KEEPING DEMOCRACY AT BAY: POST-REVOLUTIONARY DILEMMAS IN EGYPT AND LIBYA

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INTRODUCTION
The Arab uprising, and the scenes of people pouring into the streets and squares, challenged many of the theoretical models that scholars used to employ in interpreting Arab politics. It was a major stimulus to ‘bring the society back in’ by focusing on the role of social forces in enacting change in the Arab world and resisting authority. In other words, the Arab uprising led many analysts to shift attention from the authority/state (structure) to resistance (action/agents). However, in most cases the transition to democracy was obstructed, if not reversed; while the old regime did not die the new regime was not born. This urges a questioning of the maturity of the arguments understating the structural factors in the ‘Arab Spring’ or overstating the agent-related aspects. Many analysts as well as ordinary people wondered what went wrong.
Egypt and Libya represent two stories of unsuccessful transitions. Despite the different trajectory of the two revolutions, both countries failed, at least in the short term, to fulfil the promises of a new era. This paper investigates how elite choices of alliance and re-alliance building play the major role in the democratic transition in these two countries. It argues that the nature of the old regime and the elite’s perception of threat and opportunity mediate these choices. It distinguishes between two kinds of elites: the state’s elite (those who represent the State’s Dilemma: the regime’s collective action problem of maintaining the unity of dominant classes and moulding its various factions into a coherent power bloc) (Lichbach, 1998), and the rebel/counter-elite (representing the Dissidents’ Dilemma: how to maintain the counter-elite dilemma). Tackling these dilemmas requires an analysis of a two-level game that occurs between regime elites and dissidents, at one level, and within the regime and the dissident coalitions, at another level (Lichbach, 1998, p. 414). The interaction between the Dissidents’ and State’s dilemmas, this paper argues, affects the transitional path. Accordingly, the paper seeks to answer the following questions: what accounts for the formation and dissolution of revolutionary coalitions? How do the main social and political actors change alliance and why? The importance of these questions lies in the fact that coalition formation largely determines the fate of protest movement/revolutions (Tarrow, 2011, p. 191). Needless to say, coalition building also includes internal as well as external elements, although the paper focuses mainly on the internal dynamics and tackles three main signposts on the transitional trajectory in both countries: the situation immediately after the revolution, the elections, and inclusivity vs. exclusivity in the political process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Collective action theories perceive protests as result of rational and calculated behaviour. Recognizing the within-group conflicts, collective action theorists address the conditions under which protest groups are activated/deactivated. According to Mark Lich-
bach, the collective action model focuses on the interrelationship of what he called four dilemmas: Hobbes’s Dilemma, the Prisoner’s Dilemma, the Rebel’s Dilemma, and the State’s Dilemma (Lichbach, 1998, pp. 401-424). Hobbes’s Dilemma focuses on the possibility of social order in a certain nation. In their search for social order, people face the Prisoner’s Dilemma: “everyone wants everyone else to voluntarily renounce the use of force and fraud, but everyone also wants to retain that right for himself” (Lichbach, 1998, p. 413). Applying this logic to the world of contentious politics, dissidents have their own Hobbesian problem of order when they challenge an existing social or political order. They also have their rebel’s dilemma. In Lichbach’s words, “[d]issidents seek a public good of either capturing the state or forcing the existing authorities to redress their grievances. Rational dissidents will not voluntarily contribute to this public good” (Lichbach, 1998, p. 413).

Looking at the counterrevolutionary coalition, argues Lichbach, regime supporters also face a collective action problem in assisting the regime. In this case, contributions to the regime are also a public good in the same way as contributions to protest. Lichbach calls the regime’s collective action problem of maintaining the unity of dominant classes and moulding its various factions into a coherent power bloc “the State’s Dilemma” (Lichbach, 1998, pp. 413-414). In this way, the importance of this approach lies in its analyses of the strategic situations in which regimes and dissidents confront one another. It brings new insights into the study of revolution and transition by identifying many collective action problems in conflict (for example, among rebel organizations, within a rebel organization, among the state’s supporters or the State’s Dilemma). As Lichbach summarized it:

The politics of reform and revolution involve the interaction of the Rebel’s Dilemma and the State’s Dilemma. Each side wishes to solve its own CA problem and intensify the CA problem of its opponents. Alignments and realignments, tensions between civil society and the state, and cross-class alliances and social coalitions result (Lichbach, 1998, p. 414).

