

Conclusion: Agency, Context and Emergent Post-Uprising Regimes

Raymond Hinnebusch*
University of St. Andrews

Published in *Democratization*, March 2015

This conclusion summarizes the evidence explaining the divergent trajectories taken by post Arab Uprising states in terms of multiple variables, each illustrated by an iconic case, namely: State Failure and Competitive governance (Syria), Regime Restoration and Hybrid Governance (Egypt) and Polyarchic Governance (Tunisia). Factors include the starting point: levels of opposition mobilization and regimes' resilience--a function of their patrimonial-bureaucratic balance; whether or not a transition coalition forms is crucial for democratization prospects. Context also matters for democratization, particularly political economic factors, such as a balance of class power and a productive economy; political culture (level of societal identity cleavages) and a minimum of international intervention. Finally, the balance of agency between democracy movements, Islamists, the military and workers shapes democratization prospects.

Arab Uprisings, agency, political economy, political culture, post-Uprising governance, failed states, Islamists, social movements, military, workers movements, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia

The introduction to this issue surveyed how starting points—regimes and uprisings against them—made some subsequent trajectories more likely than others. Thus, violent uprisings and state failure sharply narrowed democratization prospects, while relatively peaceful transitions widened them. However, as the subsequent chapters showed, agency—the struggle of rival social forces in the period after Uprisings began-- also contributed to outcomes. Such agency was itself affected by the political economy, political cultural and international contexts. Together, starting points, subsequent agency and context shaped divergent trajectories of post-uprising regime re-formation.

Agency

Anti-regime democracy movements

Secular middle class youth with their Internet proficiency were instrumental in overcoming atomization and enabling anti-regime mobilization. In particular, the unemployed educated, seeking themselves as the victims of discriminatory crony capitalism, embraced democracy as the answer. The peaceful protest their discourse promoted was compatible with a democratic transition. They were the vanguard of movements that forced the departure of authoritarian leaders and/or won potentially democratic constitutional changes. However, the youth movements proved unable to capitalize on the fall or weakening of old regimes.

Vincent Durac pointed to the leaderless, highly heterogeneous nature of the anti-regime movements that shared only the desire for the fall of the regime, and that, once this happened, quickly divided into contentious factions. Their lack of ideology and organization meant they did not constitute a counter government that could replace incumbent regimes, not mobilize empowering mass votes. Moreover, splits between secularists and Islamists broke the anti-regime front, enabling the deep state to recover. In Egypt and Morocco, secular liberals' inability to compete with the Islamists in elections quickly compromised their commitment to democracy and revived the ability of the "deep state"—the military or the monarchy—to use them against the Islamists. Only in Tunisia did secular forces remain

* E-mail: rh10@st-andrews.ac.uk

united enough to both balance and compromise with Islamists. In cases such as Syria and Libya, the heterogeneity and fragmentation of the movements meant they could not reach any kind of pacted transition with incumbent rulers and, as a result, soon became armed factions, propelling state failure and much reducing the prospects of a democratic outcome.

Islamists:

Islamist movements were key actors in post-Uprising political contestation. Variations in their relations with ruling regimes and other political forces were central to outcomes. Islamists' critics widely predicted that democratic elections could bring anti-democratic Islamists to power who would end democracy. Others argued that inclusion in the political process incentivized Islamists to moderate their ideologies in order to enable anti-authoritarian coalitions with secular opposition groups, maximize their voter appeal, and negotiate constraints from secular institutions such as the military and judiciary.¹

Initially, Islamists appeared to be the main beneficiaries, with their organized committed activist followings, electoral experience, charity networks, schools and television stations, welfare services and ability to speak for the deprived, funding from the Gulf, competitive advantage from use of mosques and madrassas for recruitment; and the greater debilitation of the secular political opposition under authoritarian rule. Post-Uprising, while liberals and secularists focused on street protests, the Islamists concentrated on organizing for elections and in Tunisia and Egypt Islamists got pluralities in the first democratic elections, but not solid majorities needed to marginalize opposition and govern effectively.²

However Islamists were themselves variegated, all were not equally empowered and inter-Islamist splits soon cost them their opportunity to achieve hegemony. In their contribution to this special issue, Frédéric Volpi and Ewan Stein assessed the fortunes of three brands of Islam after the Uprising. Initially the Muslim Brotherhood's state-oriented "electoral Islam" appeared to be empowered by the removal of authoritarian presidents, as well by the support and inspiration of Turkey's Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), a model of apparently successful pragmatic Islamic governance. Salafists, already on the rise before the Uprising, were energized and propelled into the political arena by the Uprising and by funding from Saudi Arabia, which saw them as an instrument against both the Muslim Brotherhood and secular revolutionaries. The behaviour of the Brothers in Egypt where, outflanked and pushed right by the Salafists, they broke several promises not to push their agenda too far alarmed secularists, with similar tensions observable in Tunisia.³ Trans-state jihadist movements inspired by al-Qaida initially appeared discredited by the prospect of democratization via peaceful protest. However, the new opportunities in failed states resulting from civil war in the Levant and North Africa, combined with the military's repression of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, reversed the relative power balance within the Islamist camp. This empowering of non-democratic and violent jihadists (Syria/Iraq); the military's political exclusion of a significant sector of Islamic civil society (Egypt); and the renewed ability of revived regimes to play off rival brands of Islamists and secularists halted moves toward democratization. Without inclusion of Islamist movements willing to play by democratic rules, such as the Brothers, with their mass constituencies, greatest capacity among social forces to balance the power of the state, and unique ability to confer legitimacy on market capitalism, no democratic transition is likely.⁴

