - and a clash of (secular and Islamist) ideologies. While it is clear that the uprisings were not driven by ideology in the sense of elaborate strategies for a political order, it is also clear that divergent political ideas played a role and continue to do so, and that the uprisings have generated a significant amount of ideological reorientation. My basic argument is that any analysis of revolution must take the revolutionary subject seriously. If we do that, we naturally attend to the hopes, visions, and calculations of the people involved in radical mobilisation. I argue that we can conceptualise these visions – even when they are quite incoherent – as ideology. Through a re-reading

of ideology theory we can advance an ethnographic approach to political thought.

In defense of ideology

When I say that we need to re-conceptualize ideology, it is because ideology as a paradigm collapsed in the 1990s when other large-scale ordering categories collapsed too as part of the postmodern and cultural turn in social sciences (Bonnell and Hunt 1999: 10). Most social scientists began to deal with questions of political thought, utopia, and belonging in competing overarching terms, such as discourse, habitus, norms, hegemony, culture, community and particularly identity, and consequently viewed ideology as an area of the social world better left to historians, and literary theorists, or just an approach from an outdated Marxist toolbox.

In our re-politicised world of uprisings, commitment, looming and real crises, and religious revivalism, we are being forced to rethink how systems of political thought mobilise people. What was at one point seemed outdated has, over the past 15 years, come back into force in terms of the range and sophistication of analyses devoted to ideology (Freeden 2015, Stråth 2006). One of the main proponents of restoring ideology as a key term in social theory, Michael Freeden (2015a), has recently claimed that both as a theoretical concept and in the manner of its application to a host of concrete cases, ideology and its study have "has been largely cleared of its pejorative connotations" going back to Shils' (1958) characterization of ideologies as closed systems resistant to change, Marx' notion of false consciousness, and the more general disdain of ideologists' and their victims' inclination towards "factitious propagandizing" (Geertz 1973: 197). Freeden (2015a) identifies the current shift in ideology theory as one from macro to micro-analysis, from structural to 'lived' manifestations of ideology, and from examining elite forms of thought to emphasizing the vernacular. This shift will enable far subtler accounts, Freeden forecasts. I share his optimism, for two main reasons.

First, I think we live in ideological times. The crisis of global capitalism has brought back radical critique to the mainstream of politics and with that the regeneration of the critique of crisis, which as Ghassan Hage (2015) puts it, had stalled in a crisis of critique since the 1970s. Counter-revolution, even when seemingly successful as in Egypt, inevitably engenders revolution.

Second, ethnographic studies of politics allows actual political thought-practices to come to light in all their complexity, revealing the way power is negotiated and the patterns, logic, functions and sources of collectively held ideas are established. Ideology understood in this way is both exciting and illuminating of social processes that allow for revolutionary mobilization.

Culture and ideology

How can we arrive at a theoretical model that does justice to the revolutionary subject and his/her complex orientation in crisis, critique and utopia? The first step is to define an ethnographic approach to ideology. Clifford Geertz seems a good place to start. He was arguably the first anthropologist to address ideology as a system of symbolic metaphors carrying cultural and social meanings. In his 1966 article "Ideology as a cultural system", Geertz revised existing psychological and class oriented theories of ideology. He had an even more succinct stab at the reigning approaches to ideology in the 1950s and early 1960s political sociology, what was then known as strain theory and interest theory. Despite the advances made by Mannheim, Geertz complained, ideology theory remained caught in a fruitless dichotomy, known as Mannheim's Paradox, between 'true' thinking (represented by rigorous science) and 'false' representation of reality (the hallmark of ideology). Critics like Parsons, Shils, Stark and Aron, writing in the 1950s and 1960s from a modernization or functionalist (and anti-Marxist) perspective, saw ideology as various shades of extremism and delusion, whereas pragmatism in politics was seen as – and celebrated by Daniel Bell in his 1960 End of Ideology for being – the sensible choice for Western politicians and populations as well as for the world. Moreover, sociology itself, and social science generally, should strive to remain uncontaminated by ideology. As Geertz (1973: 207) wrote, this stale

dichotomy did not even begin to provide a model for the actual workings of ideology. Besides, as many others have noted, writing in an America in the grips of racial and youth protests in the 1960s provided an odd setting for declaring the 'end of ideology'. Just like writing in the time of uprisings today seems an odd time to declare the end of utopia.

After Geertz' critique, a series of well-know developments in social science gradually nudged the study of society in a less positivist direction. The full effect of Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigms, then Foucault, Hayden White, and full fledged postmodernism in the 1980s, instituted as central a major critique of the idea that disciplines like sociology and history are value-free. In White's (1999: 316) own words (paraphrasing Lukács), all social science disciplines and approaches are "contaminated with ideological preconceptions," but actually this is a good thing: "any science of society should be launched in the service of some conception of social justice, equity, freedom, and progress, that is to say, some idea of what a good society might be." Following Kuhn, scientific paradigms shape ostensibly positivist science; following White, history is essentially ideological constructs about the past; and following Foucault, power relations are always inscribed in these constructs. Ideology, in other words, is not an anomaly, a disease, or a symptom of individual stress (as stress theory of the 1940s and 1950s would have it), but rather an integral part of human sense-making, be it in national societies, in world politics, in academia and science, or on the subjective level. Ideological constructs are simply the way we categorise and prioritise the social world we would like to bring into place. Humans rarely do this in completely seamless, rational and well thought-through ways. We are all bad philosophers (except for those few good philosophers), and we change our minds a lot. Political thinking is dynamic and contextual, reacting to history as it unfolds, and ideologies change over time. Ideology is emotional and fluid. But it still betrays patterns, and those patterns are what we should seek to understand.

Antonio Gramsci (1971: 165) labeled the way ordinary people think "popular philosophy" in the sense that everyone has conceptions of the world inherited from previous understandings. Popular philosophy is "disjointed" and "episodic" and structured by "folklore" and "common-sense" as opposed to the self-aware and critical thought of real philosophy (Ibid. 323). Ideology, then, is the way that "philosophers" (public intellectuals, leaders, activists) "create a new culture," which goes beyond "one's own individual 'original' discoveries" (Ibid. 324-25). What this new culture means, Gramsci continues, is:

> the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered, their 'socialisation' as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination and intellectual and moral order. For a mass of people to be led to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world, is a 'philosophical' event far more important and 'original' than the discovery by some philosophical 'genius' of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals (Ibid. 325).

Contrast that to Napoleon's famous dictum that "Sensible people rely on experience, or have a *philosophy*; silly people rely on ideology." (Williams 1985: 157). Philosophy for Gramsci is precisely not removed from the 'silliness' of ordinary beliefs but necessarily embedded in their life worlds. Philosophy is a metaphor for culture, by which Gramsci essentially makes thinking – and culture - a political question. "One might say ideology here," he continues, "but on the condition that the word is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is implicit in art, in law, in economic activity, and in all manifestations of individual and collective life." (Ibid. 328). This broad conception of ideology maintains that it is a phenomenon, which at the same time orders individual conceptions of the world and large-scale power structures. Indeed, it is the ability of leaders to relate to the sub-strata of ideology that Gramsci calls common sense, which determines their success as molders of a "new culture," that is, as ideologists. Studying such processes therefore requires every level of analysis, and certainly not just the macro-level of political economy, sociology and international relations. Anthropologists must pitch in too.

As already mentioned, Geertz (1973) took up the mantel in 1966, by calling for an assessment of how "metaphor, analogy, irony, ambiguity, pun, paradox, hyperbole, rhythm, and all the other elements of what we lamely call "style" […] help casting personal attitudes into public form." In his essay, the prescient Geertz foreshadows two developments in ideology theory: the influence from Pierceian semiotics, and the affective turn. Language and emotions, and the way they are patterned in public life, provide the platform for political visions, and therefore a symbolic or semiotic anthropology is needed to make sense of the "socalled cognitive and socalled expressive symbols or symbol-systems" which:

> [A]re extrinsic sources of information in terms of which human life can be patterned – extrapersonal mechanisms for the perception, understanding, judgment, and manipulation of the world. Culture patterns - religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological - are "programs"; they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes.

Ideology is unfixed because culture is, and as we seek to reconceptualise political thought as cultural process we must both take onboard the intense criticism of the culture concept in recent anthropology, as well as realize, with James Clifford (1988: 10), that it is a deeply compromised concept that we cannot yet do without. Culture (in one of its many meanings) stands for a concrete and bounded world of beliefs and practices. This definition includes culture as community (as in 'Syrian culture,' 'Communist culture'), culture as cultural production and institutions, and culture as meaning making on an individual and social level. It is both meaning and practice, or rather, a dialectic between the two (Sewell 1999). It is a system of symbols and meanings with a certain coherence and definition, but also a set of practices. Culture is, to paraphrase Marx, what they say *and* what they do.

Grand Schemes and utopia

The experience of living in liberalizing economies run by authoritarian regimes produced registers of political language and potentials for mass mobilization. They did so both through internalization of regime-speak, but also through critical engagement that in some cases generated resistance. Generally, the social worlds people inhabited shaped their horizons of expectation, which in turn produced the ideological registers and resonance that unfolded in open-ended popular mobilization. Political thinking on the eve of revolution was shaped by generations of young Arabs experiencing diminishing opportunities, and by the exhaustion of ideological traditions underpinning ruling regimes. In lieu, Islamism in its various guises offered an alternative order. Other ideas were available, such as socialist and liberal registers. As Michaelle Browers (2009) showed in her book, *Political Ideology in the Arab World*, an accommodation had been taking place between liberals, socialists, Islamists and nationalists since the 1980s (albeit an accommodation often based on mutual enemies rather than common political visions), but rarely in a very cohesive form with focused leadership, strong parties and broad popular base. Other ideas, less formalized and less articulated, dominated political thinking of the populations at large. This was the Arab Middle East's version of what Freeden calls 'thin ideology' in the early 2000s.

A very apt analysis of how young Egyptians pre-2011 experienced thin ideology in an exhausted political, social and ideological landscape can be found in Samuli Schielke's book *Egypt in the Future Sense* (2015: 23). Utopia was not a Hegelian *telos*, but a flimsy range of options for betterment in a rapidly changing and expanding world that deprives people of the certainties of a smaller and slower world. The combination of frustration and rapid social change that forms part of cultural globalization, with all the 'expectations of modernity' it brought with it, generated a "politics of everyday life" in the Middle East, as observed by Asef Bayat (2010) just prior to the uprisings, that was dominated by hopes for perfection in all aspects of personal life. These hopes – for religious purity, romantic love and marriage, migration and a better life abroad, and capitalist consumption – were utopian on a individual level, but also contained the potential for politicization, which is exactly what happened in 2011. Each of the claims expressed in slogans on squares in Cairo, Sanaa, Damascus and Tunis,

related to hopes for the future signaling a restructuring of the social and political realm, which in turn were symptoms of social malaise. As Schielke (2015: 23) observes, lower-middle class Egyptians had their private utopias, which in turn structured available ideologies of betterment. Hence, the turn to scripture in salafism and piety is a symptom of the loss of God's certain presence in daily life. The pressure of migration has to do with the devaluation of paths of life that were once enough to make a man respectable. The search for moral perfection and a pious self have to do with the shattering of comfortable moral ambiguity in a world where paths of survival and success are not only ambiguous but also blatantly immoral. The pursuit of perfection in love and marriage are symptoms of a transformation of family life and livelihood in a way that makes family arrangements obsolete and inevitable at the same time. All these embodied experiences created the basis for ideological orientation, grand schemes for the future.

There is another way to approach utopia, or grand schemes, than Schielke's. In my own work on Arab leftists (Haugbolle 2015) I stress ideological traditions as communities of interpretation. Going back to Gramsci and Geertz, political ideas circulate in the social world as utterances, as cultural expressions, as embodied understandings of the social world—habitus—based on human experience, and inscribe themselves in cultural symbols. Therefore, to study ideology is to study expression in the social world. It is to study the ways in which political ideas are negotiated over time. Ideological processes are long inter-generational conversations, or cumulative discursive traditions in the sense used by Alasdair MacIntyre. Tradition, MacIntyre argues, is:

> [A] historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition. Within a tradition the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes through many generations. Hence the individual's search for his or her own good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual's life is a part.

In political culture, discursive traditions and sensibilities afford a comprehensive, ongoing reflection on the individual's own good in relation to the common good of society. For example, in Arab revolutionary socialist milieus, a common frame of the ideal, egalitarian society exists, but with significant variations. These variations, which if serious enough can become subsidiary ideological traditions, reflect how people read history as it unfolds, and how particular interpretations of that history become paradigmatic.

Approached in the way I have briefly sketched here, ideology offers us not dogmatic cut-in-stone frameworks for the ideal society, but a dynamic prism for understanding affect, experience and utopia today.

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Arab transitions and the old elite

By Ellis Goldberg, University of Washington

"Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come é, bisogna che tutto cambi"

If you want things to stay as they are, they have to change: These are the words challenging an elite faced with ruin which Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa places in the mouth of Prince Tancredi Falconieri in the novel "Il Gattopardi" (The Leopard). Lampedusa's novel is set in Sicily during the unsettled conditions of the Risorgimento. The problem confronting the old nobility is what to do in the face of the new Italian nationalism and the revolutionary changes to the state and society that the Republican general Giuseppe Garibaldi hoped to impose. To preserve its influence and elite status (that is, to ensure that nothing changes), the family must accept the new forms of governance (that is, accept that everything has changed).

Prince Tancredi's observation offers a useful framework for understanding the different outcomes of what appear to be similar processes in Tunisia and Egypt. Tunisia has garnered high praise for passing the "Huntington two-turnover" test that every other Arab country has failed: The party that dominated the government immediately after the fall of the authoritarian regime has now peacefully given way to its opposition. Tunisia's October legislative election therefore marks what political scientists call the consolidation of democracy because it seems that all political actors accept the verdict of the ballot box. This supposed success contrasts vividly with the failure of Egypt's transition, which ended instead in intense political polarization and a military takeover.

To understand why the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings have had different outcomes, his guidance would be to leave aside the dominant narrative of secularism, Islamism and the political weakness of the youth. Those contentious and seductive issues lead us astray from the more fundamental and essential role of the ruling elite, without whom no country can make the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. We must think of those old elites, even in a revolutionary uprising, as active participants who are neither passive nor innocent.

This has not customarily been the focus of most analysis. Many have blamed Egypt's revolutionary youth for failing to gain mass support or to build a solid organization either to compete with the Islamists in elections or push the revolution to its conclusion. But revolutionary youth in Tunisia had little more impact on the outcome either way whereas the old elite had a very large impact. Another common explanation has to do with the nature of Islamist forces in the two countries, as a weaker and more savvy Tunisian Ennahda party avoided the mistakes of a powerful but clumsy Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Both arguments miss who these various Islamist and revolutionary forces threatened. Democratization succeeded in Tunisia because the old elite was neither excluded nor subjected to the threat of political or administrative marginalization. The old elite, not revolutionaries or Islamists, proved to be the pivotal actor.

The underlying thread of many analyses since December 2010 has been that democracy can be and perhaps should be the result of a revolutionary rising. But democracy, unlike revolution, is a profoundly conservative as well as inclusive solution to the problems of social change. Democracy's success more or less guarantees, for a protracted period of time, that there will be few political solutions – whether in terms of moderate public policy or dramatic institutional change – to economic inequality. An understandable desire by many observers and analysts to conflate a revolutionary uprising with the process of democratic transition has created a narrative that now lacks not only many details but is, in some ways, a significant distortion of the political trajectory of the two countries.

Rather than thinking of revolution vaguely as a rapid

and complete change, I prefer a definition proposed by German political scientist Otto Kirchheimer. Does the new regime destroy the possibility that the old regime and its members can return to power? We will gain more traction in understanding the events of the last four years if we focus on a different set of admittedly elite institutional actors: members of political parties, government officials and holders of significant economic resources. The crucial question is whether the political conflicts in the wake of a mass uprising and the collapse of a regime provided a plausible existential threat to any particular group. Are all parties, including the ones ousted by the collapse of authoritarianism, able to contest for governance?

In early 2010 there was every reason to think that Egypt was more likely to experience a successful transition to democracy than Tunisia. Egypt had a far more open press environment, more competitive elections, and had experienced more turnover among government ministers. For example, in 2010 the Tunisian prime minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, was the same one who had been appointed more than 10 years earlier by then-President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Atef Ebeid, who former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak had appointed as prime minister in 1999 (when Ghannouchi assumed his office) to replace Kamal Ganzouri, departed after a five-year term. Ahmad Nazif, Ebeid's successor, had only served seven years when he was replaced on Jan. 30, 2011. Egypt had had three prime ministers in the two decades during which Tunisia had one.

In both Tunisia and Egypt the authoritarian regime centered on a particular figure who had been in power for decades and around whom an increasingly small coterie of family and close associates clustered. By 2010, wide sections of the political elite in each country had been marginalized by a narrow group at the very pinnacle of authority. In each country the regime maintained its grip on power partly through reliance on the police and partly through the manipulation of a single party (the Constitutional Democratic Rally in Tunisia and the National Democratic Party in Egypt).

The Tunisian Supreme Court first appeared as an actor in the transition on Jan. 15, 2011 when it declared that Ben Ali was not incapacitated but had quit the presidency. Consequently, Fouad Mebazaa, the speaker of the assembly, was installed as president rather than Ghannouchi, who then remained as prime minister. Mebazaa, a member of the RCD central committee since 1988, served as the president of Tunisia until Dec. 13, 2011 when he was replaced by the human rights activist and Ben Ali opponent, Moncef Marzouki. Had the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court made a similar ruling when Mubarak left office, it would have declared that either the speaker of the assembly, Fathi Sorour, or Farouk Sultan, president of the court, was his constitutional successor. Both men were as closely associated with Mubarak as Mebazaa was to Ben Ali.

By Jan. 17, Prime Minister Ghannouchi announced a new cabinet that contained 12 members of the RCD including former Defense Minister Ridha Grira, a graduate of the distinguished French institute for training high-level civil servants, the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (a distinction he shares with Adly Mansour, the president of the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court who served as Egyptian president from the ouster of Mohamed Morsi in 2013 until the election of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2014).

Ghannouchi's replacement was not an outsider by any stretch of the imagination, but an even more central figure from the old regime. The new prime minister, Beji Caid Essebsi, had served in several key positions under the republic's founder, Habib Bourguiba. Essebsi was defense minister from late 1969 until June 1970 and then served as ambassador to France. In Tunisia, as in other former French colonies, the ambassador to Paris is a position of exceptional importance for economic, political and security issues. Between 1981 and 1986 Essebsi was the country's foreign minister. After Ben Ali ousted Bourguiba, Essebsi moved to the legislature where he was president of the Chamber of Deputies from 1990-91. Essebsi, who would be prime minister in 2011 until he resigned to make way for Ennahda party leader, Hamadi Jabali, on December 24 thus played a key role in determining the nature of the

democratic transition. Before the courts in Tunisia (as in Egypt) dissolved the former ruling party in March, the Interior Ministry had already suspended it from official activity. Essebsi thus presided over the liquidation of the party in which he had spent most of his adult career and from which he would draw many of the leaders for the new party he created for the 2014 legislative elections. Essebsi and his associates were quintessentially what Egyptians derided as "feloul" or the remnants of the old regime.