In this sense, tackling these two dilemmas requires an analysis of a two-level game that occurs between regime elites and dissidents, at one level, and within the regime and the dissident coalitions, at another level (Lichbach, 1998, p. 414). The paper focuses on the interaction between the Dissidents’ and State’s Dilemmas, and argues that this interaction affects the transitional path.

**NATURE OF THE OLD REGIME**

The different trajectory of the Egyptian and Libyan revolutions partially finds explanation in the different nature of their old regimes. The Egyptian regime under Hosni Mubarak was best described as semi-authoritarianism or electoral authoritarianism. Although transition to a multiparty system was initiated three decades ago, it did not lead to a transfer of power or real power sharing. The regime arbitrarily controlled the margin of freedom to maintain its survival and manage its foreign relations. Mubarak’s regime also reflected a great imbalance of power as the president enjoyed sweeping constitutional prerogatives (Tawfia, 2011). The executive authority was further empowered by imposing the emergency law that was in effect since 1981. The law severely restricted civil and political rights. Moreover, the Egyptian party system was a de facto one party system as the National Democratic Party (NDP) monopolized power since the end of the 1970s. The opposition parties were weak, fragile and lacked any substantial popular base. The only

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opposition group that had a considerable popular base was the Muslim Brotherhood, which was de jure banned for decades.\(^2\) It seems that the regime needed this de facto existence of the group to use it as an internal and external scapegoat. Mubarak has often stated directly or indirectly that it was either him or the Islamists.

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One of the main pillars of the Egyptian regime was the military institution. Steven Cook described the army in Egypt as an institution that rules but does not govern (Cook, 2007). Mubarak has succeeded in outlining a power sharing formula between him and the military elite. This arrangement enabled him to control power and, at the same time, remain faithful to his power base: the army. The military institution also has its economic interests since it manages an economic empire and is keen on keeping it away from public scrutiny. This obviously requires a deep involvement of the military in the decision-making process. Such an involvement takes different forms; the most famous of which is appointing retired officers in the highest positions in the Egyptian bureaucracy as governors, heads of state-owned companies, and so on (Elgohari, 2013). In short, the Mubarak regime represented an alliance among the security institutions, state bureaucracy, and the ruling party. Capitalist interests represented in Gamal Mubarak’s crony businessmen later joined that alliance and were pushing for installing Gamal as his father’s successor. The regime’s stubbornness in the years preceding the revolution in dealing with the demands of political reforms confirmed the perception that the inheritance scenario was politically irreversible.

As for Libya, Gaddafi came to power through a coup against the monarchy in 1969. He established a personal ‘sultanic’ style of dictatorship. Over the years, he destroyed all the institutions that existed before the coup and banned all political organizations (Bruce, 2011). Decisions were thus taken arbitrarily given the complete lack of institutionalization. Gaddafi also succeeded in getting rid of, or at least marginalizing, the majority of the political elite. With the establishment of *Jamahiriyya* and ‘direct democracy’ in 1973, the regime persecuted civil society and restricted independent media, and established a network of unelected bodies and informal centres of power (Bruce, 2011).

It is noticeable here how Gaddafi, when he first came to power, worked on dismantling the tribal alliances formed by the old regime. He substituted the tribal nobles, who occupied the top administrative positions on the regional level, with youth technocrats. Tactical and ideological reasons drove him to weaken and marginalize the role of the tribes. Tactically, he wanted to push aside any remaining loyalists to the monarchy. Ideologically, his Arab nationalist beliefs enticed him to shift the political regime from tribalism to one that could encompass all of the Arab states (Wright, 2012). Attempts to excluded tribalism did not last for long, however. Different attempts to seize power urged Gaddafi to seek protection from his tribe to face political opposition. He started appointing many of his relatives and in-laws in the important positions in army and police. The small number of his tribe (al-Qaddafi), in addition to its light political and economic weight, urged Gaddafi to form tactical and informal alliances with important tribes such as Warfalla and Magarha. Playing the tribes against each other and building tribal alliances became an important part of Gaddafi’s internal political manoeuvres.