The military and security forces:

Eva Bellin⁵ argued that a main ingredient of authoritarian resilience had for many decades been the reliability of large effective security forces and that, similarly, military responses to the Uprisings were crucial to outcomes. These responses varied depending on factors such as the institutional autonomy, repressive capabilities, and interests (political, economic, communal, professional) of military establishments.⁶ Initially, seeing the rapid departure of

presidents in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, many judged that political mobilization had exceeded the repressive containment powers of the old regimes; however, the military and security forces have re-grouped, restoring some of the old state-society (im)balance. In his contribution to this special issue, Joshua Stacher, observes that while *states* may have been weakened by the Uprising, *regimes*, and particularly their coercive cores, have not only survived but also dramatically expanded the use of violence to rescue old orders.

Variations in the military's role were pivotal for outcomes. In Egypt, where the military retained institutional autonomy of the top political leadership and also had conflicts of interest with presidential families as well as a large stake in the preservation of the establishment, including considerable command of large sectors of the economy, it sacrificed the president to preserve itself and the institutions and territorial integrity of the state. Its dependence on Western support also made it unwilling to risk their funding via mass repression on behalf of the president. Once Mubarak departed, Egypt's large politicized army attempted to retain command of the transition process and steer it in such a way as to preserve its interests. When it faced resistance, it did not hesitate to repress protestors when they targeted its own interests and particularly in its attacks on the Muslim Brothers after al-Sisi's coup it showed that an institutionalized US funded military was no less willing than patrimonial leaders to use massive violence to defend its vital interests. Moreover, it possessed the repressive capacity to reassert control over Egyptian society and territory (even if contested in Sinai). This was pivotal in enabling *restoration* of a *hybrid regime*. By contrast in Tunisia the limited repressive capacities and de-politicization of the military was decisive for enabling democratic transition.

In Syria, sectarian penetration and Ba'thist politicization of the military reduced its autonomy, keeping the bulk of it loyal to the regime. Identity differences between the military and protestors much reduced the chances of defections from the security forces when they were ordered to fire on civilians, hence the chances of a transition pact. The Syrian military retained enough institutional cohesion to defend the regime from collapse; yet incremental defections on identity grounds, acquired enough critical mass to staff a rival 'Free Syrian Army', leading to militarized *civil war and stalemate*.

In Libya and Yemen militaries were least institutionalized and most communally riven, thus most vulnerable to fairly rapid and major splits along tribal and family lines. Where, they split, with part remaining loyal to the leader and part opposed, the outcome was *stalemate* (Yemen). Where, as in Libya, the military disintegrated, a function of Qaddafi's weakening it as an institution, the result was *state failure*.

Workers:

In his contributory article, Jamie Allinson examines the variable impact of the working classes on post-Uprising trajectories. Where workers movements were, as a result of greater industrialization, larger and better organized, as in Egypt and Tunisia, even though their top leadership had long been co-opted by regimes, they played key roles in anti-authoritarian mobilization. Workers' unions were pivotal in the mobilization against the president in Tunisia where the formal union structure recovered its autonomy and helped organize the Uprising. In Egypt, Tripp⁷ argues that nationwide strike action made it clear to the Egyptian military that opposition to Mubarak was too deep and widespread to be rolled back.

In alliance with the middle class, workers, as Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens show,⁸ are crucial elements of a democratic coalition that is necessary to drive democratization. Aschar observes that workers constituted the real alternative to the other two post-Uprising contending forces, the military/state establishment and Islamist movements, both of which stood for variations of the neo-liberalism against which the uprisings initially mobilized.⁹ Yet, the outcome has not been uniform, with the official unions

co-opted by the military in Egypt and playing the key brokerage role in democratic consolidation in Tunisia. The marginalization of organized workers during the Uprisings in Syria, Libya and Yemen, was associated with both state failure and democratic failure.

Generally, it can be hypothesized that the *balance of agency* between these four actors will bias trajectories in certain ways. Where pro-democracy social movements and organized workers are strong, the military weak or non-political and Islamists moderate, chances for polyarchy are best (Tunisia); where the military is strong and politicized, Islamists moderate and democracy and workers movements fairly strong, a hybrid formula results (Egypt); a strong military, radicalization of Islamists, and weakened democracy movements and worker unions biases the outcome toward state failure and civil war (Syria).