It is possible that Essebsi only pursued this course under the pressure of demonstrations, but nevertheless it was Essebsi and a number of politicians from the old regime as well as some of their long-standing opponents who bore the responsibility for shaping a democratic outcome in Tunisia. Thus, speaking on Nov. 10, 2011 at the African Media Leaders forum, Essebsi noted that it was his government's responsibility to ensure that the Tunisian revolution did not devolve into a fratricidal conflict nor deviate from what he called its virtuous path.

Among the consequential choices his government made was the exclusion of members of the RCD from participating in the elections for the constituent assembly. Arguably even more important, however, was the decision to encourage human rights activist Kamel Jendoubi to preside over the commission charged with writing the relevant electoral law and carrying out the election itself, the Independent Higher Authority for the Elections, ISIE. Jendoubi and his fellow commissioners chose to employ a particular version of proportional representation that provided Ennahda with the number of seats that corresponded to its share of the vote but that also privileged smaller parties. Other electoral rules, including other versions of proportional representation, would have translated Ennahda's 38 percent of the popular vote into a majority of seats rather than the plurality it actually received. Ennahda thus, by design, was unlikely to control the constituent assembly without receiving an overwhelming majority of the popular vote.

Ennahda had the votes in the constituent assembly to impose an electoral law banning members of the old ruling party from engaging in politics. In fact, article 167 was drafted into the organic electoral law by a majority in June 2013. Under the rules of the assembly, however, it was rejected in May 2014 because it failed to gain an absolute majority: 38 of 63 Ennahda delegates present abstained. Such a law would have been an insuperable barrier to the old political elite regaining influence through electoral politics and would have made the creation of Essebsi's Nidaa Tunis, the largest party after the last elections, impossible. The most widely cited argument for not excluding former members of the RCD was simply that there is, in a democracy, no reason for stripping individuals of their political rights unless they have been convicted of criminal activity. Whether Ennahda representatives were convinced of this argument on its merits or simply took a more hard-nosed view of the likely results of excluding their long-time opponents we do not know, but their decision was consequential.

In Egypt events have worked out quite differently. One obvious and crucial difference was the inability or unwillingness of the Muslim Brotherhood to find a way to compromise with members of the old regime. On the contrary, the Muslim Brotherhood often sought to marginalize and exclude as much of the NDP as possible. These attempts to marginalize and exclude the NDP and its cadre as well as its leadership were highly popular with a significant portion of the Egyptian public. The top NDP leadership included prominent businessmen, religious officials and government officials all of whom were widely derided as corrupt figures of an authoritarian regime.

Days before Mubarak resigned, on Feb. 6, 2011 Vice President Omar Suleiman met with members of the opposition including the Muslim Brotherhood in an attempt to broker an agreement about the future of Egypt. These were the days in which several groups of so-called "wise men," including some of Egypt's wealthiest and most important businessmen as well as academic figures and former officials engaged a public dialogue through public statements and occasional interviews. Other opposition leaders including Mohamed ElBaradei opposed the talks, which were unpopular with the demonstrators in Tahrir

Square. The first attempt to broker some kind of agreement or transitional pact foundered.

Subsequently there were occasional talks between leaders of the MB and some of their political competitors and more than occasional claims that the MB had worked out a deal with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces but nothing of the kind ever happened. Talks routinely broke down; bargains once made were scuttled; and a heightened sense of distrust permeated relationships between all the dominant actors during the period after Mubarak left office.

Anger and contempt for the political figures of the old regime were common through the first year of the uprising in Egypt and the MB began to present itself as a party dedicated to reforming Egypt by continuing the revolution. Key to this objective was eliminating the feloul. This was surprising to many Egyptians because there was no reason to believe that the MB planned to make significant or rapid changes to the country's economic or governmental structures which would have been the hallmark of a revolutionary party as widely understood in Western as well as Egyptian academic literature.

The MB's reaction to the so-called Selmi document of late 2011 shows how different the situation in Egypt was from what occurred in Tunisia. Ali al-Selmi, at the time deputy prime minister, drafted a proposal that had the backing of SCAF and the government, which was then still dominated by liberal elements of the old regime and a handful of its liberal opponents. He offered a set of supra-constitutional principles to guide the work of the still-to-be chosen constituent assembly which had many substantive similarities to earlier such statements issued by the Muslim Brotherhood, his own Wafd party and independent forces in March 2011. It only allowed the civilian government to consider the total budgetary allocation to the armed forces and it gave SCAF the right to prior review of any legislation affecting the army, an unpopular ratification of the military's hitherto unofficial authority in the new constitution. His proposal also included significant restrictions on how the still to be chosen legislature could choose the constituent assembly. First, Selmi proposed that elected legislators not be allowed to serve as members of the constituent assembly. He also proposed a corporatist plan through which the SCAF would appoint the bulk of the members of the constituent assembly from the existing institutional framework of Egyptian society in which unions, professional associations and other groups would choose their own representatives.

Selmi's proposal placed mild substantive constraints on what the assembly could write but it egregiously violated one of the few obviously legitimate elements of the transitional process. That an elected legislature would choose the constituent assembly was one of a handful of provisions that had been the object of the March 19 referendum. The MB called for massive demonstrations against the Selmi proposals and hundreds of thousands of people mobilized including sections of the left. Selmi became a lightning rod for protest and mistrust because of his own connections to the old regime. Selmi has a doctorate in economics and had served previously in Mubarak cabinets. He was a prominent member of the Wafd, generally considered a secular pro-business party with a significant Christian base of support. Rejecting the Selmi document placed the MB firmly on the side of electoral legitimacy but it suggested an at best limited tolerance for reaching substantive agreements with the social, political or economic elite of the old regime.

The Muslim Brotherhood initiated demonstrations in Tahrir Square and was able to mobilize significant support against the proposal on Nov. 18, 2011. Police later attacked a sit-in by relatives of the people killed in the initial uprising and protests continued. These included particularly violent confrontations on Muhammad Mahmoud Street, just off Tahrir Square, between the police and youth, many of whom were drawn from the ranks of soccer fans and from poorer neighborhoods, which left 41 people dead and perhaps 1,000 wounded. The Selmi document was another victim and so was the government of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf who resigned on Nov. 21. He was replaced by Kamal Ganzouri, who had served as prime minister under Mubarak from 1996-99.

The left viewed these events as evidence that the Muslim Brotherhood was uninterested in pursuing the revolution to establish a democratic order. Viewed in the framework of Tunisian politics, however, they suggest a different interpretation: The MB refused to reach an agreement with members of the old regime about the new structure of the state. The mobilization of street demonstrations and the willingness to accept the outcome of the violent confrontations that it had neither solicited nor endorsed placed the MB on a distinct path in the months to come. This was the path of electoral politics, themselves a fundamental process for representative democracy. It was also, however, a path in which elections and demonstrations together could be used to marginalize and diminish the role of other institutions of the state as well as the political opponents of the electoral victors.

Sometime before his tragically premature death I had coffee with Samir Soliman, the respected Egyptian political scientist. In the years since it has become common to argue that the failure of the Egyptian revolution and Egyptian democracy can both be attributed to the failure of the secular left to organize sufficient popular support to challenge the Muslim Brotherhood. Seen in this optic, the tragedy of Egypt is the fault of the middle-class intellectuals who played such conspicuous roles in front of the television cameras in the early days of the uprising in 2011. Soliman had a different view of how democracy, if it was to work at all, would work in Egypt. The only party that could conceivably challenge the MB and alternate with it, he argued, was a conservative party. Committed as he was personally to the politics of the left, he did not that day argue that the liberal left would be a likely counterweight to the MB nor did he mention from where such a party would draw its leaders or members.

In Tunisia, just such a conservative-centrist party has emerged in Nidaa Tunis to challenge Ennahda and its roots are heavily in the old regime although it also boasts other supporters. In Egypt for a variety of reasons no alternate center-conservative party was built. That would have necessarily been a party with deep roots in the old NDP, the party many of whose members have re-emerged since the 2013 coup. In the absence of a thorough-going revolutionary exclusion, they would likely have re-emerged anyway. The question is whether they did so through elections or as part of an anti-electoral coalition. Attempting to exclude the economic and political elites of the old regime may have seemed like both revolutionary and democratic good sense to the Muslim Brotherhood and to many Islamists and leftists between 2011 and 2014.

Egyptian revolutionaries (in the conventional left-wing sense) and the leaders of the MB feared the re-emergence of the feloul as a political force. They correctly understood that a powerful conservative party with significant support from Egypt's business elite was not a friend. Such a political grouping was not inclined to support either the projects of economic and social equality that animated the left or the projects of creating new state institutions that the MB favored. The MB was committed to elections. As the old elite increasingly re-asserted itself the MB responded by attempting to marginalize both their institutional and electoral capacity. In this it echoed the very old concern of revolutionaries in Europe and Latin America that electoral democracy is not necessarily the friend of movements for economic redistribution nor does it necessarily lend itself to the creation of strong protections for the political, civil or social rights of the poor and the weak.

The idea that democracy is the last station on the revolutionary road remains seductive and it informs a certain idealized understanding of U.S. history and the process of democratization. Representative democracy itself, however, is less likely the successful conclusion of revolution and more likely the premature end of its utopian hopes and dreams. Only if nothing changes, can everything change.

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How Tunisia's Ennahda turned from religious opposition movement into consensus-seeking political party

By Rory McCarthy, University of Oxford

The fragile process of building democracy in Tunisia has brought extraordinary changes. Some of the main opposition parties of the past have almost entirely disappeared. A consensual democracy has emerged, but it is built on the return of the former political and economic elite. Despite the political successes, the transition is now facing security challenges and serious economic discontent. Now, in a congress this weekend, the Ennahda movement has formally stepped away from the Islamism of its past to divide itself into a civil political party and a separate religious movement.

Ennahda shaped this uneven process of democratization and — in turn — has been shaped by it. The movement has changed from a religious opposition movement that once staged months of mass demonstrations against the Ben Ali regime, into a political party that pursues a consensus-seeking agenda. From now on Ennahda will be divided into a political party that draws on an Islamic reference but is no longer formally "Islamist," and a separate religious, social and cultural movement.

Ennahda's ambitions were once much more radical. When it first announced its political project in 1981, it talked about siding with the "oppressed." It aspired to compete in elections while simultaneously forging a dissident subculture built around identity, morality and da'wa, the call to Islam. Following years of exclusion and repression the movement eventually moved to confrontation in 1990, after its leaders were jailed in sweeping arrests following its successes in elections a year earlier. It staged months of demonstrations and protests, before being dismantled in a final clampdown.

Two decades later, after the 2011 uprisings, Ennahda again took a populist tone: it called for the prosecution of security forces responsible for killing demonstrators, demanded reform of the political police, and called for a final break with the former regime.

However, under pressure for its failures in government from 2011 to 2014, the movement shifted strategy. It diluted its Islamising ambition in drafting the constitution and reversed an earlier commitment to exclude from political life former senior figures from Ben Ali's party, the RCD (Democratic Constitutional Rally).

After losing the second elections in October 2014, the Ennahda leadership pushed hard for a minor role in coalition with its rival Nidaa Tounes, a new party largely representing the political and economic elite of the old era. It voted in favour of a new anti-terrorism law that was harsher in parts than that of Ben Ali, and it backed an unpopular draft bill that would amnesty those businessmen accused of financial crimes. This was, Ennahda said, a "strategy of consensus" that was required for the greater cause of a successful democratic transition.

How can we explain this shift? The most common explanation is that Ennahda was simply acting pragmatically. Even if it had really wanted to apply sharia law or to take a more confrontational stance against the former regime elites, the reality of transition politics instead required compromise. After all, Ennahda's defeat in the October 2014 elections showed it couldn't win repeated victories at the ballot box. Perhaps there was more to be gained by settling for a second-best outcome in uncertain times, especially in a system in which proportional representation and a mixed parliamentary-presidential model meant that coalition governments were more likely than a two-party system. But this implies that the movement's adaptation was merely presentational and only the result of the political upheavals of the last few years.

A better way to think of Ennahda's shift in strategy is to ask what lessons the movement drew from its own history. Most important is the way the movement has learned from its experience in the elections of April 1989, during a brief moment of political opening at the start of the Ben Ali regime. Despite running only as independents in a rigged election, Ennahda candidates won around 15 percent of the vote nationwide, and up to 30 percent in some cities, including Tunis, Sousse, Monastir and Bizerte. However, they won no seats in parliament and instead an intense confrontation developed between the movement and the regime, with mass street demonstrations and a widespread campaign of arrests. This led to a severe repression and the dismantling of the movement.

In jail and in exile, the movement went through a process of evaluation. It admitted that its political ambition had overwhelmed its original cultural and social Islamising project. It accepted that it had failed to build alliances with other opposition parties and that occasional acts of violence had undermined its position. Different trends learned different lessons.

Leaders in exile began to propose reconciliation with the Ben Ali regime, to the frustration of those thousands of Nahdawis languishing in Tunisian prisons. Interviews with Nahdawi leaders since 2011 suggest that the fear of a return to repression remains a powerful motivational force even now. They saw inclusion in coalition government — whatever compromises and costs that might entail — as the strongest protection against the risk of a return to repression.

But others, including some of those who had been in prison, drew different lessons and in the 2000s they began to work with non-Islamists in human rights associations or in other opposition parties in order to challenge the authoritarian regime. Many other ex-prisoners, of course, stayed away from all political and civil society activity altogether because of the punishing weight of repression and social exclusion. For them, the lesson of the confrontation had been that the political ambitions of their leaders had destroyed the years of working to build an Islamist subculture in society. These different lessons go some way to explaining the party-movement split in Ennahda today.

The third explanation for this strategic shift is that it represents a more profound but inconclusive intellectual adaptation. The division into party and movement is not merely a functional separation, but an attempt to rethink what it means to be an Islamist movement that competes within a democratic system. This has been under discussion inside the movement for several years, starting well before the 2011 uprising, but it was always contested.

In the final stages of constitution drafting in January 2014, several Ennahda deputies tried in vain to reinsert mention of religious law as a source of legislation or to exclude a guarantee to freedom of conscience. The party's political vision remains ambiguous. Often, Ennahda has returned to a familiar position of defending or acting as guardian over the Islamic tradition that it regards as authentic to the Tunisian experience. Its strategy of consensus means not just forging pragmatic political alliances but also conceiving of Tunisian society as one homogenous community with one authentic identity.

The leadership of Ennahda has drawn from its past a sense of the need for caution and inclusion. As a result, the new priority given to a consensus-seeking political strategy is part strategic adaptation, part intellectual shift. However, Ennahda's leaders are still to convince all of the movement or its political rivals of the value of their new approach.

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Five years after the revolution, more and more Tunisians support democracy

By Michael Robbins, Arab Barometer, University of Michigan, Princeton University

Five years after the Arab uprisings, Tunisia remains the region's best – and likely only – hope to complete a transition from authoritarian rule to a more inclusive form of government. However, amid myriad challenges, ranging from weak economic growth and unemployment to terrorist attacks and political fragmentation, many are questioning whether Tunisia's government will survive or succumb to authoritarian retrenchment.

With such high stakes, the results of the fourth wave of the Arab Barometer in Tunisia may be cause for optimism. The nationally representative survey – conducted from Feb. 13 to March 3, 2016 – was led by the Tunis-based independent firm One to One for Research and Polling. Including 1,200 respondents randomly selected from all 24 of Tunisia's governorates, the survey was conducted face-to-face in the respondent's place of residence and has a margin of error of ± 3 percent.

Results reveal that Tunisians have not given up on democracy. In fact, today 86 percent of citizens say that democracy, despite its problems, remains the best system of governance – even more than the 70 percent polled shortly after the revolution.

Perhaps even more importantly, the survey shows that Tunisians are more supportive of democracy even though they recognize some of its potential limitations. At the time of the revolution, the vast majority of Tunisians had never lived under democracy, leading many to believe this political system would represent a panacea for the country's ills. In 2011, fewer than 20 percent of citizens said that economic performance was weak in a democracy or linked democracy with political instability or indecisiveness. By contrast, five years after the revolution, nearly half or more say democracy suffers from each of these problems. In sum, Tunisians have become more supportive of democracy even as the majority have come to realize it is a less than perfect political system.

Although Tunisians remain supportive of democratic governance, they do so within a very difficult political environment. Just 15 percent rate the economy as being good and 90 percent say corruption is widespread. Given the lack of progress in improving the livelihoods of citizens over the past five years, it is unsurprising that Tunisians are increasingly losing confidence in public institutions. About a third say they trust the government and the courts, while just one-in-five has confidence in parliament. These levels are significantly lower than in previous Arab Barometer surveys in 2011 and 2013. Meanwhile, roughly a third or fewer rate the government as doing a good job tackling some of the key problems facing the country, including managing the economy, creating jobs and reducing inequality.

Political parties, an important link between citizens and their government, fare no better. Just 12 percent of Tunisians say that they trust political parties to a great or medium extent. The two largest parties, Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda, have similarly low levels of support. Moreover, two-thirds say that they do not closely identify with any existing party.

Amid all these political and economic challenges, security remains an overwhelming concern as 97 percent of Tunisians are very concerned their country will suffer more terrorist attacks and 91 percent are very fearful someone in their family is likely to face harassment or threats to their personal safety when going about their daily life.

The problems facing Tunisia are particularly acute for younger Tunisians, who are more likely to be dissatisfied with their political situation. Respondents aged 18 to 34

are 17 points less likely to trust the government than those 35 and older. Younger Tunisians are also less likely to say the government is effectively tackling corruption or that economic conditions are good and are more likely to link democratic governance with economic problems. These differences reflect the challenges the younger generation has experienced early in their adult lives, including the far higher rate of youth unemployment in Tunisia. Perhaps as a result, 55 percent of those ages 18 to 24 say they want to emigrate from Tunisia.

However, on the whole, Tunisians have not given up hope of a better future. About half still expect that economic circumstances will improve in the next three to five years. This optimism may be tied, in part, to the growing desire for better economic relations with foreign countries. Nearly two-thirds of Tunisians want economic relations with the United States to become stronger than in past, while three-quarters say the same about economic relations with the European Union.

Along with a desire for improved economic relations, views of the West have also improved in recent years. In 2016, 54 percent of Tunisians say the U.S. role in its transition has been positive or neutral, compared with 37 percent in 2013. The E.U.'s role is viewed even more positively, with 67 percent saying it has been positive or neutral in 2016 compared with 41 percent in 2013. These changing views may afford Western partners renewed opportunities to assist the ongoing transition.

Stepping back, a key question is why has support for democracy endured, including among the younger generation, despite the rocky transition? Two explanations seem likely. First, most Tunisians believe that their country is far from being fully democratic. When asked to place the level of democracy in Tunisia on a scale of zero to 10, with zero being a complete autocracy and 10 a complete democracy, the average score was exactly five. This rating represents only a marginal increase over the 4.3 rating in 2013, and underscores Tunisians' belief that their country has a long way to go to becoming fully democratic.