The Political Economy Context

Outcomes are, however, not merely the result of agency, which must operate within a pre-existing political economy structure. Historical sociologists such as Barrington Moore¹⁰ showed that variations in modernising coalitions shape democracy possibilities: where the state joined with the landed oligarchy to repress and exploit the peasantry to serve an agricultural export strategy, the result was conservative authoritarianism, while if the peasants were included in a radical coalition against the landed class, authoritarianism of the left resulted—as in the Arab populist republics. Moore and later Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens showed that inclusive democratization requires a balance of class power, including some state autonomy of the dominant classes and a bourgeois alliance with the organized working class to extract power sharing from the state.

In MENA, however, political economy is unfavourable to democratization. First, rentier states produce state-dependent bourgeoisies and clientalized citizens (combined in many cases, with readily expelled expatriate labour); indeed, states with copious rent have proved most resistant to the Uprising. Second, the pathway of the earlier populist regimes, under which a more inclusive ruling coalition corresponded to social reform and import substitute industrialization, was cut short by some combination of capital accumulation failures, lost wars and international financial institution (IFI) pressures for “structural adjustment.” The neo-liberal “solution” to the populist crisis--re-empowering investors and export strategies that required the repression of labour costs--shaped new state-crony capitalist coalitions to exclude labour as well as deepening dependencies on global finance capital. Neo-liberalism drives a wedge between bourgeoisie and workers at the expense of the democratic coalition between them needed to check the power of the deep state.

While the Uprisings were rooted in protest at the neo-liberal “solution,” Aschar¹¹ observes that they remained purely political, with no attempts to attack economic injustice or dysfunction; rather, they actually worsened economic growth, hence prospects for addressing unemployment, by deterring investors, particularly in manufacturing. Moreover, a root cause of under-investment, the exceptional export of MENA capital to the West by family dynasties in oil rich mini-states, at the expense of regional investment, can hardly be addressed by revolutions in the republics. In parallel, the enduring dependence on the Western-centred international financial system locked Egypt and Tunisia, the two states with the best prospects for democratization, into neo-liberal practices that removed the big issues of politics—distribution of wealth—from domestic political agendas.

With socio-economic alternatives off the political agenda, political competition in the post-Uprising states was diverted into *cultural wars* over identity issues framed in destabilizing zero-sum terms (Islamist vs. secularist, Sunni vs. Shia). Under such conditions, political pluralism, where it survives, is likely to be mixed with doses of authoritarian power in order to manage identity conflicts and turn back demands for social justice that cannot be accommodated in a global neo-liberal economic order. The least bad outcome under neo-

liberalism has tended to be “low intensity democracy“ in which elections serve as an institutionalized mechanism for elite circulation that may constrain the state but only marginally empowers the masses;¹² this may well lead to their disillusionment and support for alternatives such as Salafism or even for restorations of elements of the old regime. Indeed, in Tunisia where democratic transition was most advanced, disillusionment with democracy set in, political contestation was diverted into cultural wars and the October 2014 elections led to a certain restoration of old elites. This does not mean indigenous agency and resistance is unimportant: Tripp suggests that within the global neo-liberal order, resistance can alleviate the worse effects of the system or carve out a space for autonomous action. For Aschar outcomes depend on freedom for organized workers’ movements and on the “unblockage” of investment propensities among an industrial bourgeoisie in order to re-start growth.¹³ One could therefore hypothesize, that a degree of economic “unblockage” and some balance between classes (bourgeoisie and workers) and between classes and the state (as in Tunisia) facilitates democratic transition; their absence underlies either autocracy *or* state failure if radical movements fill the vacuum; while a middle scenario of *some* balance enables hybrid regimes.

Between Structure and Agency: the Political Cultural Variable:

Political culture is a residue of historical structures that constrains agency as well as being reproduced and altered by it. Given that culture changes only over long periods while the Arab world has experienced both authoritarian quiescence and attempted democratic revolution in a period of mere decades, culture, per se, would appear to carry limited explanatory power.¹⁴ It might be argued that the historic cycles of popular submission when the state is strong and revolt when it is weak reflects a durable political culture inhospitable to democracy.¹⁵ Yet polling evidence that Arabs, including pious Muslims, value democracy¹⁶ and the demand for it expressed by millions of Arabs in the Uprising, seems incompatible with the exceptionalist image of an unchanging Middle East cultural propensity for authoritarian rule.

However, Stepan and Linz¹⁷ suggest that disputes over the role of religion in politics have made it difficult for Arab societies to arrive at a consensus on democratic rules of the game. Symptomatically, all parties in Egypt wanted limits on majorities built into the constitution: secularists wanted the military to introduce guarantees against Islamist majorities while the Muslim Brotherhood wanted legislation vetted by a religious body like Iran’s Council of Guardians. This suggests that support for democracy can be wide but shallow: middle class secularists may value personal liberty more than democracy and sacrifice the latter if it means Islamists can curtail the former; Islamists can value democracy but subordinate it to religious law.

Nevertheless, culture and identity are far from fixed. Dialogue can enable compromise across cultural differences and contentious politics tends to harden them. In this respect, a main locus of cultural interaction, the media, played a prominent but two-sided role. While the new media--satellite television and the internet—had, prior to the Uprisings, apparently produced an Arab public sphere that promoted an informed and active citizenry tolerant of a pluralism of views, once they became instruments of political struggle during the Uprising, democratic civility gave way to hyperbole and polarization. With the much renewed permeability of weakened states, the internet became a vehicle of misinformation, while satellite TV channels, owned by Gulf states, business tycoons, salafi preachers or sectarian groups, became instruments to fight proxy cultural wars that fragmented the new public.¹⁸ Where, in the many multi-identity societies of the region, elements of shared civic identity were shattered by the instrumentalist use of sectarian cleavages, as in Bahrain and Syria, media-spread sectarian discourse diverted mass mobilization into sectarian conflict;

even in homogeneous societies such as Egypt, cultural wars were constructed as the secularists and the military launched a sustained media campaign to demonize the Muslim Brotherhood. Such identity cleavages tend to produce exclusionary governance strategies and are a major obstacle to creating a consensus for prioritising democratic rules of the game.

What made Tunisia somewhat different was that these cleavages were more muted, partly because of the country's long history of secularism, down to the agency of the founding father, Bourguiba. The more civic political culture was reinforced, as Durac observed, because exiled secularist and Islamist elites had a history of dialogue before the revolution. The mainstream Islamist party was relatively liberal and the role of Gulf funded salafis relatively contained--although not entirely, since several assassinations of secular leaders almost precipitated a breakdown similar to Egypt's.

In summary, the more homogeneous the identity and the greater the propensity to compromise between Islamists and secularists, the more a civic culture supportive of democracy exists (Tunisia). Where identity is fragmented and compromise blocked, the Uprising challenge to states resulted in failed states (Syria). A homogeneous culture plus failed religio-secular compromise is compatible with a hybrid regime (Egypt).

The International Variable

The international variable contributed both to precipitating the uprising and to the failure of democratic transition. First, not only did the globalization of neo-liberal economics generate post-populist crony capitalism, but also the West's democracy campaigns, empowered by globalization of communications, delegitimized post populist regimes. Then, in the wake of Uprisings, in good part against neo-liberalism, Western IFIs sought use the weakening of economies in uprising states to deepen neo-liberalism in the region, threatening to hollow out democratization before it had even began.

The external factor was important too, in affecting the power balance between regimes and oppositions. The restraint of the army in Egypt was partly a function of foreign dependency. While its oil riches ought to have given the Qaddafi regime the resources to survive, its relative international isolation opened it to foreign intervention; conversely, the survival of the oil-poor Asad regime was contingent on significant external financial and military support and protection by its Russian and Iranian allies.

At the regional level, the *competitive interference* of rival powers (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey) in Uprising states, where they backed warring sides and alternative governance models, contributing to democratic reversal or civil war (governance models). The Sunni Gulf Cooperation Council powers and Turkey, themselves split over support for rival kinds of Islamists, and Iran, deployed sectarian polarization against each other. Moreover, both sides used rent transfers to bolster anti-democratic forces--the non-oil monarchies, the military in Egypt, the Asad regime, salafis. But with neither side able to sweep the board, the result was both the de-stabilization of states and the fragmenting of publics between secularists and varieties of rival Islamists. Democratic transition was blocked and reconstituted regimes emerging from such communal power struggles were likely to incorporate some identity communities in order to exclude others. The resulting norm fragmentation meant democracy had little chance of becoming "hegemonic" in the region.

It can therefore be hypothesized that the more a country becomes an arena of competitive interference, the less likely is democratic transition; thus, while Tunisia managed to avoid such intervention, Libya suffered its most extreme form, with the result being polar opposite outcomes--democratic transition and state failure; Egypt, a middle case, facilitated a hybrid state.