A second factor is almost certainly the regional environment. Despite the challenges Tunisians have encountered since their revolution, events in other countries suggest no better way forward. Libya and Yemen, which experienced regime changes in 2011, have been plagued by civil wars. Meanwhile, Egypt's coup in 2013, and subsequent authoritarian retrenchment, reveals the great costs of a failed transition process. Looking around their neighborhood, Tunisians appear to have taken to heart Churchill's famous dictum: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." As such, it is far too soon for the outside world to give up on Tunisia's transition to democracy.

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Elite-led Protest and Authoritarian State Capture in Egypt

By Neil Ketchley, Brasenose College, University of Oxford

When unruly protests in Tunisia inspired ebullient scenes of 'people power' in Egypt and elsewhere in 2011, many scholars and observers of the MENA region drew some measure of hedonistic pleasure at the sight of ordinary people challenging calcified autocracy. In the enormous output of academic and journalistic writing that followed, a great deal of attention has been paid to the ways in which economically and politically disenfranchised actors – secular activists, trade unionists, Islamists, and local residents – banded together to challenge old regime powers and prerogatives from below. By comparison, the role of state actors in stimulating and orchestrating street-level mobilization to roll back the gains of 2011 remains less well understood. This reflects a more general problem for students of social movements and collective protest: while political process models of contentious politics routinely depict mass mobilization as the work of "challengers" making claims on established "members" of the polity, this occludes episodes in which powerful institutional actors facilitate and impel street protest for their own ends.

In what follows, I briefly survey three such episodes of 'elite-led' protest in Egypt in the three years leading up to the July 3, 2013, coup that ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.1 An examination of these episodes, and the events surrounding them, can help to illuminate the ways in which old regime holdovers in Egypt instrumentalized mass protests on June 30, 2013, in a bid to reverse new forms of civilian democratic oversight and legitimate military takeover.

"Who loves Egypt, doesn't destroy Egypt"

Even during the height of the January 25th Revolution, street protest was never solely the domain of anti-Mubarak activists and protestors. Members of Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP), alongside pro-regime thugs, trade unionists and police officers, also staged a series of marches and sit-ins in an attempt to bolster support for Egypt's embattled dictator. The first recorded pro-Mubarak protest occurred on January 28, when NDP parliamentarians and local bosses held a sit-in in the city of Damietta. Such protests grew in size and frequency in the days that followed, peaking in early February after the "Battle of the Camel," when NDP parliamentarians and thugs launched a sustained assault on protestors occupying Midan al-Tahrir. Indeed, many of these protests were timed to coincide with anti-regime marches and sit-ins, thus providing cover for Mubarak's supporters to harass and repress the president's opponents. This, after a wave of anti-police violence, which began on the Friday of Anger, degraded the Interior Ministry's repressive capacity in several key governorates.

The epicenter of the pro-Mubarak counter-mobilization was in front of the Mustafa Mahmoud mosque in Muhandiseen in Giza, where several thousand Mubarak supporters staged a sit-in. The choice of location was strategically significant and symbolically important. The square in front of the mosque had been, until that point, an important staging area for some of the largest anti-Mubarak marches heading to Midan al-Tahrir. Interestingly, it was outside of Mustafa Mahmoud that several counter-revolutionary chants and performances were first trialed, including "Who loves Egypt, doesn't destroy Egypt." These and other slogans would go on to feature in the post-Mubarak democratic transition, invoked by state and private media personalities whenever protestors re-occupied Midan al-Tahrir.

Midan al-Abassiyya

A second round of elite-led protest took place in late November 2011 during the events of Mohamed Mahmoud

1 These episodes are discussed in much greater detail in chapter 5 of my forthcoming book, *Egypt in a Time of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press).

Street, this time in support of the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF). With revolutionaries returning to Midan al-Tahrir in numbers to demand that the military to cede power to a civilian-led national salvation government, pro-SCAF protestors staged sit-ins in Cairo and Alexandria. The focal point of the pro-SCAF counter-mobilization was in Midan al-Abassiyya, a public square located close to the Ramses train station and the Ministry of Defense.

The Midan al-Abassiyya sit-in is notable for being the second time old regime forces mimicked the repertoire of contention pioneered by anti-Mubarak protestors during the eighteen days of mass mobilization in January-February 2011. Despite being eclipsed by the much larger anti-SCAF protests in Midan al-Tahrir and elsewhere, the Abassiyya sit-in appears to have followed a similar logic to the NDP counter-mobilization during the 25th January Revolution: faced with anti-systemic opposition in Egypt's streets and public squares, powerful elites counter-mobilized in an attempt to simulate popular support for old regime interests. As one keen-eyed scholar of Egyptian society observed after visiting the Abassiyya sit-in, many of these pro-SCAF protestors appeared to be off-duty police officers and soldiers (see Armbrust 2013).

June 30, 2013

If the episodes described above were essentially defensive mobilizations, designed to counter pressure from below, then the role of the Interior Ministry and the military in orchestrating the protests that paved the way for the 3 July 2013 coup points to a qualitative shift in the dynamics of elite-led contention in post-Mubarak Egypt. In those early exchanges, elite-led protest emulated but was unable to match the scale of anti-systemic contention. This changed on 30 June 2013, when Mubarak-era figures and erstwhile members of the 25 January revolutionary coalition came together to form a broad front against the fumbling and divisive presidency of Mohamed Morsi. Here, the increasingly well-documented linkages between Egypt's security ministries and the leadership of the Tamarrod petition campaign, who spearheaded calls for Morsi's ousting, suggest that by early 2013 old regime holdovers had come to see street-level mobilization as a possible vehicle for state capture.

In retrospect, what is especially remarkable about the June 30, 2013, protests is the manner in which they were organized. In contrast to the protests of January 25, 2011, there was no attempt to conceal the targets and the timings of the protests, or evade security forces. The departure points and routes of anti-Morsi marches were well publicized in national newspapers. Each march was assigned a named Tamarrod activists; information that was widely disseminated and easily accessible online.

This formed part of a broader pattern in which state forces, and in particular the military and the Interior Ministry, openly courted the anti-Morsi opposition. In the weeks before the 30 June protests, security officials issued almost daily statements committing not to disperse anti-Morsi protests; they also refused to protect Muslim Brother headquarters and offices that came under attack, and stood by as anti-Morsi activists occupied government ministries and local government buildings. Senior and mid-ranking police officers would also stage protests of their own, calling on the military to intervene and remove the president. Needless to say, no subsequent protest movement in Egypt has mobilized with such impunity, or with anything resembling this degree of coordination with the country's security ministries, in the years following the coup.

When large crowds took to the streets on June 30, Ministry of Defense officials and former members of the state security apparatus actively lobbied local and international news media to report wholly unrealistic protest numbers. In one memorable episode, Sameh Seif El-Yezzel, a former head of military intelligence and the future leader of the pro-Sisi electoral list in the 2015 parliamentary elections, appeared on CNN to claim that 33 million Egyptians had taken to the streets in opposition to Morsi. These numbers would be repeated by Morsi's opponents in the days and weeks following the coup. The size of the protests in Midan al-Tahrir and outside of the presidential

palace, these individuals insisted, invalidated Morsi's electoral mandate. In reality, of course, participation in anti-Morsi protests was only a small fraction of the votes cast for Morsi in the 2012 elections. Tellingly, a counter-mobilization by Morsi's supporters, who staged large protests of their own in opposition to the coup, was dismissed as the work of extremists, brutally repressed and quickly forgotten (see Ketchley 2013; forthcoming: ch.6).

Conclusions

Exploring the trajectories of elite-led protest in Egypt suggests two important, and frequently overlooked, dynamics contributing to the failure of the post-Mubarak democratic transition. Firstly, progressives and revolutionaries never possessed a monopoly over the repertoire of protest pioneered in early 2011. The strategy of staging marches and occupying public squares was not only a means of deepening the democratization process – it could also be harnessed and redeployed by old regime actors. Secondly, and inter-relatedly, the centrality of the June 30 protests in the political discourse of the post-coup, military government suggests that mass street protests can also serve to legitimate authoritarian state capture. In this, the anti-Morsi mobilization would provide the basis for a convenient, but ultimately misleading, myth: that Egyptians spontaneously rose up, unaided and embraced a full-blown return to military rule.

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Why two islands may be more important to Egyptian regime stability than billions in Gulf aid

By Laurie A. Brand, University of Southern California, and Joshua Stacher, Kent State University

In Egypt, April 25 is Sinai Liberation Day, a holiday marking Israel's 1982 withdrawal from the territory, which it occupied after the 1967 war. Usually, this day is a source of national celebration, but this year it was marred by tension, with security forces on high alert and citizens warned against participating in demonstrations.

The source of regime concern proceeded from what had been expected to be both a high-profile and successful five-day visit to Egypt earlier this month by Saudi King Salman. However, during the visit, the Saudi monarch and Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi signed not only economic agreements but also a provision to "return" Tiran and Sanafir, two islands at the mouth of the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba, to Saudi control. In Egypt, the opposition was immediate, vocal and, perhaps most importantly, high-profile. Social media and traditional media alike were full of outrage at this territorial concession.

The agreements – worth about $25 billion – come at a time of widespread economic dissatisfaction in Egypt. Indeed, scholars and other analysts agree that the country is fast approaching economic collapse. The Egyptian pound (LE), long pegged to the dollar, traded at 7.83 LE to a dollar in February. A month later, when allowed to float briefly to offset the black market value, the currency immediately dropped to 8.95 LE/dollar. Another devaluation may soon be necessary, since its black market value continues to drop.

With each devaluation, prices of everyday goods rise and dissent grows. Salaries of the small middle class — not to mention the tens of millions trapped in poverty — cover fewer and fewer daily needs. The pension system for the bloated 6.5 million-strong state sector is increasingly meaningless as prices rise and the LE drops.

Meanwhile, tourism on the Red Sea beaches has declined since the bombing of a Russian jet in October, and the Nile Valley tourism that focuses on pharaonic Egypt has yet to recover from the 2011 uprisings. Even the military, with its vaunted economic empire, has become just the most recent subsidizer of the Egyptian state rather than profiting from it.

Part of the regime's formula for distracting the citizenry — the flip side to the growing repression that has characterized the period since the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013 — has been mega-projects, initiatives intended to appeal to popular patriotism and enhance national pride. Among grand plans Sissi has announced are the construction of a new capital and a million new housing units. The companies of "Military Inc." widened the Suez Canal at breakneck speed, at a cost of $8 billion. However, most of these projects seem likely to remain either on the drawing board or, as in the case of the highly touted Suez Canal extension, fall far short of the promised revenue projections.

The literature on the rentier state has examined the complex relationship between economic crises and the prospects of instability or reform in rent-dependent authoritarian states. However, as the late Samer Soliman demonstrated in his book "Autumn of Dictatorship," the Egyptian regime, when on the brink of economic disaster in 1990, managed to avoid significant reform and remain in power thanks to significant debt forgiveness received for participating in international military coalitions against Saddam Hussein. Now, Sissi seems to be banking, literally, on a combination of aid and investment from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to keep Egypt's economy afloat.

Until now, the post-July 2013 Egyptian military-security regime had been largely successful in repressing dissent, whether through its brutal assault against members, both real and imagined, of the now-outlawed Muslim

Brotherhood, or through harassment, arrests and worse of laborers, civil society activists and human rights workers. Using a legitimation strategy that wrapped various policy initiatives in hyper-nationalism and portrayed opponents of any sort as traitors, the regime managed to convince large swaths of the population that it was the only force powerful and patriotic enough to defend the country against the remnants of the Brotherhood or the even bloodier insurgents in Sinai claiming affiliation with the Islamic State militant group, also known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh.

However, Sissi and his advisers failed to appreciate the implications or logical outcome of a legitimation strategy so completely grounded in nationalism when they announced the return of Tiran and Sanafir. The history of the control and sovereignty over the islands is complex, evidenced by the flurry of justifications and stinging critiques that followed. But for the vast majority of average Egyptians, these islands *are* part of the national territory. School instructors were reportedly flummoxed by the announcement that what they had been teaching from government-approved textbooks for decades was suddenly incorrect and were uncertain how to respond to their students' questions.

None of this would matter much if the islands had remained solely a source of "academic" controversy. They did not. While popular dissatisfaction is very important, the fact that this opposition was quickly and widely promoted by what had previously been a slavishly sycophantic Egyptian media suggests that a red line has been crossed. With many top political commentators taking the president to task for this agreement, opposition has been legitimized for the first time, opening greater space for dissent by those emboldened by the effective defection from regime ranks of some of its most stalwart supporters.

Why is this case of the islands so provocative? Quite simply, there is nothing more central to the civic identity and national narrative than the borders and geography of the national territory.

The literature on national narrative construction across regions has shown that significant changes in the official story — whether interpretation of historical events, national mission or societal values — are likely to occur only during periods of crisis — political, economic or socio-cultural. However, the research also shows that even in such circumstances, there are limits to which elements in the narrative may be modified (and how) short of a major change in regime.

What happens most often is a kind of re-scripting — a reinterpretation of national symbols or key events, a redefinition of existing orientations to allow for policy innovation. In other words, leaders, political elites and regimes may make concessions on less tangible forms of sovereignty, such as national economic decisions in the form of structural adjustment agreements. Ceding national territorial sovereignty, absent conditions of extreme duress is extremely rare, however — and potentially dangerous.

Such a move is particularly problematic in the Egyptian case. Since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952, successive governments have made Egyptian control of its national territory a central part of the country's story and mission. This emphasis on sovereignty over national territory was one of then-President Gamal Abdel Nasser's justifications for nationalizing the Suez Canal Co. in July 1956. Then, after the devastating June 1967 war, while Egyptians reeled under the impact of the defeat, Nasser's driving policy message was to "erase the remnants of the aggression," meaning restoring Egyptian sovereignty over the Sinai, which Israel occupied as a result of the war. In the same vein, Anwar Sadat sold his controversial peace treaty with Israel in 1979 on the grounds that it would result in Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory, a promise that was finally completed on April 25, 1982.

As a result, Sissi — who has repeatedly likened himself to Nasser — cannot both promote a nationalism that has deep roots in the identity cultivated over decades among Egyptians through a range of educational, governmental and media sources and violate one of the most basic pillars of that same patriotic national identity with impunity.

Some of the slogans in the numerous protests that have taken place since the announcement of this agreement make clear these bases of the popular rejection of the agreement: "Land is honor" (*al-ard 'ard*) and a variation on the January 2011 classic "Bread, freedom, social justice" to (the equally rhyming in Arabic) "Bread, freedom, these islands are Egyptian."

When Egyptians revolted on Jan. 25, 2011, they chose the Hosni Mubarak-designated National Police Day to launch their protests. Ironically, the issue of the islands, just off the coast of the Sinai Peninsula, is at the core of Sinai Liberation Day protest demands. This is not to suggest that a national insurrection will follow today's demonstrations — extensive preemptive security measures prevented large, mass gatherings — and there is no question that the deteriorating economy is the greatest challenge to the subsistence of millions of Egyptians. But this episode does underscore how potent the central elements of a national narrative can be in challenging a leadership, opening otherwise closed space for expressing opposition to a repressive regime.

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They have a Gun in One Hand and the Media in the Other:
The Rise of Anti-Militarist Activism under the Supreme Council of Armed Forces

By Amy Austin Holmes, American University in Cairo

Before anyone had ever heard of Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, secular activists in Egypt began organizing to oppose the junta that he was the most junior member of: the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF). Field Marshall Tantawi, who had been Hosni Mubarak's Minister of Defense, headed the military council and was its most public figure, while Sisi was still relatively unknown. The SCAF ruled Egypt for almost a year and a half. This interregnum – after Mubarak stepped down and before Mohamed Morsi was elected – was often referred to at the time as a transition period. From today's vantage point, it may appear less as a transition than as a prelude. Given the current resurgence of the military which has taken place since Sisi's election to president, it may be useful to recall this critical period.

In this short memo I argue that a new form of contentious politics emerged in Egypt during this time: the rise of anti-militarist opposition.

In a forthcoming book manuscript I analyze the three waves of anti-government mobilization in Egypt against Mubarak, the military council, and Morsi. What I refer to as the second wave of the Egyptian revolution began when the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power on February 11, 2011. It then ended on June 30, 2012, when the generals handed over (some) power to Morsi. The second wave of mobilization against the SCAF was not aiming to topple a single person, but attempted to erode the entrenched power of the armed forces as an

institution. In chapter three of my book manuscript I chart the growth of groups that played an avant-garde role in challenging the authority of the Egyptian military including Mosireen, Kazeboon, No Military Trials for Civilians, the campaign to end virginity tests, as well as activist groups that existed prior to the uprising against Mubarak such as April 6 and the Revolutionary Socialists. In this short memo I will highlight just two of these groups: No Military Trials and Askar Kazeboon.

No Military Trials for Civilians

While many observers and analysts declared that the revolution was 'over' when Mubarak relinquished power, in fact large street protests continued almost uninterrupted in the following weeks and months.[1] On February 25, 2011, two weeks after Mubarak was ousted, a demonstration was held on Tahrir called the "Friday of Victory." Demands included calling for Ahmed Shafik to step down, who Mubarak had hastily appointed Prime Minister just weeks earlier during the uprising. At night, the protest on Tahrir was attacked by army soldiers. One person provides a vivid description of these events:

> I returned to Tahrir on the 25th of February, the Friday of Victory. Of course none of our demands had been met and we did not want Ahmed Shafik. At 2am the army attacked us. About 300 men carrying sticks, batons and electrics beat us for absolutely no reason. (…) They handcuffed me behind my back, all the time swearing at us and shouting that Mubarak is and continues to be the president. The metal wire was cutting into my wrists and when I complained they beat me even more. The commando officer stepped on my back with his boots, kicked my head and for seconds stood on my neck and I felt I will die. He shouted: "[Y]ou want Mubarak to leave. He will remain despite all of you."[2]

Most of the people who were arrested on that day were later released. Amr Beheirry, however, was not. After a few of the other protesters inquired as to his whereabouts, they realized that he was being held in prison and subjected to a military trial although he was a civilian who had not broken any law. They decided to begin a campaign to demand the release of Amr, but soon realized that this was not an isolated incident. They learned of more and more civilians who were being tried in military courts, but no one knew the exact numbers. At first they thought there may be dozens, then hundreds, then thousands. The authorities refused to release any information. The campaign to release Amr turned into a campaign against military trials. They became the first anti-military group in post-Mubarak Egypt.

After months of campaigning, the SCAF finally admitted that over 12,000 civilians were being tried in military courts, more than the number who had been tried in military tribunals during the entire period of Mubarak's rule. Activists believe the number may have been even much higher. This means that they had no lawyers, there was no due process, and no pretense of a fair trial. Some of the "court cases" were not even conducted in a courtroom, but instead the kitchen of the Haikstep military prison.

The group began approaching presidential candidates already in March 2011, hoping that someone would be willing to make a public statement criticizing military trials of civilians. They found no takers. It was not until May 7 that Hisham Bastawisy, a judge and vice president of the Court of Cassation — in addition to being nominated by the Tagammu Party as a presidential candidate — agreed to go on record with a statement. Even Mohamed El Baradei, one of the most prominent presidential contenders, and considered by many to be a liberal, still refused to make a statement as the issue was still highly controversial.