The partial reconstitution of governance: emergent regime types

There is a widespread belief that the popular mobilization unleashed by the Uprising cannot be “put back in the box.” The Uprisings unleashed a new wave of instability similar to that experienced in the Arab post-independence years, albeit now with much larger, more mobilized and, in some places, highly armed, populations. But whether this means democratization is unavoidable or whether political participation will, instead, take new forms in failed or hybrid regimes remains in contention. As Morten Vallbjorn explained in his contribution to this special issue, the notion of re-politicization implies a struggle between a *re-politicized*, more mobilized citizenry less deterred by the fear barrier and rulers trying to bring them under control through old oligarchic practices, new authoritarian upgrading techniques and, as Stacher points out, unrestrained violence. Elites will have to work harder at appeasing, co-opting and dividing the citizenry; but they are likely to be so divided themselves that this will not prove easy. The result is likely to be *neither* stable authoritarian or democratic states, but unstable and “failed” hybrids. Politics is likely to be a deepened version of Huntington’s¹⁹ “praetorianism”—mixtures of military repression, ballot box contestation, street protest and “terrorism”—in which, as he put it “clubs are trumps.” As Stacher points out in his article, quantitative studies indicate contested transitional periods suffer greater violence—“more murder in the middle.” Nevertheless, a partial reconstruction of authority is also underway, even in failed states, with the three major observable trajectories driven by different conjunctions of forces.

Outcome 1: State failure and competitive governance

A major unintended consequence of the Uprising has been state failure. In his article, Adham Saouli traced the special vulnerability of the more identity-fragmented Arab states to the limited inclusion of identity groups by regimes constructed around sectarian cores and with artificial borders exposing them the destabilizing effect of trans-state interference. In such states there is a high risk that *regime weakening or failure will lead to state failure*. In the most immediate sense, states’ failure resulted from the incapacity of the military to defend their territorial integrity, either because it was kept weak (Libya), was decimated by foreign intervention (Iraq, Libya) or suffered significant defections (Syria). There are variations, of course, notably between Libya wherein the regime and state disintegrated in parallel vs. Syria and Iraq where regimes grouped around a sectarian and territorial core but the state’s overall territorial integrity was debilitated.

The consequent breakdown of order, particularly in multi-communal societies, ushers in the *security dilemma*, as people fall back on primordial solidarity groups--tribes, sects—for survival while demonizing the “other,” with the supposedly “defensive” actions of each group making all more insecure. Moreover, as government loses the capacity to deliver services and the normal economy fails, rival movements acquire a stake in a war economy through smuggling, looting, the arms trade, and exploitation of natural resources (oil), while ordinary persons, insecure and deprived of their livelihoods, gravitate to warlords and militias for survival or exit the country as refugees.

Yet, amidst civil war, “competitive state reconstruction”²⁰ takes place. Ibn Khaldun identified cycles of state collapse and reformation in MENA where historically a new dynasty (regime) was founded by a charismatic leader, possessing followers bound both by kinship *asabiyya* (social solidarity) and religious zeal. As Tilly²¹ and others indicate, opposition movements prevail that combine an ideological message, ability to provide security through command of armed violence, and control of resources enabling provision of social goods. Charismatic leaders with armed followings seeking to construct alternative states are most evident in ISIS’s trans-state operations, straddling eastern Syria and western Iraq, aiming to create a caliphate and overthrow “artificial” boundaries imposed by “Sykes-Picot,” but

similar phenomenon are also evident in North Africa as a result of Libyan state collapse and in Yemen. In parallel, the surviving cores of pre-existing regime became more dependent on ethno-sectarian *asabiyya* and therefore less institutionalized and inclusive. Whichever side prevails, this form of state formation is likely to result in the exclusion of the losers and eventual decline into neo-patrimonial rule. However, where neither side can defeat the other a “hurting stalemate” could create conditions for a power-sharing settlement, provided the ‘commitment problem’--that neither side can trust the other to keep their agreements and not seek revenge—could be overcome, possibly through international guarantee of a settlement and international peace-keepers. The loss of control of formerly centralizing states over their territory, combined with the surge of sectarian identities at the expense of state identities, suggests that political reconstruction will require new forms of consociational ethno-sectarian power-sharing. This is, however, likely to result in a hybrid authority formula, with mixtures of authoritarian and pluralist, informal and formal, governance.

Outcome 2: Regime restoration and hybrid Governance

Where the state remains intact and the regime survives the Uprising, one possible outcome is “restoration.” The exceptional mass activism of revolutionary outbursts cannot be sustained: Brinton’s classic exploration of post-revolutionary “Thermidor” sees a yearning for order empowering a “man on horseback.” Political sociologists such as Mosca and Michels²² exposed the practices used to restore or sustain elite or class rule in spite of increased politicization, revolution and competitive elections: an “Iron Law of Oligarchy is sustained through elites’ disproportionate resources (information, wealth), command of the levers of bureaucracies and relative cohesion compared to the divided public. In the Marxist tradition democracy remains purely formal--“bourgeois,” “for the few”--when the grossly unequal distribution of wealth robs formally equal citizenship of substance. The inequality accompanying the globalization of finance capital everywhere “hollows out” democracy.²³ When powerful bureaucracies, crony capitalists and co-opted worker unions survive an uprising, it only takes the on-set of mass weariness of disorder to open the door to “restoration.”

Yet, in the wake of the Arab Uprising, elites need new forms of “authoritarian upgrading” to manage more mobilized masses. While the re-distributive populism through which the early republics consolidated themselves is incompatible with economic globalization, the subsequent post-populist crony capitalism was an immediate cause of the Uprising and cannot be wholly restored either. As such, some hybrid formula combining features of both seems likely, with forms of populist jingoism (sectarianism, “war on terror”) mixed with electoral authoritarianism. States possessing rents can sustain patrimonial practices of co-optation and enable a modicum of welfare populism in order to deter cross-class mobilization. This is compatible with hybrid regimes, featuring middle levels of both elite contestation and mass inclusion.

Outcome 3: Polyarchic Governance:

The final possible pathway from the Uprising is where democratic transition ends in polyarchy. The democratization literature identifies several enabling conditions. The existence of a shared political community enabling peaceful electoral contestation²⁴ has been problematic in MENA owing to strong sub and supra-state identities rivalling loyalty to the state; the Arab Uprising unleashed further powerful cultural wars. However, the state is less vulnerable to these rival identities in relatively homogeneous societies where they have historical roots (Egypt, Tunisia) as compared to the “artificial” fragmented states of the Levant; democratization prospects are better in the former.

Second, democratic consolidation rests on a balance of class power and a “democratic coalition” able to extract democratization from the state. While rent is widely used by MENA regimes to deter such a coalition by clientelizing society and co-opting bourgeoisies, where rent is modest and where more advanced modernization and industrialization enables a democratic coalition between the educated middle class and the organized working class, a class balance might be approximated.

Weberians such as Huntington²⁵ argued that power must be both *concentrated* in institutions—an executive with centralized command of bureaucracies—and *diffused* through incorporation of mass participation via mass political parties. The prototype is Turkey where Ataturk first concentrated power and built institutions; at a later stage, when the requisites of democratization were thought sufficient, elites presided over democratization from above by transformation of the single ruling party into a two-party system with competitive elections. This scenario was vastly facilitated by Ataturk’s successful nation-building project that endowed nationalist legitimacy on state institutions. However, in Arab countries, despite political liberalization and pluralisation experiments starting in the 1990s, Turkish-style democratic institutionalization from above never acquired momentum, in good part because nationalist legitimacy was prematurely lost, and instead change was initiated by the Arab Spring’s mobilization from below. Democratization requires a *transitional insider-outside ruling coalition*--“clean” remnants of the old regime, notably the bureaucracy, and leaders of peaceful protests--with the authority to steer a democratization of the institutions of the old regime via multi-party elections.

Unfortunately, the conditions of democratic consolidation, a shared identity, a balance of class forces, institutions capable of incorporating mass participation, and an inside-outside transition coalition were largely absent in the post-Arab Uprising period, with the possible exception of Tunisia.

Diverging Pathways: The Determinants of three Prototypical Cases

Multiple variables shaped the different trajectories followed by Uprising states. These, are summarized in Table 1 and are here brought together to explain the three prototypical cases, Syria, where transition failed; Egypt where it was reversed and Tunisia where it was relatively successful.

Syria: failed transition, failed state

Conditions for democratic transition were not favourable in Syria: identity fragmentation and the lack of a class balance weakened society, while a robust combination of *both* patrimonial authority and bureaucratic institutions gave the regime exceptional resilience. Owing to the cross cutting of class inequalities by urban-rural and sectarian cleavages, the narrow opportunity structure (weak civil society) and the willingness of the loyal military to use violence against protestors, mobilization was insufficient to overthrow the regime but enough to deprive it of control over wide parts of the country. The soft-liners were marginalized on both sides by the regime’s use of violence, the maximalist demands of the opposition and the identity cleavages between regime security forces and the protestors. Defections from the military were sufficient, together with high levels of external intervention, to militarize the conflict, resulting in protracted civil war and a failed state. This diverted the country away from democratization and along other pathways. Anti-democratic agents—the military, jihadists--were empowered while democratic forces—the protesting youth, the trade unions--were marginalized. The Uprising greatly sharpened identity cleavages along both sectarian and secular-Islamist lines. No cross-class democratic coalition was conceivable as the destruction to the political economy infrastructure debilitated capitalist production relations

and generated a parasitic war economy that locked Syria into a much-deepened crisis for at least the immediate future.