1 In an earlier publication I analyzed the 2011 uprising, and endeavored to explain when and how the business elite, the military, and United States either withdrew their support from Mubarak or rather continued to support him, as well as how the repertoire of protest tactics changed over the course of the 18-day uprising. "There are Weeks when Decades Happen: Structure and Strategy in the Egyptian Revolution" *Mobilization,* 17(4), December 2012, p 391-410. My forthcoming book manuscript adopts a similar approach to explaining the waves of mobilization against the SCAF and against Mohammed Morsi.

2 "Diaries of a Revolution under Military Rule: Excerpts from 2011 Report," El-Nadeem Center for the treatment and rehabilitation of victims of violence and torture.

In July 2011, when Tahrir was occupied for three weeks, the longest occupation since the uprising that ousted Mubarak, the main demand of the sit-in was to end military trials of civilians. The yellow and black logo identifying the group spread both online and as graffiti on the walls throughout Cairo and other cities.

By September 2011, the group had created a video of seven presidential candidates all with stated opposition against military trials of civilians, including: Amr Moussa, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, Ayman Noor, Hisham Bastawisy, Hazem Abou Ismail, Hamdeen Sabahhi, and Bouthaina Kamel._ Within the span of just a few months, this small group of activists had managed to change the political discourse around the issue of military trials from one of absolute silence to a situation in which presidential candidates from across the political spectrum (liberals, leftists, former regime figures, moderate Islamists, and Salafis) openly stated their opposition to military trials of civilians. I asked a member of the group how they managed this — and if the civilian judiciary in Egypt could be used to fight the military judicial system, and if not, what could be done to help the tens of thousands of civilians, many of them young people, who faced military tribunals. She said: "Nothing legal can help these kids. The pressure is what made it possible."[3]

Askar Kazeboon

Kazeboon was formed in the wake of the five day uprising in November 2011 known as the Battle of Mohamed Mahmoud and the clashes in December in front of the cabinet building. Of the many cases of violence and abuse of power that occurred under the SCAF, one event in particular triggered outrage across Egypt and even internationally. A woman wearing a long black hijab was dragged across Tahrir by several soldiers in broad daylight. Her body was limp and the abaya was either ripped or somehow opened, exposing the upper half of her body. One soldier raised his leg to stomp on her chest. Captured on video, the image of this unknown woman became an iconic symbol of how the revolution was literally being crushed under the boots of security forces.

The following day, on December 18, Tahrir newspaper featured a front-page headline reading "Kazeboon" or liars next to an image of the "blue bra woman." After this, Adel Omareh, a member of SCAF, held a press conference and insisted, despite the fact that the image had gone viral: "The armed forces do not have any procedures involving the use of violence." Omarah went on to complain about the burdens that the army had to shoulder "while having to endure a lot of stress and friction with the public."

Kazeboon was formed in order to document the fact that the SCAF were lying about their use of violence. They named their group "Askar Kazeboon" which means "the generals are liars." In order to prove that the generals were deceiving the public and spreading false information, Kazeboon would use footage from official SCAF communiqués or from press conferences and juxtapose the claims they were making, for example about how soldiers never used violence against protesters, with images showing soldiers using violence. They would then screen these short videos in public places, by projecting the videos onto the side of buildings.

Kazeboon grew out of the popular neighborhood committees that were formed during the uprising against Mubarak. However, Kazeboon preferred to remain a loose network, "hard to pin down" or "kids with a projector" as some have described the group. According to one Kazeboon activist they hoped to take Tahrir outside of Tahrir — in other words to decentralize the protests. The idea took off like wildfire: within a matter of weeks screenings were done in Alexandria, Mansoura, Assiut, Aswan, Qalubeya, Suez, and elsewhere.

One of Kazeboon's most high-profile screenings took place on the first anniversary of the uprising, in January 2012, when they projected their videos onto the outside of the state television building known as Maspero. In so doing they were publicizing everything the state media was trying to conceal.

3 Interview with a member of the No Military Trials group on February 19, 2012 in Cairo

Conclusion

How do we explain the emergence of these new anti-militarist activist groups? While a more detailed analysis of these groups is outside the scope of this short memo, their emergence should be seen in direct relation to specific events and actions undertaken by the SCAF. The practice of trying civilians in military tribunals led to the No Military Trials group. The practice of conducting forced virginity tests led to the campaign to stop virginity tests. The pro-SCAF state media led to the creation of Mosireen, a collective of media activists, who produced videos that challenged the official narrative. The practice of committing human rights violations in broad daylight and then lying about them later led to the creation of Kazeboon that was created with the sole purpose of exposing the lies of those in power. The military engendered its own anti-militarist opposition.

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Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Dilemma between Religion and Politics

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The audacious decision of Tunisia's Ennahda movement to separate politics and religion has raised the question of whether Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood would follow Ennahda's course. Pundits believe the current crisis of the Brotherhood might prompt its leaders to consider taking a similar move and separate the two realms. Furthermore, while some of the Brotherhood's exiled figures highlighted that they are weighing in the idea of separating political and religious activities, other reject it as not viable or realistic. No matter the outcome of the Brotherhood's ongoing discussion over this issue would be, assuming it exists, the movement faces many hurdles that preclude reaching a decision similar to that of Ennahda.

Calls for separating religion and politics in the Brotherhood are not new. Many Islamist figures including Mohammed Salim El-Awa, Tariq El-Bishry, and Abduallah Al-Nofaisy (among others) urged the Brotherhood to leave politics and focus on *da'wa* (religious preaching) and *tarbiyya* (education). The prime reason behind the split of Al-Wasat Party from the Brotherhood in 1996 was to morph the movement into a political entity. As Abu Ela Madi, the chairman of Al-Wasat Party puts it in a recent interview "The Brotherhood's activity should be limited to *da'wa*."

A key hurdle that faces the Brotherhood is what I call the "founding defect." Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood, envisioned his movement not as a merely religious or preaching organization but also as a political actor. He defined the Brotherhood, among other things, as a "political association." In fact, a key reason motivated al-Banna to establish the Brotherhood in 1928, instead of joining any of the existing Islamic groups which were many at that time, was to change the political and social order to become more Islamic.

Since the 1940s, the Brotherhood has immersed itself in everyday politics. Blending religion and politics is not peculiar for the Brotherhood's members at might appear to outsiders. Indeed, it is quite the opposite. The Brotherhood

takes pride of mixing religion and politics as part of its comprehensive ideology. Islam for al-Banna as well as for Brotherhood's members is a comprehensive religion that encompasses all aspects of life including the political.

As I discuss in my book, the idea of *shumuliyyat al-islam* (comprehensiveness of Islam) is embedded in the Brotherhood's ideology and constitutes an integral component of its collective identity. Members join the Brotherhood not because of its religious character but also its social, political and educational activities. Put differently, politics constitutes a chief component of the Brotherhood's DNA — impossible to remove without changing the nature of the movement.

Another hurdle is the Brotherhood's ideological indoctrination. Unlike other quietist Islamist groups, the Brotherhood adopts a highly politicized platform that keeps members engaged in everyday politics. The indoctrination programs within the Brotherhood promote certain values that go beyond religion and help create politicized identity. lMoreover, the Brotherhood trains its members not to be only preachers but also social activists and politicians. Forsaking politics would mean a fundamental change in the Brotherhood's indoctrination and socialization programs, something the movement cannot afford to do.

The third hurdle is the organizational structure of the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is usually praised for its tight-knit and disciplined structure, which enabled it to survive regime repression for decades. However, this structure can be counterproductive. After the January 2011 uprising, the Brotherhood created the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) which was mainly a "Brotherhood" entity with little evidence it included non-Brotherhood members. The nascent party relied heavily on the Brotherhood's structure, recruitment, and mobilization tactics. For example, the Youth Division within the FJP was mainly created by the student office as scores of the young Brotherhood moved from the movement to the party with no genuine distinction or separation. The lines between the Brotherhood and the FJP were blurred and the latter acted as a mere political arm to the former with no real autonomy.

Finally, if the Brotherhood decides to become a religious group only, it will lose its edge in the religious market. When I wrote my first book on the Brotherhood in 2007, many members rejected the idea of only having a religious role — not political or social. Some of them expressed distress with separating religion and politics and considered it as a form of secularism. These members joined the Brotherhood because of its comprehensive character. Separating religion and politics would alienate many of the Brotherhood's members —particularly in rural and suburban areas.

The final hurdle the Brotherhood faces is its current crisis. The movement struggles not only to survive one of the most eliminating and repressive campaigns in its history, but also to remain united. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime has put the movement under unprecedented pressure with no communication between the leadership and the grassroots organizers, which has led to significant differences and divisions within the Brotherhood.

For the first time, the movement has two sets of leaders inside and outside Egypt. They disagree over almost everything from policy to tactics. With such a hostile and divisive environment, any decision to separate religion and politics would create more divisions and problems — and may even shatter the movement.

To envision a Brotherhood without political activity is a delusion. The debate inside the Brotherhood is not over separating religion and politics, but instead: it's over separating the preaching activity from party politics. As an ex-Brotherhood minister living in exile, Amr Darrag points out "[T]he Brotherhood should not abandon politics or withdraw from the public sphere, but rather avoid political competition with other parties." Darrag — and other Brotherhood figures who share his view — reflect a small faction within the Brotherhood who don't have real power over the movement.

Any attempt to genuinely separate religion and politics would require fundamental changes in the Brotherhood's organization, ideology and socialization programs — which seem unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

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Abdel Fatah al-Sissi in the Age of the Trickster

By Walter Armbrust, University of Oxford

In many ways the decisive months in the January 25th Revolution were from October 2011 to February 2012. It was a period of massacres and street battles: Maspero, Muhammad Mahmud (I and II), and the Ministerial Council. In the beginning the rank and file of most of the revolutionary political spectrum, furious at the callous violence employed by both the military under the command of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the security forces controlled by the Ministry of Interior, was chanting "down with military rule" at demonstrations. Many politically less-engaged members of a broad middle class looked on, unsure whether or not to side with the nominally interim military rulers or the revolution.

By the end of these four months the wider public, and to some degree those who could be described as politically mobilized, had experienced a sea change. The "sectarian card" had been played with a vengeance by the government and exploited by Islamists. Whatever SCAF may have wanted at the beginning of its interim rule, by the end of 2011 it was left with little choice but to hand over power to a civilian government. Consequently, if a long-suspected political bargain between SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood might possibly have remained unconsummated at the beginning of November 2011, by early February 2012 there was no question that it was a *fait accompli.*

The most interesting event that I observed during that period was a side-show to these momentous spasms of violence. It was an anti-revolution rally in 'Abbasiyya Square near the Ministry of Defence, on 23 December 2011 to be precise, not long after the violent break-up of a sit-in at the Ministerial Council (Maglis al-Wuzara') to protest the appointment of a Mubarak-era dinosaur, Kamal al-Ganzuri, as Prime Minister. This was implicit punishment for a massive days-long street battle the month before, on Muhammad Mahmud Street, after a government official announced a plan to get all the political forces to agree to "supra-constitutional principles" that would grant the military near-complete autonomy from civilian control. During the breakup of the Ministerial Council sit-in a shocking video was made and widely circulated of a woman beaten to the ground by soldiers in army uniforms. Revolutionary forces called for a large demonstration in Tahrir, dubbed "The Friday of Regaining Honour" (*gum'at radd al-i'tbar*) on the 23rd. That demonstration was well attended, by quite a few thousands.

The parallel 'Abbasiyya counter-demonstration was called "The Friday of the Crossing" (*gum'at al-'ubur*) in honour of the crossing of the Bar Lev Line in the 1973 October War, a moment widely considered to have been the finest hour of the Egyptian armed forces. Only a few hundred people attended the event, most of them un-uniformed

security or military forces. The atmosphere was menacing. Banners calling for the execution of pro-Revolution media figures hung from a nearby traffic flyover. Tough-looking men held signs condemning the revolution or praising the army, police and judiciary. Journalists from presumably unsympathetic organizations were reportedly roughed up. I edged out of the crowd and left when some of the attendees started asking if I was a journalist.

The Friday of the Crossing was promoted by and publicly attributed to a television talk show host, Taufiq 'Ukasha, who was mercilessly mocked by the pro-revolution camp. On air 'Ukasha spun wild conspiracy theories about plots against Egypt by immense collectives of enemies: Freemasons, the Revolutionary Socialists, Qatar, the United States, world Jewry, the April 6th movement, Hamas, the Kefaya movement, Google, the Muslim Brotherhood (but not their nominal allies at the time, the Salafis), NATO, Hizballah, Israel and Iran. He pitched his rhetoric in a blatantly populist register. 'Ukasha was vulgar to the point of absurdity, and apparently ignorant; at one point he famously warned of a Masonic conspiracy that would unfold on "13/13/13"—the thirteenth day of the thirteenth month of 2013.

'Ukasha was particularly adamant about the dangers posed to Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood, and was slavishly devoted to the military at a time when "*yasqut hukm al-'askar* " (down with military rule) seemed to be on everyone's lips. Many observers said he was flat-out an operative of military intelligence, at the time headed by Abdel Fatah al-Sissi . Later, when Muhammad Morsy was elected, 'Ukasha played a prominent role in planting the notion that al-Sissi was a crypto-Muslim Brother. 'Ukasha appeared on the air in what many assumed would be his last appearance before the government banned him, warning the public to beware of the Muslim Brotherhood's "man in the armed forced," none other than al-Sissi:

I will hold the Muslim Brotherhood in particular responsible for my security, and responsible for closing the Fara'ayn Channel. That's first. Second, I hold the Military Council responsible for my security, from Field Marshall Muhammad Husayn al-Tantawi down to the last member of the Military Council, who is General Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, the Director of Military Intelligence, and the Muslim Brotherhood's man in the armed forces.

At the end of 2011 thousands across the country were demonstrating against the military, as opposed to the few hundreds at 'Ukasha's rally. Yet clearly, in hindsight, the small demonstration in 'Abbasiyya was a far better barometer of Egypt's political trajectory from that point on than the much larger one in Tahrir Square. How, then, should we assess the significance of 'Ukasha for Egyptian politics?

Undoubtedly 'Ukasha was a mouthpiece for counter-revolution. But more than that, he was a harbinger of "al-Sissi-ism"—part of a pattern, not simply an operative of the counter-revolution detachable from the style of governance that would emerge a year and a half later. Moreover Abdel Fatah al-Sissi , the eventual President of Egypt who came after 'Ukasha's initial revealing flicker in 2011, has ruled in ways that articulate with larger political currents that go further afield than Egypt. The moment of instability that made 'Ukasha audible to Egyptian publics was characteristic of political fluidity in a revolution, which we may characterize as a liminal crisis—a state of "anti-structure" from which there was no clear exit. But the substance of governance that followed, when al-Sissi took power, in effect echoed many of the themes 'Ukasha had articulated as a quasi-outsider: extreme nationalism, paranoia, and an obsession with security buttressed by conspiracy theorizing and mirrored by utter devotion to Egypt's security establishment. al-Sissi ended the revolution, but the new political normativity in which his regime governed was structured by forms of precarity that were distinct from the Revolution, but which echoed its liminality more enduringly, thereby rendering the "paranoid style" that 'Ukasha pioneered so colourfully a long-term feature of the political sphere.

In what follows I want to first elaborate on the theme of revolution as liminal crisis, and secondly, to explore some of the implications arising from it. To start with,

Taufiq 'Ukasha, my point of entry to this line of thinking, can be understood as a Trickster. Such figures flourish in conditions of liminality. We can understand 'Ukasha this way by recognizing that he achieved his political salience in the context of certain universal *forms* that have been described and analysed in the analytical heritage of several disciplines, most prominently anthropology. One of these forms is a narrative archetype: the Trickster. The other is a political inflection of what anthropologists have called "the ritual process." Ritual is a means for trying to control the unpredictability of transitions from one social position to another. The classic case was "rites of passage," as described in the classic work by van Gennep in the early 20th century, expanded and elaborated by Victor Turner in the 1970s, and adapted to political theory recently by anthropologist Bjørn Thomassen.[1] The ritual process involved a breaking away from social norms, entry into a liminal phase in which normative social conventions could be (or were *expected* to be) overturned, and initiands in the ritual were joined together in a state of solidarity that Turner termed "communitas"; think Tahrir Square during the mythical first 18 days of the Revolution. Finally, initiands in the ritual process would be re-incorporated into normative society in their new social positions.

Ritual exists to control the transitions we know will happen, whereas societies (and individuals) are often obliged to undergo transitions that are unexpected. When unexpected transitions happen the *form* of the ritual process (*not* the "content," or more precisely, the social significance of the transition, which is inevitably contingent on many factors) can still tell us much about how individuals and societies adapt to them. One way to understand revolution is, in Thomassen's formulation, as a "liminal crisis," an entry into liminality in which there is no "master of ceremonies" to usher initiands back into a recognized social position. When the liminal phase of a social drama becomes protracted crisis ensues, and consequently "sides are taken and power resources calculated."[2] This happens precisely in such circumstances as civil wars and revolutions, when "taking sides and calculating resources" obviously raises the question of who leads, both in the sense of familiar leaders operating on a shattered political terrain as well as new leaders emerging in the liminal void.

In a liminal crisis the Trickster becomes an especially dangerous type of leadership. A Tricksters is a being at home in liminality—the wanderer who appears in a village and captivates its inhabitants with alluring stories. The term designates both a character and a type of narrative found in various forms across all modern cultures and in antiquity. From Prometheus in Greek mythology to Wadjunkaga of the native-American Winebago people, Trickster is the fulcrum of cautionary tales about the dangers of uncontained liminality.*3* On the political stage the American politician Donald Trump plays the same role. The potentials of liminality, both creative and destructive, are at the heart of the Trickster, who is exquisitely ambivalent: potentially powerful, ridiculous, and dangerous.

In modern politics Tricksters acquire a following when the conventional signposts of social and political life are thrown into doubt. Normally Tricksters are objects of ridicule. But in liminality such outsiders can be seen as a solution to crisis. "Having no home, and therefore no real human and existential commitments, the trickster is not really interested in solving the liminal crisis: he simply pretends."[4] One way to perpetuate liminal crisis is to foment strife, which 'Ukasha did with gusto, as he worked

1 Van Gennep, Arnold. 2004 [1909]. *The Rites of Passage*. Tr. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee. London: Routledge. Thomassen, Bjørn. 2012. "Notes Toward an Anthropology of Political Revolutions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 54 (3): 679-706; Turner, Victor. 1977. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Cornell: Cornell University Press.

2 Turner, Victor W. 1988. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, p. 91.

3 The figure of the Trickster is well known in the study of literature, folklore, mythology and anthropology. For a classic study of the phenomenon anchored in folklore, anthropology, and psychology, see Radin, Paul. 1956. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology; with a commentary by Karl Kerényi and Carl G. Jung*. New York: Philosophical Library.

4 Thomassen 2014, 104.

assiduously to set the public against the Revolution, revolutionaries against the Muslim Brotherhood, and Egypt ostensibly against the world, which was, in his narrative, rife with grand coalitions of plotters aiming to destroy the country. But if 'Ukasha may be entirely legible within the terms of Trickster politics, then what can we say about Abdel Fatah al-Sissi? At first glance it might seem odd to speculate that an iron-handed populist dictator can be understood as a Trickster politician. But I think he should be, in full acknowledgment of the many nuances that characterize Egyptian politics at this historical juncture to be sure, but also in the context of universal forms of liminality which can be a productive analytical framework for understanding contemporary politics globally.

It is important not to be misled by the form of a Trickster as literally a "demonic clown."[5] Politicians such as Donald Trump or Boris Johnson fit the conventional Trickster form: "a figure of excess, especially of eating and drinking, and of sexual exploits, often depicted with an enormous phallus — the very grotesqueness of his figure denoting an inversion of order … a breaker of taboos, a joker and prankster, the best of companions, but also a thief, a liar and an impostor…"[6] al-Sissi is certainly not that Trickster. His internationally circulated image is of a dour ruler admired by realpolitik Western politicians, presiding over the harsh suppression of Islamist insurgency and revolution, commanding the country to get serious and get back to work—all no-nonsense, and don't you dare laugh.

But the *function* of a political trickster, as opposed to the literal form, fits al-Sissi rather better: the pretend politician, a man with no existential commitments (one notes his half-way position between the head of a civilian government and head of a military that sees itself as distinct from and above the state that supports it), purveyor of false charisma, and above all, a suddenly prominent person who presents himself as "a solution to the crisis" when he is in fact just a skillful mime adept at telling people what they want to hear. The fulcrum of a Trickster tale is that people are duped into feeling empowered for a while, but all too soon the feeling "dissolves into nothingness."[7]

It is important to appreciate that the decline of al-Sissi's popularity has been remarkably swift considering the immense hopes that a substantial proportion of a revolution-weary public had invested in him. He has been spectacularly bad at forging political alliances. University students were opposed to him from the beginning, but much of the non-Islamist intelligentsia was at first desperate to justify what they claimed, somewhat delicately, was the necessity of a coup on grounds that Morsy posed a mortal threat to the nation. A modicum of freedom of expression and a light security touch on non-Islamist political figures would have kept many of them on side. Instead, al-Sissi's undiscriminating scorched earth approach to potential political opponents has squandered support. Many intellectuals, opinion-makers, and artists still firmly dissociate their support for removing Morsy from their current political stance. But they have nonetheless largely become hostile to al-Sissi, if not necessarily vocal about it given the dangers of speaking out.

Business elites likewise are frustrated with al-Sissi's rule. His economic policies thus far have been a mix of neoliberal initiatives (a "roll-back" policy fine by the business elites) and neglect of state initiatives to actually structure the economy to their advantage (an insufficient "roll-out" policy to rig the economy in their favor). al-Sissi operates through grand announcements of mega-projects, most of them re-treads from the late Mubarak era, such as a "million unit" low-income housing project, a "new capital city," a Norman Foster-designed plan to re-make the Maspero Triangle—a lower-class area near the centre of Cairo—as a mixture of low income housing and elite business and tourism facilities, and a so-called

5 Forlenza, Rosario and Bjørn Thomassen. 2016. "Decoding Donald Trump: The Triumph of Trickster Politics." *Public Seminar* (28 April): http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/04/decoding-donald-trump-the-triumph-of-trickster-politics/#.V4uVB5MrLys accessed on 17 July, 2016.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

"second Suez Canal" which was in reality an infrastructural enhancement needed, eventually but not urgently, to maintain the Canal's place in the global shipping market. The Canal project in particular was instructive. A routine upgrading of the Canal was presented to the public as an epic national achievement that would, the regime claimed, more than double the Canal's badly needed foreign currency income. It was inaugurated by a pageant, much parodied by those who felt they could do so safely, in which al-Sissi sailed through the new channel perched on the prow of a warship wearing Qaddafi-like sunglasses. The fact that Canal revenues subsequently declined, as most experts predicted, was quietly ignored by the regime.

Al-Sissi had told the public what it wanted to hear — and the public briefly saw what it wanted to see. "The sense of empowerment that tricksters manage to produce feels real enough for a while, but it evaporates as suddenly as the trickster entered the stage, and dissolves in nothingness."[8] The Canal ceremony by all accounts *did* feel real to the public in July, 2015—it was by far the most successful political theatre the regime has mounted since al-Sissi's accession to power. But by April of 2016 the exuberance of the previous year was gone, as spontaneous demonstrations erupted against al-Sissi's gift (or "return" as the regime termed it) of the two Red Sea islands Tiran and Sanafir at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, to Saudi Arabia. An attempt to amplify the initial demonstration ten days later was brutally suppressed in a wave of arrests of potential organizers that successfully prevented further anti-regime expressions. Though the regime remains popular in some quarters, it is now clear to all that it stays in power only through violence. The proportion of the public that falls for political tricks like the Canal opening will never increase.

One might be tempted to attribute the regime's actions to political inexperience or simple ineptitude. This may be true to a degree, but it is also consistent with the character of the Trickster as a mime—an outsider with no existential commitments pretending to be a politician. In this sense there is a distinction to be made between the liminal crisis that brought Taufiq 'Ukasha to prominence in 2011, and de facto permanency of crisis that has been ongoing since al-Sissi took power in 2013, or really long before the Revolution insofar as the structuring of crisis is part of the way modern capitalism works. But how has crisis been made permanent in post-revolution Egypt?

First, al-Sissi has made no effort to create the sort of political machine that Mubarak's National Democratic Party had wielded, at least through the first two decades of Mubarak's rule—before the machine began to atrophy in the long transition from Hosni Mubarak to his son Gamal in favor of a more blatant rent-generation-through-megaprojects model. Many observers have commented that al-Sissi does not really seem to care about politics. Some have attributed this to his military background, assuming that he is accustomed to giving orders and having them followed unquestioningly. But the slow reconstituting of even a parliament that was designed to be largely subservient to the president without being linked to him politically (and not a parliament with a political agenda of its own and a machinery of hegemony to back it up) left a hollow feeling in the most politically expert parts of the public. The parliament deflects some of the rising political criticism that might otherwise stick to the president, but it does little else. It is completely unlike the NDP patronage machine that had run Egypt for the previous three decades and the regime seems not to be trying to turn it into anything more.

Al-Sissi's apparent lack of concern for political institutionalization articulates with a concomitant reliance on media spectacle, which goes perfectly with megaprojects and hypernationalism. One compares al-Sissi's use of media with the practices of both Taufiq 'Ukasha and Donald Trump. Both in their own way are on the cutting edge of global politics in terms of their use of a media bullhorn defiantly disconnected from their respective political establishments. Politics by media spectacle has limits. Trump's lack of conventional political organizing skills might lose him the presidency.

8 Forlenza and Thomassen, 2016.

'Ukasha, despite having been elected to the Egyptian parliament (later expelled for insubordination after having an unauthorized meeting with the Israeli ambassador), has probably had his day, and will be relegated to the carnivalesque margins of politics. But the rising prominence of media spectacle as a political tool in both cases is unmistakable. It remains to be seen how far such spectacle can carry al-Sissi.

Media spectacle flourishes in "permanentized" instability. In such a system "the state increasingly limits itself to discourses and practices of police and military safeguarding, which in turn increasingly operate with disciplinary control and surveillance techniques."[9] Such an image is instantly recognizable in Egypt, as in many other societies. The Muslim Brotherhood provides a pretext for an endless security crisis, which the state nurtures, as opposed to seriously addressing the root grievances that keep the organization politically viable. Everything from floods in Alexandria[10] to the ostensibly righteous (in the view of the most vehemently pro-regime press) killing of Italian/Cambridge doctoral student Giulio Regini can be blamed on the Brotherhood.[11] After Great Britain's Brexit vote, one joke circulated by Egyptians on social media was to ask how long it would take the government to blame the disaster on the Ikhwan. In the actual world over 40,000 political prisoners were held in Egyptian prisons as of May 2014; after that the data become vague, but it is unlikely that the number of prisoners has shrunk. [12] Moreover, extrajudicial disappearances of citizens at the hands of security forces have become an alarming phenomenon,[13] and the means for defending the rights of prisoners has been systematically degraded.[14]

Aside from discipline and surveillance, instability produces some of the effects of the liminal crisis mentioned above. But a liminal crisis conceived in the terms of the ritual process writ large is a moment of political fluidity characteristic of all revolutionary events, perfect for the emergence of a Trickster, but also genuinely open to contingency and hence also potentially grounds for the emergence of other political formations. Permanentized instability is a synthetic form of liminality that governments struggle to keep within manageable limits. The degree to which it is deliberately structured is debatable, but it is worth noting that instability is not at all out of place in a neoliberal order. "Crisis capitalism" is one way of expressing that kind of instability. Milton Friedman, one of the primary ideological architects of neoliberalism, famously stated that crisis breaks "the tyranny of the status quo —in private and especially governmental arrangements",[15] and that the function of those committed to "freedom" as he understood it, was "to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable."[16]

`In a more philosophical vein Isabel Lorey writes on "government of the precarious" in which "precarious living and working conditions are currently being normalized at a structural level and have thus become a fundamental

9 Lorey, Isabell. 2015. *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. London: Verso, p. 64.

10 http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/articles/260592.html

11 http://www.tahyamisr.net/2016/04/blog-post_685.html The fanciful allegation that Regini was working on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood to destabilize Egypt implicitly justifies his murder, though the article does not openly admit that it was a branch of the security forces that killed him.

12 https://wikithawra.wordpress.com/2014/01/09/al-Sissi-mansour-detainees/ On conditions within the expanding network of post-Revolution prisons, see http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n04/tom-stevenson/al-Sissis-way).

13 *The Independent* reported that 1,840 such disappearances have occurred over the past year (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/egyptian-government-disappears-1840-people-in-just-12-months-ruling-by-fear-a6923671.html). The Egyptian independent news site Mada Masr reports that in February 2016 alone twenty young people, some in their teens, had been disappeared in Alexandria (http://www.madamasr.com/news/least-20-alexandrian-young-people-forcibly-disappeared-last-week).

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15 Friedman, Milton. 2002. *Capitalism and Freedom; Fortieth Anniversary Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. xiii-xiv

16 Hanieh, Adam. 2013. *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East.* Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 48-52; Klein, Naomi. 2008. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.* London: Penguin.

governmental instrument."[17] A neoliberal system that reneges on general welfare (which is not so much a means for eliminating precarity as for harnessing it in governance) and instead prioritizes its resources more narrowly on safeguarding the security of an elite was a root cause of Egypt's revolution, and is increasingly a feature of all neoliberalized societies, certainly including Egypt even more intensely after the Revolution than before it. The point of a "government of the precarious" is to balance "a maximum of precarization, which probably cannot be exactly calculated, with a minimum of safeguarding to ensure that the minimum is secured at this threshold."[18]

In other words, certain constituent parts of society are kept below the threshold of revolution, and above the threshold of absolute poverty and thus potentially prone to buying into a system that requires belief in the capacity for individual self-improvement. The space between these thresholds—a space of synthetic liminality—may be precisely the social position at which a Trickster politician is maximally audible: Taufiq 'Ukasha spinning his bizarre conspiracy theories; Abdel Fatah al-Sissi pitching ever grander (and less economically viable but more rent-generating) megaprojects, and foreclosing criticism by invoking the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists-over-the-horizon as a never-ending threat; British voters captivated by Boris Johnson's unfulfillable Brexit promises; Donald Trump whipping crowds into a frenzy with promises to "make America great again" by building walls to keep Mexicans out and forbidding Muslims from coming in. Maintaining the thresholds of this structured precarity is, ironically, a quintessentially precarious task, which is to say, the perfect job for a Trickster, someone who is "at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself."[19]

Trickster tales often end in disaster. Can we imagine a hypothetical Trump presidency coming to disaster? (This is a rhetorical question.) More to the point for present purposes, Western governments that interpret al-Sissi as an unfortunate but necessary bulwark against the chaos of undisciplined freedom are grievously misunderstanding the structured precarity at the heart of the regime's capacity to govern. Perhaps such precarity is so close to their own governing strategies that they can no longer tell they've been Tricked.

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17 Lorey 2015, 63

18 Ibid, 65.

19 Radin 1956, ix.

From Co-optation to Crackdown:
Gulf States' Reactions to the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring

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Examining recent statements made by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) governments about the Muslim Brotherhood, it is difficult to believe that its members were almost universally welcomed into the Gulf states in the 1950s, with some of their ranks holding ministerial positions into the 2000s. The rise of Islamist opposition movements during the Arab Spring led governments across the region to focus keenly on the Muslim Brotherhood as it emerged as the primary voice of political opposition. I argue that the reason for such a focus on the Ikhwan inside the Gulf lies beyond regional politics alone; rather, the persistent presence of Muslim Brotherhood movements inside the GCC states led their governments to articulate different policies toward such groups. Indeed, each of the Gulf states has developed a distinct strategy to manage the Ikhwan, ranging from a soft form of co-optation seen in Qatar to a harsh crackdown in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

That such policies diverge so widely demonstrates the degree to which each Gulf regime considers the Ikhwan threatening to its hold on power. As the whole, government treatment of these organizations in the GCC varies according to the degree to which regimes consider them linked to broader opposition movements. The more the Brotherhood is seen to collude with secular opposition or hold political sway through government positions, the more dangerous it are considered, and thus likelier a crackdown will result. The link between activities of local Brotherhood branches and support for the Ikhwan abroad, however, is less direct. Those states which co-opt rather than shut down Brotherhood movements tend to feel less threatened by them not only domestically, but also abroad. Still, domestic calculations about the political threat posed by the Brotherhood are remarkably subjective and often rest on individual rulers' opinions about and experiences with the organization.

Bahrain: Loyalist Brotherhood

Bahrain provides an example of Muslim Brotherhood co-optation due to the political salience of sectarian identity in that state. Because oppositional Islamist movements tend to be Shiite, the Muslim Brotherhood has traditionally been allied with al-Khalifa ruling family. This is not to say that the Bahraini Ikhwan is politically inactive; the Bahraini Brotherhood has a social branch (al-Islah Society) and a political bloc (al-Minbar Islamic Society). As a parliamentary bloc, al-Minbar tends to support the monarchy's political and economic agenda while also pressing for the implementation of Islamist social policies.[1] Its primary policy demands seem to comprise "generic support for the security services and rejection of government concessions to the main Shi'a opposition society, al-Wefaq."[2]

To maintain its position in the government's favour, al-Minbar has been careful to distinguish itself from more oppositional Brotherhood groups elsewhere in the region, especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In the words of its president Ali Ahmed in 2014: "All eyes of the voters are on us as they say we are the Muslim Brotherhood, which is not right. It is the ideology that we follow, but we do not have the organization in Bahrain - neither do we support it."3 Al-Minbar went so far as to denounce protests during the Arab Spring as Shiite or Iranian agents.[4]

1 Lori Plotkin Boghardt, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf: Prospects for Agitation," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 20, 2013, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-gulf-prospects-for-agitation.

2 Justin Gengler, "Are Bahrain's Sunnis Still Awake?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 25, 2012, http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=48650.

3 Ali Ahmed, qtd. in Alex MacDonald, "Sunni Islamists Could Face Uphill Struggle in Bahrain Elections," Middle East Eye, November 20, 2014, http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/sunni-islamists-could-face-uphill-struggle-bahrain-elections-1404489268.

4 MacDonald.

Because it has never positioned itself as an opposition movement, the Bahraini Ikhwan has not played a major role in articulating policies, aside from those already supported by the government, and, as a result, though they have disagreed on certain policies (like government land ownership), tensions between the two are almost nonexistent.

Kuwait: Ikhwan in Opposition

The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood has altered its original focus from revising social policy to concentrating on political reform and stamping out corruption, in particular with the advent of the Arab Spring. While its social arm, Jam'iat al-Islah al-Ijtima'i (the Social Reform Association) extends outreach through educational and charitable activities, the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Islamic Constitutional Movement (or ICM) has tempered its demands for social and cultural reforms that would "Islamize" Kuwaiti society while focusing increasingly on demands for broader political reforms.

Though the government, accustomed to Brotherhood activism, has allowed the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood substantial political freedom, crackdown on the opposition as a whole, rather than solely on Islamists, has become more prevalent. Indeed, the government has attempted to stem the tide of the opposition's reform efforts with dissolutions of parliament (two in 2012 alone), the revision of electoral laws to favor traditionally pro-government candidates, and the shielding of ministers from interpellation to maintain al-Sabah ruling family's primacy. In response, the ICM, with other blocs, has boycotted the last two parliamentary elections.

Outside parliament, the ICM has increasingly privileged the advancement of a pro-democracy agenda in partnership with other opposition blocs. In 2013, the ICM signed on to a document articulating demands for reform, drafted by secular opposition leader Musallam al-Barrak, former ICM parliamentarian Jama'an al-Harbash, and Tariq al-Mutairi of the liberal Civil Democratic Movement. Political trends ranging from secular leftists to Salafis have signed the document, which calls for expanded parliamentary authority, an independent judiciary, and a modified criminal code — none of which is forms a traditional "Islamist" platform. To further the coalition's aims, the ICM has thus dropped its once primary demand of amending article two of the constitution to proclaim shari'a as the sole source of legislation.

The April 2016 sentencing of former ICM MP Mubarak al-Duwailah may point to a targeted crackdown on Islamists, informed by the Emirati example, however. Al-Duwailah was sentenced for two years in prison5 on charges of endangering ties with an ally and insulting leaders of an allied state following his statements, on Kuwait's parliamentary television channel, about Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan being "against Sunni Islam."6 It remains to be seen to what extent the Kuwaiti response becomes harmonised with the Emirati, though a full-scale crackdown remains unlikely due to the broad support base that the Ikhwan enjoys inside Kuwait.

Oman: Past Crackdown, Present Uncertainty

The Muslim Brotherhood is less relevant as a political force in Oman, since Ibadi Islam is the dominant strand of the religion in that state.7 Nonetheless, the Brotherhood did have an affiliate there. In fact, in 1994, authorities cracked down on the movement, arresting hundreds of people presumed to be Ikhwan-linked on charges of subversion.8 Among the accused were a former ambassador to the United States, a former air force commander, and two ministerial undersecretaries, suggesting that sympathisers

5 Habib Toumi, "Kuwait Former MP Sentenced for Insulting UAE," *Gulf News*, April 13, 2016, http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-former-mp-sentenced-for-insulting-uae-1.1710578.

6 "UAE to Try Kuwaiti Ex-MP over Remarks on Abu Dhabi Crown Prince," Middle East Eye, March 9, 2015, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-try-kuwaiti-ex-mp-over-remarks-abu-dhabi-crown-prince-1546132555.

7 Zohrul Bari, "Islamic Revival in the Gulf: An Overview," *International Studies* 31, no. 49 (1994): 51.

8 Plotkin Boghardt.

may have held sway in segments of the government.[9]

Today, the Omani Brotherhood lacks institutionalized capacity and major political or social influence due to the lack of Sunni activism as a whole (Sunnis are a minority in the country) and government crackdown in the 1990s. Remaining Islamist movements in Oman are Idabi or Jamaat al-Tabligh, neither of which is ideologically similar to the Ikhwan. The Omani government, since it cracked down on its Brotherhood in the 1990s, has largely stayed out of the fray while its Gulf neighbours have clashed about the political threat presented by the Ikhwan in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, perhaps due to the fact that the group there does not pose a substantial political threat or cohesive group.