Table 1: Variables Shaping Divergent Tangents

Variables	Syria	Egypt	Tunisia
MASS MOBILIZATION Cleavages	Mobilization diluted by cross-cutting cleavages	Bandwagoning via cross-class coalitions	Bandwagoning via cross-class coalitions
Opportunity Structure	Diluted by Low civil society experience	Facilitated by high civil society experience	Facilitated by high civil society experience
REGIME CAPACITY (co-optative and coercive)	Patrimonial-bureaucratic balance	Patrimonialism bureaucratically constrained	Patrimonialism bureaucratically constrained
Military role	Low autonomy-loyal to leader	High autonomy	High autonomy
Bureaucratic territorial penetration	Medium	High	High
TRANSITION COALITION	No→presidential survival + protracted insurgency →state failure	Yes→presidential removal, transition starts→state establishment survival	Yes→presidential removal, transition starts→state establishment survival
POLITICAL ECONOMY class balance economy	Lack of class balance War economy	Lack of class balance Rentier economy	Some class balance Productive economy
POLITICAL CULTURE Societal identity	Fragmented	Homogeneous	Homogeneous
secular-religious cleavage	high	High	low
COMPETITIVE EXTERNAL INTERVENTION	High	Medium	low
AGENCY Dominant forces and their relations	military vs. radical Islamists	military vs. moderate Islamists	moderate Islamists + trade unionists +civil society
OUTCOME	Failed State	Hybrid regime	Polyarchy

Egypt: reversed transition

In Egypt an anti-regime cross-class coalition and a favourable opportunity structure—manifest in considerable civil society experience and internet penetration--enabled a massive bandwagoning against the ruler; the relative autonomy of the military, which prioritized its own interests, enabled an insider-outsider coalition to engineer presidential departure. In spite of a relatively peaceful transition from Mubarak’s rule, the post-Uprising power struggle between secular revolutionaries, the military and Islamists was unconstrained by agreement on rules of the game. The lack of a strong organized pro-democracy movement and autonomous trade unions, compared to the over-sized politicized military, and the split between secularists and divided Islamists allowed a substantial “restoration” of the old regime. This reflected the lack of a balance of class power able to check a rent-funded state. Post-Uprising authoritarian upgrading depended on sophisticated versions of divide and rule, as exemplified by military’s cooptation of the Muslim Brotherhood to demobilize street

protests followed by its co-optation of the “Tamarod” (grassroots protest) movement to destroy the Brotherhood’s President Morsi. No democracy that excludes one of the most important socio-political forces in Egypt can be consolidated and only a hybrid regime, retaining extra-constitutional powers for the security forces, can cope with the violent spillover of Islamist resistance. Saudi Arabia played a crucial role in encouraging and supporting the counter-revolution, both in funding the al-Sisi regime and in encouraging its Salafist clients to break with the Brotherhood and support the military. A populist-xenophobic intolerance of dissent more repressive than under Mubarak was combined with electoral authoritarianism manifested in Sisi’s election and the rather dim prospects of free parliamentary elections amidst the exclusion of the Brotherhood.

Tunisia: transition and institutionalization

As in Egypt, cross-class grievances and a favourable opportunity structure--civil society experience—enabled bandwagoning mobilization that, given the refusal of an autonomous military to protect the president, enabled an insider-outsider democratic coalition. Yet Tunisia’s transition was not similarly stalled. Political culture inheritances--Tunisia’s secular tradition, relative homogeneity and long history of statehood - consolidated the political community needed to underpin contestation over other issues. Its historically more moderate Islamist movement enabled compromise between Islamists and secularists. What made the big difference from Egypt was Tunisia’s larger middle class, greater mass literacy and small unpoliticized army. The Islamist en-Nahda party won a plurality in the first post Uprising elections, but unlike the Egyptian Brotherhood, shared power with two secular parties, and a secularist politician became president alongside an Islamist prime minister. Moderate democratic Islamists were much stronger than Salafists and, contrary to the case in Egypt, entered a coalition with secularists rather than the Salafists. Nevertheless, before long the secularist-Islamist cleavage threatened to destabilize the country: militant salafists’ attempts to restrict cultural expression they considered anti-Islamic seemed tolerated by the government and the murders of secular political leaders critical of the en-Nahda government plunged the country into a crisis in 2013 similar to what was, in parallel, happening in Egypt. However, by contrast Egypt, there was no “man on horseback” in Tunisia’s small politically unambitious military that rival political forces could call upon to “rescue” the country from the other; hence they had to compromise their differences through dialogue. The constituent assembly was more inclusive than in Egypt and was able to reach a compromise constitutional formula. Crucially, the balance of agency favoured democratic forces. The limited role of the military in public life and the exceptional role of the trade union movement in brokering a consensus had its origins in the fact that the independence movement had combined a powerful political party, the Destour, and an equally powerful union movement, pre-empting the role of national vanguard assumed elsewhere, including Egypt, by the army.

As a result, Tunisia experienced the most thorough democratization. Still, the revolution remained purely political: only the top political elite was renewed, with the ouster of the ruling family and some ruling party elites while the bourgeoisie and the military establishment survived. Indeed, Tunisia experienced a mild restoration as a result of the October 2014 elections in which a “Bourguibist” party dominated by old regime elites was voted into power at the expense of the post-Ben Ali currents, both the secular democratic movements and an-Nahda; the elections reflected both cultural cleavages and nostalgia for order and economic stability. Ultimately, the better prognosis for democratic transition in Tunisia than elsewhere was rooted in the success of the Uprising in ameliorating (rather than aggregating) the pre-Uprising crisis.