Qatar: Cooperative Co-optation

The Qatari Muslim Brotherhood, which formally chose to dissolve itself in 1999, has tended to focus on social policy rather than political reform. Indeed, the organization never formed a political arm. Without means to disseminate its ideology through an official publication or even a formal meeting place, the Qatari Ikhwan does not appear to harbour ambitions beyond continuing intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

Possibly because of the lack of a political opening and partly due to general satisfaction with the prevailing system, the Islamic sector in Qatar has not become politically active in any nascent pro-democracy movement. Further, because the government has been public about the need for democratic reforms, there is less space for Brotherhood agitation in this field. In addition, because many Brotherhood members hail from prominent families, the organization is "hardly subversive."[10] In its current, loosely organized form, members are able to meet without fearing consequences of a crackdown from authorities. Furthermore, their goals of *da'wa* and Islamic education are achievable without the implementation of a structure that the state may find objectionable.[11]

Because Islamist demands in Qatar have been confined to the social sphere, the government has not forced a confrontation with Brotherhood supporters and instead has articulated willingness to work with other Islamist organizations. Its attitude about the Brotherhood abroad thus is largely informed by its peaceful experience with the Ikhwan at home, rather than by an ideological affiliation with the organization.

Saudi Arabia: Cycles of Co-optation and Crackdown

The Saudi Brotherhood has maintained a somewhat low profile, largely eschewing public criticism or calls for change in favor of more grassroots activity. Such activity reached a pitch in the early 1990s, when a number of Brotherhood figures joined the Islamic Awakening (al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya, hereafter Sahwa) movement, which focused on opposing the deployment of foreign troops on Saudi soil to liberate Kuwait and included protests and petitions demanding political reform to allow for greater public participation in politics.12 For its part, the ruling family seems to have vacillated between supporting and co-opting its local Brotherhood affiliate, depending on the degree to which it considers the group to be aligned with Sahwa and other reform movements that could threaten the Kingdom politically.

By 1995, the regime had quelled the Sahwa campaign, but continued to harbor a distrust and dislike of the Brotherhood, as it considered the group the primary force

9 Ibid.

10 Jassim Sultan, Qtd. in Andrew Hammond, "Arab Awakening: Qatar's Controversial Alliance with Arab Islamists," Open Democracy, April 25, 2013, http://www.opendemocracy.net/andrew-hammond/arab-awakening-qatar's-controversial-alliance-with-arab-islamists.

11 Ibid.

12 Toby Matthiesen, "The Domestic Sources of Saudi Foreign Policy: Islamists and the State in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings," Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at Brookings Institution, Rethinking Political Islam Series, August 2015, 2, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Research/Files/Reports/2015/07/rethinking-political-islam/Saudi-Arabia_Matthiesen-FINAL.pdf?la=en.

behind "this unprecedented episode of dissent."[13] Indeed, in the years that followed, the government moved to diminish independent Sahwa activities and expelled several prominent Muslim Brotherhood or Muslim Brotherhood-linked, figures, since they considered the groups to be one and the same.[14] In 2002, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, then-minister of interior, went so far as to accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of being the "source of all evils in the Kingdom."[15]

The relationship changed in later years. After the death of the most respected figures of the official religious establishment, Sheikhs Ibn Baz and Ibn Uthaymin and in the midst of its fight against jihadism, the ruling family needed a Sunni support base to back its legitimacy.[16] Al-Saud family's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood outside the kingdom thus improved, and it become more tolerated inside the state.

This relationship soured during the Arab Spring, however, when, members of the Sahwa movement in 2011 began to call for far-reaching political reforms through petitions.[17] To make matters worse, in August 2013, 56 sheikhs— some of whom are linked to the Saudi Muslim Brotherhood— criticized the overthrow of Brotherhood leader Mohammed Morsi in Egypt, which the Saudi government had supported, dubbing it the "removal of a legitimately elected president" and a violation of "the will of the people."[18]

Certainly, "in 2011 and 2012 there was some interaction between Sahwa Islamists, liberals and political reformers of various persuasions."[19] As a result, the government came to consider it dangerous and thus took a harsh stance toward the Brotherhood, culminating in the removal of Ikhwan sympathisers from university posts and the designation of the organization as a terrorist group in February 2014.[20]

This stance seems to have been tempered in the past year, however. Foreign Minister Saud bin Faysal stated in February 2015 that his government has "no problem with the Muslim Brotherhood."[21] Such a change in rhetoric may be part of the Saudi government's attempt to gain favour among Sunni Islamists as it wages war in Yemen and against ISIS, positioning itself as the protector of "proper" Sunni Islam. In turn, it may also reflect the policies of King Salman, who, as long-time governor of Riyadh, developed ties with a variety of Islamists in the Kingdom.[22]

United Arab Emirates: Crackdown and Securitization

Jam'iat al-Islah wa-l-Tawjih al-Ijtima'i (Reform and Social Counselling Association, hereafter Islah), the Emirati branch of the Muslim Brotherhood initially resembled the Qatari branch in its focus on social policy and education. Islah also developed a political reform agenda alongside its social program, however, pressing for more representative government and more equal distribution of wealth.[23]

Fearing that the Emirati Brotherhood could gain a broader following as a political bloc, the government resolved to squash it before the Ikhwan became too powerful to influence politics on an institutionalised level. Allegations about Islah's misconduct from Egyptian

13 Stéphane Lacroix, "Saudi Arabia's Muslim Brotherhood Predicament," Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS), March 20, 2014, http://pomeps.org/2014/03/20/saudi-arabias-muslim-brotherhood-predicament/.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Matthiesen, 3.

18 Lacroix.

19 Matthiesen, 3.

20 "Saudi Arabia Declres Muslim Brotherhood 'Terrorist Group,'" BBC News, March 7, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26487092.

21 Saud al-Faisal, Qtd. in "Saudi Arabia Has 'No problem' with Muslim Brotherhood: Foreign Minister," Middle East Eye, February 11, 2015, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/saudi-foreign-minister-no-problem-muslim-brotherhood-230201904.

22 Ibrahim al-Hatlani, "Next Saudi Royal Generation Takes the Lead," Al-Monitor, June 24, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/06/saudi-arabia-future-challenges-king-salman.html#.

23 Pekka Hakala, "Opposition in the United Arab Emirates," Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department, European Parliament, November 15, 2012, 2, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=78691.

President Hosni Mubarak, who claimed in 1994 that Islah's charity had funded Egyptian Islamic Jihad, provided the first opportunity for the Emirati government to move against the organization. That year, the government dissolved Islah's elected emirate-level boards of directors[24] and placed them under supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Furthermore, the government banned Brotherhood members from holding public office.[25] A second crackdown, involving hundreds of arrests, occurred following the 9/11 attacks, as the Emirati government was eager to prove itself harsh on any type of Islamism after Dubai was revealed to be a financial hub for terrorism and after two Emiratis were involved in the attacks.[26]

Although liberal and Islamist activists had worked together to draft a petition urging political reform in 2011, the government exaggerated links between them to dramatize the danger to the prevailing system. By the end of 2012, 94 alleged members of Islah had been arrested as security threats, with the government claiming to have received confessions from imprisoned Islah members that their organization had an armed wing and intended to overthrow the existing order to re-establish the caliphate, a claim not substantiated by any independent Islah documents or public statements.[27] Still, in November 2014, the UAE dubbed Islah a terrorist organization.[28]

Emirati Foreign Minister Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan denounced the Brotherhood as "an organization which encroaches upon the sovereignty and integrity of nations" and called on Gulf governments to work against its expanding influence.[29] Such language illustrates government attempts to use fears about emerging Islamist political parties in the region as an excuse to dismiss such groups' demands for political reform within the UAE. The crackdown on the Brotherhood also sent a strong signal to any potential opposition movements that crackdown would be swift and complete.

Inside the GCC, different Muslim Brotherhood organizations have varying priorities in terms of political versus social platforms and have adopted differing organizational forms. As a result, government responses have fluctuated, with successful co-optations in Bahrain and Qatar, crackdowns in Oman, the UAE and at times in Saudi Arabia, and with a relatively hands-off approach in Kuwait. Such responses illustrate the degree to which such states consider the Ikhwan threatening to their economic and political agendas.

The fact that Brotherhood movements survive in some of the world's wealthiest rentier states also demonstrates the flexibility of the organization and its ability to adapt its shape and activities to suit different political environments. Due to such flexibility, the Brotherhood is likely to remain politically relevant in the region, even where structural restrictions remain. Just as Tarek Masoud points out in the Egyptian context, political Islam is also far from dead in the Gulf region.

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24 Ibid., 2.

25 Ibid., 2.

26 Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, Dubai, February 10, 2014.

27 "UAE Islamists Deny Forming Military Wing," *Ahram Online,* September 22, 2012, http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/53525.aspx.

28 "UAE Blacklists 82 Groups as 'Terrorist,'" Al Arabiya, November 15, 2014, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/11/15/UAE-formally-blacklists-82-groups-as-terrorist-.html.

29 Ian Black, "Emirati Nerves Rattled by Islamists' Rise," *The Guardian*, October 12, 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/on-the-middle-east/2012/oct/12/uae-muslimbrotherhood-egypt-arabspring.

Adding Insult to Injury:
Vilification as Counter-Mobilization in Turkey's Gezi Protests

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The timing, extent and nature of the anti-government uprisings collectively known as Turkey's 2013 Gezi Protests came as a shock to even the most diligent Turkey observer. Electorally speaking, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) had faced little in terms of serious political competition throughout its first three terms in power, increasing its share of the vote and its seats in parliament in each general election since achieving its first parliamentary majority in 2002 as a newly formed party. Although founded by members of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), closed by the Constitutional Court in 1998 for anti-secular activities, the AKP seemed initially to represent a progressive, big-tent, secular-friendly party. AKP leaders proclaimed their party's orientation to be conservative democratic, stating that they had "taken off the shirt" of the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement, and thus were shedding their affiliation with Turkey's broadest, and explicitly anti-Western, strain of political Islam.[1] In its first years in power, the AKP appealed broadly to domestic and international audiences alike as a party that focused on tangible results for its constituents[2] and was pointed to as a "Turkish model" for its Middle Eastern neighbors.[3]

While the AKP had been electorally successful up to May 2013, the events comprising the Gezi Protests made it abundantly clear that many of Turkey's citizens did not support the party's increasing consolidation of power and tendency towards rhetoric rooted in appeals to Islam. Previously politically apathetic individuals, including huge swathes of Turkey's youth, turned out in the millions to voice their criticism of the government, its illiberal actions, and the policies AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hoped would contribute to raising a "pious" (*dindar*) generation.[4] The swell of opposition that was catalyzed and spread within hours of camera-phone images showing Turkish police forces beating peaceful demonstrators in Gezi Park and setting tents on fire while people slept in them unleashed a torrent of criticism against the AKP. The Gezi Protests, which began in May 2013 as a small environmental sit-in to protect a park adjacent to Istanbul's Taksim Square from "urban renewal" (into a shopping mall), evolved rapidly into massive grassroots mobilization.[5] Demonstrations showing solidarity with the Gezi movement were recorded in all but one of Turkey's 81 provinces and lasted over three months.[6]

As widespread, broad-based,[7] internationally supported,[8] and emotionally charged[9] as the Gezi Protests were, however, they fizzled out relatively quickly, and ultimately produced no lasting political change. Even following the revelation of a massive corruption scandal directly involving AKP leaders and their families, including

1 See Erdal Şafak, "Erdoğan Gömleği," *Sabah Gazetesi*, 4 January 2006: http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/safak/2006/01/04/erdogan_in_gomlegi.

2 Engaging AKP supporters in conversation about why they vote as they do often produces project-based responses similar to the following given by a taxi driver in conversation with the author in Ankara, March 2014: "Look at what Tayyip [Erdoğan] did: the third bridge, the airport… What did the other guys do? Nothing."

3 See *The Economist*, "The Turkish Model: A Hard Act to Follow," 6 August 2011: http://www.economist.com/node/21525408.

4 *Hürriyet Gazetesi, "Dindar Gençlik Yetiştireceğiz,"* 2 February 2012: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dindar-genclik-yetistirecegiz-19825231.

5 See Efe Can Gürcan and Efe Peker, *Challenging Neoliberalism at Turkey's Gezi Park: From Private Discontent to Collective Class Action* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

6 See Tolga Şardan, "*Gezi'ye Katılmayan Tek İl," Milliyet Gazetesi,* 25 November 2013: http://www.milliyet.com.tr/geziye-katilmayan-tek-il/gundem/detay/1797621/default.htm.

7 Sulome Anderson, "Gazi to Gezi: Turkish Protests Unite Minorities Who Distrust Each Other," *The Atlantic*, 13 June 2013; http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/gazi-to-gezi-turkish-protests-unite-minorities-who-distrust-each-other/276845/.

8 See Allison Kilkenny, "Occupy Gezi: International Solidarity for Turkey's Uprisings," *The Nation*, 3 June 2013: http://www.thenation.com/article/occupy-gezi-international-solidarity-turkeys-uprising/.

9 Onur Bakiner, "Can the 'Spirit' of Gezi Transform Turkish Politics?" *Jadaliyya*, 3 July 2013: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/12616/can-the-spirit-of-gezi-transform-progressive-polit.

Erdoğan's own son, the AKP achieved major electoral victories in the March 2014 local elections and re-secured a parliamentary majority in the November 2015 general election. While questions arose about the legitimacy of the March election in particular,[10] exit polls indicate that the AKP still enjoys loyal support from around 45-50 pecent of Turkey's population.[11] How is this possible?

This paper explores the counter-mobilization strategy of vilification the AKP government used to marginalize and delegitimize Gezi protesters and their grievances. To account for the government's success in quashing the seemingly indefatigable spirit and massive numbers of protesters in the face of brutal violence, I demonstrate how the AKP literally added insult to injury to demobilize and discredit its opposition. To do so, and to contribute to wider discussions of effectiveness in counter-mobilization, I identify three mechanisms of rhetorical vilification: naming, blaming, and framing. By naming, I mean the use of derogatory and belittling terms used repeatedly by AKP members and spread through government-influenced media outlets to identify Gezi protesters as a hostile "other" to be feared and condemned. This mechanism serves to criminalize the actions of protesters and thus justify harsh measures used against them, while fueling a societal polarization of "us" (good government supporters) versus "them" (bad opposition agitators) that would have lasting consequences. Blaming consists of focusing on rare occurrences of violence and, much more often, fabricating antisocial and even immoral behavior for which Gezi protesters must be held accountable. Finally, the mechanism of framing enabled the AKP rhetorically to situate the behavior of the protesters into pre-existing frames with negative connotations. This further solidified beliefs in its supporters' minds that Gezi protesters were miscreants with ulterior, and often externally supported, anti-government motives.

The AKP's use of naming as a mechanism to delegitimize and "other"-ize those supporting the Gezi protests was quite explicit in its marginalization of the extent of anti-government opposition. AKP Istanbul Governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu initially reacted to the uprisings on his watch as the works of a few "marginal people" (marjinaller),[12] a theme Erdoğan repeated many times. By declaring the protesters to be marginal, the AKP was able to both reduce public perceptions of the number of people protesting and relegate their grievances to the category of minor or even illegitimate. The AKP's practice of naming protesters with derogatory language took many other forms, some of which directly engage Turkey's tumultuous history with terrorism. By calling anyone who went to the streets to express their discontent with the government a terrorist (terörist), a term most vocally applied by then-EU Minister Egemen Bağış, the AKP identified Gezi protesters as inherently dangerous to Turkey.

The word terrorism in Turkey immediately evokes images of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*, PKK), which has waged a violent struggled against the Turkish state for over 30 years and against which many Turkish families fear their sons will be conscripted to fight. "Terrorist" also has leftist connotations dating from Turkey's deadly political struggles in the 1960s and 70s, and often associated with Turkey's (non-Sunni Muslim) Alevis, who were targeted with violence by ultra-nationalists. Berkin Elvan, a 14-year-old Alevi child who was shot in the head with a tear gas canister while out to buy bread in his neighborhood, was called a terrorist by Erdoğan in several public speeches.[13] In another vilifying act of naming, EU Minister Bağış tweeted that those who attended Berkin's funeral were "necrophiliacs" (*nekrofiller*); perhaps sensing he had gone too far even for his party's supporters, he later softened his epithet to "provocateurs."[14]

10 See Lisel Hintz, "No Opposition, No Democracy in Turkey's Elections," *The Washington Post*, 3 April 2014: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/03/no-opposition-no-democracy-in-turkeys-elections/.

11 1 Kasım 2015 Genel Seçim Analizi, Report issued by *Strateji ve Düşünce Merkezi*, November 2015. Available for download at: ilkha.com/files/uploads/Dosya_145.pdf.

12 İsmail Saymaz, "Gezi Park'ında Devlet ve Marjinaller: Erdoğan da Bir 'Marjinal' Değil Miydi?" Radikal Gazetesi. 12 June 2013: http://blog.radikal.com.tr/gezi-parki-direnisi/gezi-parkinda-devlet-ve-marjinaller-erdogan-da-bir-marjinal-degil-miydi-25014.

13 *"Erdoğan Berkin Elvan'ı Terörist İlan Etti,"* Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, 14 March 2014: http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/video_haber/50741/Erdogan_Berkin_Elvan_i_terorist_ilan_etti.html#.

14 *"'Nekrofil'i Sildi 'Provakatör' Dedi,"* Hürriyet Gazetesi, 13 March 2014.

In perhaps the most widely reported form of naming as a mechanism of vilification, Erdoğan frequently termed Gezi participants "çapulcu," a word meaning "looter" or "hooligan." Far from the largely peaceful, environmentally friendly political culture that demonstrators created (and even self-policed when necessary, as I observed in rare instances of deviation from the predominant norms of behavior), the use of çapulcu portrayed the protesters as destructive and unruly. In a creative and spirited effort to counteract such disparaging acts of naming, protesters began defiantly calling themselves çapulcu, using the term in witty riffs on AKP policies to which they objected.[15] In a critique of Erdoğan's call for all women to have at least three children, one woman held a sign reading "I'll have three kids, I promise," which included stick-figure drawings of children named ÇapulCan, ÇapulNaz, and ÇapulNur – adding common Turkish names to the çapulcu insult.[16] A photo reprinted in a volume titled A Çapulcu's Guide to Gezi shows the phrase "you banned alcohol, we sobered up" spray-painted on a wall in response to newly imposed restrictions on alcohol sales.[17] While the humorous co-optation of the insult temporarily bolstered morale and helped to foster bonds of solidarity among disparate groups of protesters all facing the same insults and injuries,[18] the AKP's rhetorical vilification – particularly when distributed through media sources with complex government links[19] while other outlets were being censored – instilled fear of and animosity toward protesters among AKP supporters.

A related government strategy of highlighting those relatively very rare occasions in which Gezi protesters deviated from the peaceful norms of protest the great majority attempted to enforce, as well as falsely blaming protesters for incidents of violence and destruction, also served effectively to paint all those engaging in anti-government opposition demonstrations with the vilification brush. Blaming Gezi protesters not only for damage done to storefront windows but also for the decline in these stores' business, Erdoğan declared that shopkeepers were legally justified in using violence against demonstrators.[20] In one instance of false blaming much publicized by the AKP, protesters were accused of drinking alcohol in a mosque – behavior considered inexcusable and immoral for pious AKP supporters. *Yeni Şafak* correspondent Süleyman Gündüz, who was present at the mosque when the supposedly alcohol-consuming protesters sought shelter from the tear gas being used by police, countered this claim by stressing that not only was alcohol not consumed but that those entering "took off their shoes" as a sign of respect.[21] Although the mosque's imam corroborated the journalist's story, the rhetorical damage was done for many who repeated the story long after the supposed incident.

Seemingly denouncing another disgraceful act, Erdoğan claimed that a group of Gezi protesters, menacingly stripped to the waist, attacked and urinated on a head-scarved woman pushing a baby stroller at the Istanbul port of Kabataş. Emphasizing the woman's role as a pious Muslim and a mother, pro-government journalists filled columns with their moral outrage at such thuggish behavior. When presented with this image of barbarism, AKP supporters' beliefs about the debased character of demonstrators and thus the need for harsh countermeasures against them became even more firmly entrenched. Despite the release of video footage from Kabataş surveillance cameras that show the women in question calmly waiting for and then boarding a ferryboat

15 *"Başbakan Erdoğan: Biz Birkaç Çapulcunun Yaptıklarını Yapmayız," Radikal Gazetesi*, 9 June 2013: http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/basbakan_erdogan_biz_birkac_capulcunun_yaptiklarini_yapmayiz-1136875.

16 Photo used in Çapulcu'nun Gezi Rehberi (Istanbul: Hemen Kitap, 2013), p. 169.

17 Ibid., p.13.

18 Lisel Hintz, "The Might of the Pen(guin), *Foreign Policy*, 10 June 2013: http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/10/the-might-of-the-penguin-in-turkeys-protests/.

19 "The Turkish Media Muzzle," *Al Jazeera*, 2 April 2013: http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2013/04/201342104340948788.html

20 "Erdoğan: Esnafın Palalı Eylemi Hukuk Çerçevesinde," *Yurt Gazetesi*, 8 July 2013: http://www.yurtgazetesi.com.tr/politika/akp-esnafin-palali-eylemi-hukuk-cercevesinde-h38095.html.

21 *"Erdoğan 'Camiye İçkiyle Girdiler' İddiasını Tekrarladı," Hürriyet Gazetesi*, 10 June 2013: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23468860.asp.

without incident,[22] AKP leaders' narrative of blame reinforced mental images of violent, perverted behavior as ubiquitous among Gezi protesters.[23]

Finally, the government's strategic use of framing placed those who supported the Gezi movement in subversive company with foreign agents recognizable in Turkey as plotting the country's downfall. A common narrative stressed by AKP leaders was that foreign "lobbies" – from an interest rate lobby (*faiz lobisi*)[24] to an Israel/Jewish lobby (*İsrail/Yahudi lobisi*)[25] – were conspiring to prevent Turkey from becoming the powerful regional leader it deserved to be. In a country in which conspiracy theories are immensely popular (and often at least half-true), the idea that Gezi protesters – already named as hooligans and blamed for immoral behavior – could be organized and/or funded by scheming external forces proved too tantalizing to resist. Interviewees cited foreigners' presence during the protests – some of whom were deported – as evidence that Western agents were infiltrating Turkey in the hopes of creating enough instability to provoke a coup and thus unseat the AKP.26 Given the U.S. involvement in previous cases of regime change in Turkey, the frame of Western-sponsored military coups proved an effective one in bringing the true motives of the protesters into question. Devastating economic crises exacerbated by currency speculators and the AKP's stoking of anti-Semitic flames during its rule in Turkey created plausible and logically coherent frames into which the opposition manifested during the Gezi protests could be placed.

Despite all the enthusiastic solidarity that Gezi demonstrators displayed, despite their consistent efforts to prove that they were well-intentioned, well-behaved citizens acting on their accord, the AKP's counter-mobilization trifecta of naming, blaming, and framing proved too powerful to generate political change. Sensing that no matter what they did they would be ineffective against an increasingly entrenched AKP whose supporters remained staunchly hostile to their cause, Gezi protesters eventually stopped taking to the streets. Their momentum waned, their spirits flagged; disillusionment and frustration became the norm.[27] Adopting a broader perspective, we see the social polarization that has ossified in the wake of the Gezi Protests. The AKP's vilifying rhetoric has gained tremendous momentum, targeting many different forms of opposition and cementing antagonistic "us versus them" relations along multiple identity lines. A terrifying sentiment following the Ankara terrorist bombings in October 2015 in which more than 100 Kurds, leftists, and others who had gathered for a peace march were killed was that they had in coming; if they were Kurds or leftists, so the thinking goes, they were probably terrorists anyway.[28] Despite such worrisome outcomes, naming, blaming, and framing – related but distinct mechanisms in how they function – seem to have gained currency among supporters as legitimate practices. When the power struggle between the AKP and its former close allies in the Gülen movement erupted into an all-out war, for example, Erdoğan coined the nickname of the movement's leader Fethullah Gülen as "Pensilvanya."[29] This evocation of his Gülen's exile in the United States, which rapidly spread among AKP supporters, casts him and his "parallel structure" (*paralel yapı*) as foreign and thus inherently suspect.

22 Ali Aslangül, *"Kabataş'ta Yalan Kesin, Rivayet Muhtelif: İşte Emniyetten Elif Çakır'a 'Zehra Gelin' Metinleri," T24.com*, 12 March 2015: http://t24.com.tr/haber/kabatasta-yalan-kesin-rivayet-muhtelif-iste-emniyetten-elif-cakira-zehra-gelin-metinleri,290216.

23 *"Sabah, 'Kabataş Yalanı'nı 52 Saniyeye Sığdırdı," Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 11 March 2015: http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/230267/Sabah___Kabatas_yalani_ni_52_saniyeye_sigdirdi.html#. As one person commenting on the online version of this article notes, "perpetuating their lies by continuing to insist on [the Kabataş attack] even though they know it's a lie is a greater crime than the original lie."

24 Barış Balcı, *"'Gezi' mi Faiz Lobisinden, Faiz mi Gezi'den?" Hürriyet Gazetesi*, 11 June 2013: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gezi-mi-faiz-lobisinden-faiz-mi-gezi-den-23476867.

25 *"GEZİ Senaryosunu Yahudi Lobisi Yazdı, Yahudi Sermayesi Finans Etti," Yeni Akit*, 13 June 2013: http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/mehtap-yilmaz/gezi-senaryosunu-yahudi-lobisi-yazdi-yahudi-sermayesi-finanse-etti-bes-1803.html.

26 Author's interview with AKP official, Eskişehir, August 2013.

27 Author's interview Turkish social movement expert Güneş Ertan Ankara, March 2014.

28 Lisel Hintz, "The Heinous Consequences of Turkey's Polarization," *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2015: https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/15/the-heinous-consequences-of-turkeys-polarization/.

29 "Erdoğan'dan Paralel Yapı Açıklaması," Takvim.com, 11 October 2014: http://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2014/10/11/erdogandan-paralel-yapi-aciklamasi.

What cohered as a counter-mobilization strategy against Gezi protesters has evolved into everyday politics in Turkey. Although rhetorical vilification should not be seen as a sole causal factor in the dissipation of demonstrations, its uses in justifying harsh measures against protesters carry over into methods of delegitimizing anyone who voices criticism. Today, those using xenophobic insults against AKP opponents are lauded;[30] those using injury are rewarded.[31] When examining the authoritarian's toolkit, the long-term, society-wide consequences of rhetorical vilification pose significant concerns for scholars and citizens of Turkey alike.

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30 "Erdoğan Attends 'Ak Troll' Wedding, Chats with Suspect," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 15 June 2015: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-attends-ak-troll-wedding-chats-with-well-known-suspect.aspx?pageID=238&nID=84013&NewsCatID=338.

31 "Controversial Former AKP MP in Anti-Hürriyet Protests Promoted to Deputy Minister," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 18 December 2015: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/controversial-former-akp-mp-in-anti-hurriyet-protests-promoted-to-deputy-minister.aspx?pageID=238&nID=92693&NewsCatID=338.

Why Turkey's authoritarian descent shakes up democratic theory

By Jason Brownlee, University of Texas at Austin

Wealthy democracies don't become dictatorships. For a generation that adage has provided one of the firmest laws of modern democratization, the equivalent for comparativists of the democratic peace among international relations scholars. Like any big claim, the link between economic wealth and democratic durability has provoked debate. Political scientists have parsed the data, questioned the mechanisms involved and pursued new projects that validate the proposition even as they refine it. They have explored whether wealth not only sustains democracy but also produces it, and whether the distribution and forms of assets matter more than their raw amount.

Even while students build new and more nuanced links between development and democracy, they have not severed the connection established by political scientists Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi in their agenda-setting 1997 article "Modernization: Theories and Facts." Building on seminal work by Seymour Martin Lipset, the authors determined that countries at all levels of material prosperity had become democratic (i.e., shifted from dictatorship to democracy). However, countries had not become authoritarian (shifted from democracy to dictatorship) when their non-oil GDP per capita exceeded $8,043 (in 2005 constant prices adjusted for purchasing power parity).

Why $8,043? That was the level of development Argentina had reached in 1975 before a junta toppled President Isabel Péron (40 years ago this week). Her government ranks as the most affluent democracy to fall in Przeworski and Limongi's study. Democracies with higher GDP per capita were self-sustaining.

Przeworski and Limongi's data stopped in 1990, but their principal finding has held for a quarter-century. Democratic experiments have fizzled in Africa (as in Mali after the 2012 coup), in post-communist states (witness Russia under Vladimir Putin) — and even in Latin America (thanks to pseudodemocrats like Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega). But non-oil wealth in these circumstances was below the Argentina 1975 level.

Meanwhile, medium-income and richer democracies have remained dictator-proof — until now. The example of Turkey under premier-then-president Recep Tayyip Erdogan presents a potentially theory-busting specimen of a highly developed democracy going authoritarian. Despite recent market uncertainty, Turkey is now significantly more affluent than Argentina was 40 years ago and its political trajectory carries global implications. The more Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) pull their economically vibrant country toward autocracy, the bleaker the outlook for democracy in similar or less favorable circumstances.

To be clear, Turkey's democratization has never been seamless and Erdogan has not yet become a full-blown despot like Putin. After the ruling Republican People's Party lost elections and peacefully passed power to the opposition in 1950, Turkey joined the political science canon as a multi-party Muslim-majority state — with periodic military interventions. In 1960, 1971 and 1980, the army pushed aside insufficiently secular governments, and then returned to the barracks. These interregnums disrupted democracy but conformed to Przeworski and Limongi's pattern. At the time of the three coups, GDP per capita was approximately $3,200, $4,500, and $5,300, still significantly below the threshold at which development seals democracy.

Erdogan's current drive, toward a super-powered presidency, is subtler than Turkey's prior authoritarian periods. Rather than cancelling elections, Erdogan has employed the ballot box to quell his critics. Further, if electoral authoritarianism means only opposition parties lose on Election Day, then Turkey skirts the line. Last June,

the electorate denied AKP parliamentarians the majority they had enjoyed since 2002. When neither the AKP nor any other party had formed a government by August, Erdogan called snap elections for that November.

Meanwhile state security forces aggressively battled the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and menaced the AKP's electoral rival, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). As fear spiked, media coverage and campaigning withered. A climate of insecurity probably helped the AKP rebound, winning half the votes and 58 percent of the seats. Nonetheless, Freedom House considered Turkey an electoral democracy in 2015. If the state keeps attacking judges, journalists and professors between voting cycles, Turkey may soon lose that designation (not that the country's president would apparently mind).

If Erdogan ultimately confirms analyses that he is building a "competitive authoritarian" regime, his actions will be less novel than the context in which he acted. The country's generals (briefly) led Turkey when it was relatively poor (and hence more prone to authoritarian reversals). Erdogan, though, has operated in socioeconomic conditions that should keep power dispersed. In 2003, when Erdogan became prime minister, GDP per capita reached $8,300. Since that time the economy has grown rapidly, adding more than six million jobs in recent years while reducing the "extreme poverty rate" from 13 percent to 4.5 percent.

Turkey's middle class — historically a bulwark of democracy — has doubled in size. As Turks became better off, they ought to have become more effective at holding their leaders accountable. Instead, the opposite has occurred: Erdogan, buoyed by a cross-class alliance between the poor and the bourgeoisie, has combined economic advancement with political regression.

Authoritarianism in Turkey would not only upend Przeworski and Limongi's findings, it would cast a pall over other high-income countries where democracy seems assured. A recent series of coups and autogolpes has raised concerns about an "authoritarian resurgence."

Yet most of the incidents in question, while troubling, are not iconoclastic. Among the countries Stanford University professor Larry Diamond listed in a 2015 essay on the topic, only one (Turkey) had reached the level of non-oil wealth per capita of Argentina in 1975 (see Table). Few people are happy when democracy teeters in locales as varied as Honduras, Niger and Sri Lanka. Nonetheless, anti-democratic currents are common in such developing economies. By contrast, Turkey in 2010 (the latest year of comparable data) belonged to a significantly more industrialized cohort, with a GDP per capita more than a quarter greater than Argentina's in 1975. (Turkey was more affluent still in 2014, the year Diamond dates the breakdown of its democracy.)

TABLE–DEMOCRATIC BREAKDOWN AND WEALTH

Year of breakdown	Country	Non-oil GDP/capita (2005 $ PPP)
1975	*Argentina*	*8,043*
2000	Fiji	4,227
2000	Russia	6,811
2001	Central African Republic	596
2002	Guinea-Bissau	768
2002	Nepal	908
2004	Venezuela	5,521
2005	Thailand	6,839
2006	Solomon Islands	1,561
2007	Bangladesh	1,167
2007	The Philippines	2,980
2007	Kenya	1,204
2008	Georgia	4,912
2009	Honduras	3,554
2009	Madagascar	700
2009	Niger	1,685
2010	Burundi	396
2010	Sri Lanka	4,063
2010	**Turkey**	**10,421**

SOURCES: Larry Diamond, "Facing up to the Democratic Recession," (January 2015); Alan Heston, Robert Summers and Bettina Aten, Penn World Table 7.1; World Bank, World Development Indicators. Note Argentina 1975 is included as a baseline. Economic data for Turkey come from the most recent year suitable for comparison.

Skeptics that development shapes regime type may see these figures as one more reason to reject the

theory outright. For students who do believe wealth has historically preserved democracy, Turkey turning autocratic would shift expectations. Specifically, it would signal that in democracies with greater than $8,043 GDP per capita, the "hazard rate" (the probability that a democracy will become authoritarian in a given year) has risen above zero. Hence, current democracies with GDP per capita similar to Turkey's—for example Bulgaria ($10,600), Romania ($9,400), or Brazil ($8,100) — would not be out of the woods. Authoritarianism returning in such developed places has seemed impossible, but Erdogan's tenure suggests otherwise. Further, if Turkey's experience invites vigilance in medium-to-high income states, then it implies added concern for significantly less developed democracies — like Albania ($6,600), Tunisia ($6,100), and Paraguay ($4,100) — that have not even reached the level of Argentina 1975.

It is too soon to know whether Turkey under Erdogan will be an outlier or a bellwether. Already, however, Turkey's experience suggests that the economic forces that previously bolstered democracy appear to be weakening, perhaps dramatically. The causes of this shift — and whether it can be offset by stronger opposition parties and tighter constraints on executive power — remain to be determined.

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Master Frames of the Syrian Conflict:
Early Violence and Sectarian Response Revisited

By Reinoud Leenders, King's College London

Much of the dialectics involving revolutionary movements and counter-revolutionary responses gravitate around protagonists' grand narratives, or master frames, making unyielding claims about the origins, evolution, cleavages and nature of their conflicts. Five years into the Syrian conflict competing master frames have proven to be as powerful as they are inadequate, incomplete or outright inaccurate. Noticeably, and despite the conflict having gone through numerous mutations from a mass uprising into an internationalised civil war, the essence of two key master frames has not significantly changed; the regime and its supporters still purport that they are fighting a necessary war against a violent jihadist conspiracy fuelled by sectarianism, and despite their differences otherwise most opposition activists of various denominations insist on what they see as a revolution against oppressive, authoritarian rule by a regime whose violent intent to persist has no bounds.

That such stories fail to capture the complex dynamics of the conflict should not come as a surprise. They are largely meant to mobilize and muster support behind, respectively, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary agendas; not to accurately document and analyze the conflicts fuelled by them. Yet the "trouble with stories"[1]

1 Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identity, and Political Change,* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 35.

hits the level of scholarship when analysis gets entangled in them. Nothing seems to illustrate this better when it comes to assessing the onset of sectarian contention, early anti-regime ('terrorist' or 'revolutionary') violence, and the connections between them. As appraisals of these fundamental themes continue to inform both master frames and, concurrently, analyses of the ongoing Syrian conflict, a retrospective may be helpful both to better understand the regime's longevity, seemingly against all odds, and to encourage researchers to study these master frames without letting them determine their own analysis.

Sectarian contention and early anti-regime violence

While claims on the onset of sectarian contention and violence variously constitute fundamental ingredients to the conflict's master frames, researchers still need to produce detailed accounts of their own by both querying and distancing themselves from the ways in which Syria's protagonists framed these key issues. To date, few scholars writing on the conflict have paid full attention to sectarianism, often making reference to it in their accounts looking back at five years of conflict, but mostly by pointing out that it should not be taken at face value. Perhaps the well-known pitfalls of studying sectarianism –crude primodialism, essentialism and culturalism made all the more salient by sustained criticism of 'orientalism' in Middle East studies—are this way circumvented. Yet the omittance causes many such accounts to settle on an analysis of sectarianism that comes close to the opposition's narrative: To the extent that sectarianism played a role in the uprising's early stages it was because of grievances rooted in socio-economic discrimination and political exclusion, and the regime's cynically playing on and whipping up sectarian sentiments in its brutal repression of peaceful, inclusive protests. The few studies that did single out the role of sectarianism in the conflict focus mostly on the need to qualify and contextualize the phenomenon, and argue extensively against reductionist readings exaggerating the role of sectarianism in the conflict.[2] It is not that such considerations are wrong or misplaced; they, in fact, are sadly appropriate when many including U.S. President Barack Obama still appear to believe in the 'eternal hatreds' narrative that sees post-uprising Middle East politics as "rooted in conflict that date back millennia" and sectarianism as offering the "only organizing principles" when authoritarian regimes crumble.[3] Yet by failing to transcend a critique of how sectarianism should *not* be studied or understood, such studies are similarly left with conclusions that echo the opposition's narrative on the onset of sectarian politics. They do so by attributing the regime with prime or even sole agency and responsibility, but without telling us much about the "'instigatees,' whose participation is essential to transform animosity into violence."[4]

Perspectives on the onset of anti-regime violence have been not been very different. While excellent work already has been done on Islamist-jihadist groups and their violence, we still lack detailed and perceptive analyses of the early stages of anti-regime violence, or the use of armed force against regime targets during the crucial first months of the uprising. A handful of articles focusses on violence in the conflict but, apart from studies of jihadist violence at later stages of the conflict, they mostly single out the regime's brutality. Many general studies of the conflict, including scholarly texts and otherwise thorough journalism, reiterate the common narrative among opposition activists wherein soldiers who were ordered to shoot at unarmed protestors defected for moral reasons, joined the demonstrations for protection against the regime's unremitting onslaught, and thus inevitably militarized the uprising in the process.[5]

2 See e.g. Christopher Phillips, "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 36.2 (2015), 357-376.

3 Cited in resp. *The Washington Post*, 13 January 2016 and Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016.

4 Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1.03 (2003): 882.