Conclusion

Immediate post-Uprising outcomes varied significantly in line with differing combinations of the factors indicated in Table 1. While in Egypt and Tunisia bandwagoning mobilization against the regime and military autonomy combined to produce presidential removal and regime survival, initiating a relatively peaceful transition from authoritarian rule, in Syria the dilution of mobilization by cross cutting cleavages and presidential control of the military precluded such a peaceful transition.

Differing political economy and political cultural contexts drove further divergence among the cases. Homogeneous cultures in Tunisia and Egypt kept the state together compared to the state failure resulting from cultural fragmentation in Syria. However, the greater cultural of compromise in Tunisia allowed agreement on rules of the game, while contests over the rules split Egypt. While Tunisia came closest to a class balance, given the relative strength of industrialization and organized labour, external rent in Egypt and a rent-fuelled war economy in Syria weakened or precluded such a balance. In Tunisia the balance of agency—a combination of a weak military, moderate Islamists and strong trade unions--facilitated democratic transition; in Egypt the domination of the political arena by the strong politicized military reversed this transition; while the combination of strong military and radical Islamists in Syria led to militarized conflict and the division of state territory. Finally, external intervention in Tunisia was too limited to disrupt democratization; medium intervention facilitated democratic reversal in Egypt; and intense competitive interference in Syria blocked any resolution of civil war.

Bibliography

Aschar, Gilbert, *The People Want: a radical exploration of the Arab Uprising*, London Saqi Books, 2013

Bellin, Eva (2012) “Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring,” *Comparative Politics*, 44, no. 2 (2012) 127-149.

Brinton, Crane (1965), *The Anatomy of Revolution*, revised ed. (New York, Vintage Books, 1965

Cavatorta, Francesco, “The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?”, *Middle East Critique*, 19, no. 3, 2010, 217–232.

Gause, F. Gregory III, “Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability,” *Foreign Affairs*, July-August, 2011

Heyderian, Richard Javad. *How Capitalism Failed the Arab World: the economic roots and precarious future of the Middle East Uprisings*, London 2014

Huntington, Samuel P. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Jones, Seth (2008), “The Rise of Afghanistan’s Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad,” *International Security*, 32, no 4, (Spring 2008), 7-40.

Lynch, Marc, *The Arab Uprising: the unfinished revolutions of the new Middle East*, NY: Public Affairs 2012

Michels, Robert, *Political Parties: A Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, New York: Free Press, 1966.

Moore, Barrington, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

Mosca, Gaetano, *The Ruling Class*, McGraw-Hill, 1939.

Robinson, William I., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

Rustow, Dankwart (1970), 'Transitions to Democracy: toward a dynamic model,' *Comparative Politics*, 2, April 1970, 337-63.

Stepan, A. and J. Linz, "Democratization Theory and the 'Arab Spring'." *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013), 15-30

Tilly, Charles, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990.

Tripp, Charles, *The Power and the People: paths of resistance in the Middle East* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Zubaida, Sami (2011) The 'Arab spring' in historical perspective, *Open Democracy*, 21 October, Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/sami-zubaida/arab-spring-in-historical-perspective>

¹ Brynen, et. al. 119-46

² Heydarian, *How Capitalism Failed*, 95-110; Lynch, 146-59.

³ Lynch, *The Arab Uprising*, 210-13.

⁴ Brynen, *Beyond the Arab Uprising*, 119-146

⁵ Bellin, "Authoritarianism in the Middle East"

⁶ Gause, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring."

⁷ Tripp, *The Power and the People* 163

⁸ *Capitalist Development and Democracy*

⁹ Ashcar, *The People Want*, 152-99.

¹⁰ Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*

¹¹ Ashcar, *The People Want*, 13-18

¹² Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*

¹³ Tripp, *The Power and the People*, 175; Ashcar, *The People Want*, 290-93)

¹⁴ Brynen, *Beyond the Arab Spring*, 95-100.

¹⁵ Zubaida, "The Arab Spring in historical perspective."

¹⁶ Brynen, et.al, *Beyond the Arab Spring*, 95-117.

¹⁷ Stepan and Linz, "Democratization Theory"

¹⁸ Brynen et al *Beyond the Arab Spring*, 233-56; Heyderian, *How Capitalism Failed*, 151-71; Lynch, *The Arab Uprising*.

¹⁹ Huntington, *Political Order*

²⁰ Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," 17

-
- ²¹ Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*
- ²² Mosca, *The Ruling Class*; Michels, *Political Parties*.
- ²³ Cavatorta, "The Convergence of Governance."
- ²⁴ Rustow, "Transition to Democracy."
- ²⁵ Huntington, *Political Order*.