5 For an excellent but in this context wanting analysis see Robin Yassin-Kassab & Leila Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, (Pluto Press, 2016), chapter 5.

Again, a mix of the conflict's high stakes, a moral imperative not to contradict the regime's victims' narratives, and fears within the study of violence in the Middle East generally to come across as condoning culturalist accounts[6] may have added to the steep challenges of studying the Syrian conflict from a distance. Some scholars within Middle East studies may also have shared Syrian activists' frustration with the Left.[7] As Syrian writer Bodour Hassan put it, Syrians do not "owe explanations and justifications to those who dismiss their sacrifices and insist on supporting and even glorifying revolutionary violence everywhere except in Syria."[8] This all is understandable as revolutionary narratives have been largely drowned by crude depictions of the Syrian conflict as a struggle against jihadist extremism. Indeed, initially peaceful and inclusive features of Syria's popular uprising deserve be told and heard. Yet some questionable assumptions and omittances in the opposition's master frame with regard to early anti-regime violence and sectarianism should not find their way into scholarly work on the conflict.

The narrative on defections

The master frame of the Syrian opposition on the conflict leaves a lot to explain. Starting with accounts of anti-regime violence embedded in army defections, the latter appear to have gained sizeable proportions only *after* anti-regime violence reached significant levels during the first few months of the uprising. We can roughly approximate the onset and evolution of anti-regime violence by looking at estimates of regime fatalities documented by the Violation Documentation Centre in Syria (VDC, see Figure 1) that, contrary to most other Syrian human rights organisations, does not limit its documentation to 'martyrs' of the revolution.[9]

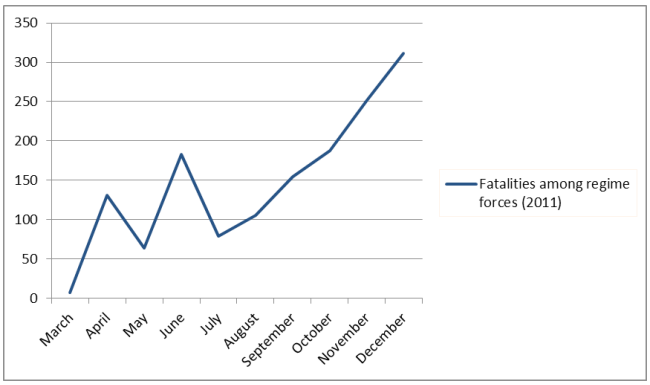

Figure 1 Fatalities among regime forces by month (2011) Source: Violations Documentation Centre in Syria

By and large, these estimates are congruent with the regime's own claims of casualties suffered until August 2011 due to 'terrorist' activities.[10] Albrecht and Koehler's estimates of desertion trends, based on their extensive interviews with deserted soldiers and officers, suggest that desertions only reached significant and growing levels by early 2012 while they were limited to much more isolated incidents prior to this date.[11] They add that only half of respondents effectively defected to the opposition, or actively joined armed rebel groups, thus further narrowing down the relevant numbers of deserters before the end of 2011. It thus appears implausible to attribute significant levels of early anti-regime violence solely or even predominantly to them.

This seems corroborated by the limited scale of reported attacks by armed groups involving defectors until at least November 2011.[12] The Khalid Bin Walid Brigade

6 Laleh Khalili, "Thinking About Violence," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45.04 (2013): 791-794.

7 See e.g. Sam Hammad, "How Noam Chomsky Betrayed the Syrian People," *Muftah*, 6 April 2016. http://muftah.org/noam-chomsky-syria/#.V0_w8GCvGWU

8 Budour Hassan, "Portrait of a Revolution: The Journey of Faiek Al-Meer," *Al-Jumhuriya*, 13 October 2013. http://aljumhuriya.net/en/portrait/portrait-of-a-revolution-the-journey-of-faiek-al-meer

9 https://www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/en/ VDC data should not be taken at face value. Yet in this case they are more likely to understate (regime) casualties.

10 Reuters, 31 May 2011, "Note Verbale Dated 27 June 2011 and 16 August 2011 From the Permanent Addressed to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights," http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/countries/SY/Syria_Report_2011-08-17.pdf. Note that the regime may have had reasons both to exaggerate and/or downplay the number of fatalities.

11 Holger Albrecht & Kevin Koehler, "Going on the Run: What Drives Military Insubordination in Violent Domestic Conflict?," Paper presented at Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs, 2 March 2016, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Albrecht_Koehler%20Desertion%20Syria%20MEI2016.pdf

12 See Joseph Holliday, Syria's *Armed Opposition*, Institute for the Study of War, March 2012. http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrias_Armed_Opposition.pdf; Asher Berman, *Rebel Groups in Jebel al-Zawiyah*, Institute for the Study of War, July 26, 2012. http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_RebelGroupsJebelAlZawiyah_31July.pdf

was one of the first groups to emerge. It was involved in anti-regime skirmishes and ambushes as early as June in neighbourhoods of Homs and Rastan, but the scope of its operations was extremely modest, at least so until September-October. Major anti-regime violence involving army defectors occurred in Jisr al-Shughur in June. Widely regarded as the first major instance of armed rebellion, the scale of the violence there was a forebode of what was to come – scores of regime soldiers and security forces were killed. Yet at the time the violence in Jisr al-Shughur was exceptional as defections occurred on the spot when soldiers refused orders to shoot at protestors, resulting in immediate clashes between loyal troops and defectors; most desertions elsewhere were more carefully prepared and typically occurred when soldiers were on leave and with their families.[13] Following a regime crackdown the area witnessed no significant attacks until Free Syrian Army groups captured it in December. Fighters who later formed the Suqur al-Sham Brigade pushed regime forces out of villages in Jabal al-Zawiya in July and August but significant clashes in this area only reached significant and sustained levels in October. In the greater Damascus area, armed groups of defectors and civilian volunteers, such as the Abu 'Ubayda Ben al-Jarrah Battallion, emerged in September, and began to carry out hit-and-run attacks only from November onwards. Likewise, defector groups began to carry out armed operations in Dar'a and north of and around Hama by November-December.

Neither does the opposition narrative on defections explain why early anti-regime violence, or 'armed resistance,' witnessed significant geographical variation (see Figure 2).

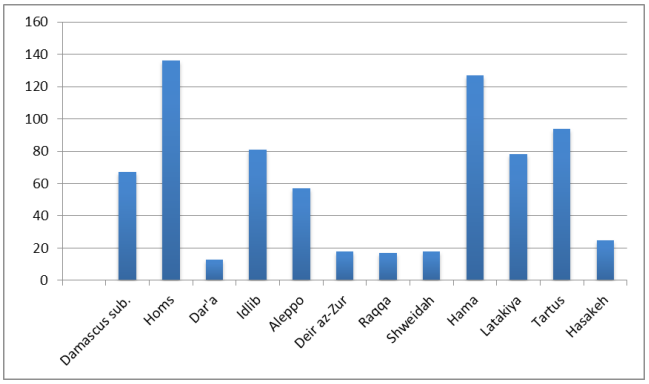

Figure 2: Fatalities among regime forces, per governorate (March-October 2011)
Source: Violations Documentation Centre in Syria

Indeed, if defections in response to regime repression had driven early anti-regime violence one would have expected Dar'a to have been at the epicentre of 'armed resistance,' with or without defectors' involvement. As noted above, defector groups began armed activities in Dar'a much later in the year.

Sectarianism and intimate threat

Looking beyond the prism of alleged defection effects, geographical variation in anti-regime violence has been suggested to have been driven by other factors. For instance, it has been variously argued that tribal or clan-based social structures helped to motivate, inform and/or enable civilians taking up arms against the regime. Yet again this somehow causes Dar'a to be an anomaly while low levels of anti-regime violence, and indeed modest levels of anti-regime protests, in tribally dense areas like Deir az-Zur and Raqqa remain unexplained. Indeed, tribal organisation and social structures seem a poor predictor of regime loyalty and/or opposition generally,[14] even when in Dar'a and other 'early risers' tribal structures or more loosely based clan associations played a key role in anti-regime mobilization.[15]

13 Human Rights Watch, *'By All Means Necessary!' Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria*, 15 December 2011.

14 Haian Dukhan, "Tribes and Tribalism in the Syrian uprising," *Syria Studies* 6.2 (2014), 1-28.

15 Reinoud Leenders & Steven Heydemann. "Popular Mobilization in Syria: Opportunity and Threat, and the Social Networks of the Early Risers." *Mediterranean Politics* 17.2 (2012), 139-159.

I propose that areas' mixed sectarian composition may be a more fruitful starting point for analysing early anti-regime violence. Accordingly, growing anti-regime violence in Homs, Hama, Latakiya and Tartus governorates could be viewed against the background of local dynamics framed, experienced and informed by sectarian factors. Without necessarily having to resort to primordialist, culturalist or reductionist perspectives, this brings into focus the sectarian context of early anti-regime violence. To my knowledge, Nayruz Satik is one of the very few authors who chronicled in detail the rise of sectarian sentiments and associated incidents of early opposition violence — including abductions and assassinations — in Homs, Latakiya, Hama countryside, and Baniyas in Tartus governorate;[16] these incidents remain largely unreported in both Western and Arabic media, and mostly ignored in academic writings on the conflict. An exception is Rosen's coverage who provides a thorough journalistic account of sectarian responses to the regime's clampdown and early formation of armed groups in Homs and Latakiya during the first six months of the uprising; events that by the summer of 2011 escalated into anti-regime violence setting neighbourhoods and villages against one another.[17] Concurrently, sectarian narratives increasingly gained acceptance at a mass level as, for instance, the famous protest song from Homs, "O, our beloved nation," was adjusted to include sectarian denunciations of the regime.[18]

"My sect is Syrian." Billboard viewed in Damascus only weeks into the uprising. Illustration kindly provided by Kholoud Mansour

Sectarian framing by both regime loyalists and those opposing them can only be fully understood by giving attention to deeply local settings and historical factors involving urban migration and socio-economic distributive matters. But the heat of the moment is crucial too. What essentially may have been at play is a cascading "security dilemma"[19] triggered by both mass protests and regime repression, and coloured and made pertinent by the physical proximity of Sunni Arab and Alawite communities in tight urban and adjacent rural settings. Opposition narratives correctly claim that the regime carries prime responsibility for escalating sectarianism by highlighting the risks of *fitna*, or inter-communal strife, from the start, by presenting itself as the only guardian of inter-sectarian peace (see photograph above), by encouraging or directing local communities to take part in pro-regime rallies responding to protests, and by aiding local communities to establish vigilante groups, or pro-regime 'popular committees.' Surely not all pro-regime mobilization involved Alawites, and some Alawites took part in anti-regime protests, but under severe pressure such nuance gave way to sectarian framing. Among Alawites existential fears of revenge grew in response to protestors flexing their muscles by the sheer magnitude of their

16 Nayruz Satik, "al-Hala al-Ta'ifiya fi al-Intifada al-Suriya," in: Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, *Khilafiyat al-Thawra. Dirasat Suriya*, (August 2013), 373-427.

17 Nir Rosen, "A Tale of Two Villages (Part 1 & 2)," *Al-Jazeera*, (24 & 26 October 2011), http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/201110236591322416l.html & http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/20111023102856446977.html, "Assad's Alawites: An Entrenched Community," Al-Jazeera, (12 October 2011), http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/20111011154631737692.html

18 A second version of the song, originally composed by Abd al-Basset Sarut and first heard in June 2011, added the following phrase: "The Throne is gone, as is the future of the Safavide gang." For further details see: Simon Dubois, *Présentation et analyse de chants issus de manifestations du printemps Syrien,* Mémoire de Master, Université Lumière Lyon II, 2012, p. 149.

19 Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds. The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War,* (Cornell University Press, 2001), 19.

demonstrations and by protestors' rumoured involvement in violence.[20] Concurrently, Sunni Arab communities bore the brunt of the regime's brutality against mostly peaceful demonstrations while real or perceived involvement of neighbouring Alawite communities in regime repression prompted anger and fear framed and mediated by sectarian "boundary activation."[21]

In short, cognitive and emotional responses cast in sectarian terms are likely to have been at the root of local pro-regime mobilization and anti-regime violence alike, and they may have resonated and amplified by way of the intimacy of 'the other' in mixed sectarian settlements.[22] Reversely, it may not be a coincident that more homogeneous areas initially witnessed no or much less sectarian agitation *and* were relatively late in taking up arms against the regime, despite being hit by regime brutality and sieges. As Syrian activist Haytham Manna' put it in April 2012, "One can take pride in the fact that after thirteen months there is not a single sectarian incident in the governorate of Dar'a. This cannot be said of other regions [..]."[23] From a counter-revolutionary perspective, the regime steadily built its own master narrative of accusing its opponents of sectarian bigotry and violence just as it drove and magnified sectarian clashes in especially Homs, Hama and Latakiya governorates.

A stillborn revolutionary leadership

While in hindsight the Syrian uprising in its first few months may this way have looked set to enter violent pathways, regime repression and sectarian boundary activation alone cannot explain why protestors' early insistence on non-sectarian, inclusive and non-violent action was overtaken by events. For mobilization to stick to peaceful methods, Pearlman argues, what is generally required is a coherent and strong movement leadership to enforce strategic discipline.[24] Yet in the Syrian uprising, of course, a revolutionary leadership developed only slowly and disjointedly while mass mobilization spread across the country. As many have pointed out, such resulted from decades of authoritarian governance practically sniffing out any form of political or even social collective organisation. While the lack of a strong revolutionary leadership hampered regime efforts to arrest the movement, it also precluded a strategic and authoritative insistence on inclusive and non-violent methods or, alternatively, a strategy to incorporate armed struggle at the service and under the control of such a revolutionary leadership. This was not for a lack of trying, as Local Coordinating Committees (LCCs) that sprung up to organize mobilization and to assist protestors during the regime's onslaught publicly announced their peaceful and anti-sectarian intentions, and strongly denounced those violating these principles. Their initiatives aimed to counter rumours of sectarian strife by opening channels of communication among communities, and helping to mediate in inter-sectarian incidents of violence at a local level.[25]

Yet by July-August 2011 the uprising's budding leadership proved to be too weak and fragmented to provide a clear, coherent and authoritative answer to growing popular sentiments viewing a non-violent path as inadequate or outright naive in the face of the regime's repression. Expressing his impatience with "purist" views questioning the morality or wisdom of taking up arms against the

20 For an account of such local perceptions in Alawite communities see Rosen, "Assad's Alawites," and Aziz Nakkash, *The Alawite Dilemma in Homs. Survival, Solidarity and the Making of A Community*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (March 2013).

21 Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21; Eddie Hartmann, "Symbolic Boundaries and Collective Violence. A New Theoretical Argument for an Explanatory Sociology of Collective Violent Action," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* (6 October 2015), 1-22.

22 See also Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35.1 (1993): 27-47. Note that this approach cannot explain significant levels of early anti-regime violence in Idlib; here regime fatality numbers may have been largely driven by events in Jisr al-Shughur.

23 Bassam Haddad, "The Current Impasse in Syria: Interview with Haytham Manna,'" 30 June 2012, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6245/the-current-impasse-in-syria_interview-with-haytha

24 Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement,* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

25 Salwa Ismail, "The Syrian uprising: Imagining and Performing the Nation," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11.3 (2011), 543-6.

regime, Syrian activist and author Yassin al-Haj Saleh commented on the turn to anti-regime violence by writing: "[W]e don't have a choice. The military component of the revolution is a side effect of the regime's essentially violent nature: nobody wanted it or planned for it."[26] Yet this lack of planning pertaining to the early stages of the uprising's militarization also caused the emerging revolutionary leadership to be overtaken, and increasingly to be made irrelevant, by those outside the LCCs and the peaceful protest movement. Indeed, as it turned out, resorting to military means framed largely by sectarianism became a platform by which numerous contenders vied for control and leadership of the movement by directing violence against the regime as much as against their rivals in an increasingly amorphous and radicalized opposition. By mid-2012 jihadist groups of various kinds became well positioned to win this contest as they were endowed with a thoroughly sectarian repertoire resonating with and amplifying sentiments during the early stages of the uprising, with military skills and experience to address real and perceived insecurities, and with funding from abroad to embark on a sustained insurgency. Combined with relentless regime violence and sectarian incitement, the Syrian revolution was set on a path of what Al-Haj Saleh called "wartime nihilism," characterized by a loss of hope, the use of blind violence and increasingly dominant Islamist extremism.[27]

Regime resilience and counter-revolutionary framing

The Syrian regime's counter-revolutionary responses have been both brutal and perversely sophisticated as it unleashed an array of tactics and strategies against unprecedented challenges since 2011.[28] Arguably, virtually all of its responses and adaptations have been premised on its master narrative emphasizing a violent jihadist conspiracy fuelled by sectarian bigotry. It is not alone in this as other authoritarian regimes in the region, from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain, similarly framed their clampdown on mass dissent and anti-regime mobilization by labelling their opponents as sectarian-driven, violent zealots or 'terrorists.' While from a scholarly perspective we should loudly reject such narratives as deceptive and self-serving, it does not follow that we should uncritically embrace revolutionary master frames. Apart from Nayruz Satik, as cited above, a few Syrian writers have courageously started to reassess the role of sectarianism and anti-regime violence. Yet ironically, some of their accounts tend to adopt the very cultural framework correctly resisted by activists and scholars alike.[29] More generally, we need to know how and why Arab regimes' counter-revolutionary framing turned out to be so successful and enduring, at least in serving their determination to persist at all costs. Some of the answer, as I argued in the case of Syria, lies in the ways in which sectarianism resonated in existential fears triggered by the prospect of profound political change and fears of regime brutality. It points up to the ways in which regime repression was intentionally cast to trigger boundary activation and violent responses where sectarian threats were sensed at their most intimate level. It also features a revolutionary leadership that valiantly emerged out of decades of authoritarian rule but failed to prevent the cycles of sectarian violence that ensued. Pursuing this analytical perspective does not force us to trespass the slippery slopes of culturalism or to deny the regime's brutality. Yet it may contradict revolutionaries' own narratives.

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26 Yassin al-Haj Saleh, "Militarization, Violence and the Revolution," *Perspectives, Political Analyses and Commentary from the Middle East*, 3 February 2012,

27 Yassin al-Haj Saleh, *La question Syrienne*, (Sindbad Actes Sud, 2016), 96-122.

28 Reinoud Leenders, "Repression is Not a 'Stupid Thing' – Syrian Regime Responses to the Syrian Crisis," in: Michael Kerr and Craig Larkin (eds), *The 'Alawis of Syria – War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*, (Hurst Publishers, Oxford University Press U.S., 2015), 245-274.

29 See e.g. Hassan Abbas, "Between the Cultures of Sectarianism and Citizenship," in: Malu Halasa, Zaher Omareen and Nawara Mahfoud, *Syria Speaks: Art and Culture From the Frontline*, (Saqi Books, 2014), 48-59. However, Abbas is careful to heavily historicize, contextualise and qualify his focus on "sectarian culture" exactly to avoid culturalist reductionism.

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