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\(^2\) The regime’s exclusionary policies toward the Muslim Brotherhood left deep imprints on its group in a way that made its unity a goal in itself. For more on this point: Al-Anani, K. Mubarak wa al-Ikhwan: Khibrat al-Thlathin ‘Aman [Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood: The Thirty Years’ Experience]. *Al Jazeera Center for Studies.* Retrieved January 20, 2015, from http://studies.aljazeera.net/files/2011/08/201187113648385131.htm
vres. Favouritism, because of alliance or blood ties, became the pillars that maintained Gaddafi’s tactical alliances. This tribalization of power is partly responsible for the rejection of the symbols of power such as the state and the security apparatus, a problem that became obvious after the fall of Gaddafi (Martínez, 2014).

Weary of the army, Gaddafi established a parallel security system of paramilitary forces controlled by one from his circle of trust, particularly his sons. These security brigades were far better trained and armed than the regular army. The national army was kept weak to avoid the possibility of a coup and the officer’s units were under tight control to avoid any possible treason. For its part, the police did not have a bad reputation as it was mainly performing traffic duties and the like. It also lacked suitable weapons (El-Katiri, 2012).

In the years preceding the revolution, it became clear that any attempt to reform the system was doomed to failure given Saif al-Islam’s inability to achieve his ‘reformist’ agenda. Saif al-Islam tried to portray himself as a reformer working on legalizing the work of non-governmental, non-political organizations and establishing an ‘independent’ media. The failure of his supposedly ‘reformist’ agenda showed how dominant the most conservative wing of the regime was, and revealed its fear of any quick or broad changes that could disturb the political stability. Simultaneously, the ambiguity surrounding the political succession in view of the rising star of Saif al-Islam created animosities among the internal circle of Gaddafi known as the ‘men of the tent’. The undeclared rule for decades was that in case of Gaddafi’s absence from the political scene, one of his revolutionary comrades would ascend to power (El-Katiri, 2012, p. 6).

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This brief characterization of the two regimes leads to some concluding remarks. Authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes allow a limited space for the opposition. Most of the time, they encourage the existence of this space to give a democratic appearance to their rule, especially if they do not build their legitimacy on a particular ideology. This opposition is often disunited and weak but may sometimes have the ability to organize for particular causes. These regimes tighten their grip via control of state institutions, particularly the military and security apparatus. The army in particular plays a major role (if not the major role) in the survival of these regimes (this is

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3. The norm was to appoint family members and the symbols of the main allying tribes in important and leading positions. The regime also armed the trusted tribes. Gaddafi enhanced his power by playing off the tribes against each other and promoting one tribe over the others in different places in the country. In 1990, the role of the tribes in public life was further enhanced by establishing a comprehensive system of the ‘popular social leadership committees’. The nobility in the tribes and regions were the main members in these new committees, which were in charge of several bureaucratic and social tasks of the central state. These committees provided welfare services to the locals and acted as judicial forums to adjudicate in local conflicts. For more details: El-Katiri, M. (2012). State-Building Challenges in Post-Revolution Libya (pp. 3-4). US Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute. Retrieved September 9, 2013, from http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB1127.pdf

4. Some analysts suggest that Gaddafi even played off his sons against each others to guarantee that none of them would aggregate enough power to challenge his authority. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.ug/column/insight/4551-despite-its-iron-grip-gaddafi’s-regime-was-always-likely-to-fall#.YI8WCUx.dudp

5. It is not, therefore, surprising to see many of these big units deflection from the regime during the revolution. Such a deflection made the liberation of the east possible.

6. The most telling example is that of the Libyan Constitution, which was written by a committee appointed by Saif al-Islam in 2008. Some leaks at that time mentioned how the work of the committee did not significantly change the existing political system. Apparently, it crossed so many lines that Gaddafi and his old guard would not have accepted it. At the beginning of 2010, the draft constitution was sent to the Social Popular Leadership Committee for discussion. Thereafter, the draft constitution disappeared and was never heard of again.
in case the army itself is not de jure in control). In contrast, totalitarian regimes do not allow any opposition and do not rely on institutions in ruling but on the individual will of the ruler. So, while the authoritarian regimes are characterized by a degree of institutionalism, the totalitarian regimes are characterized by lack of institutions. Moreover, most of the time, totalitarian regimes allow parallel security arrangements founded solely on loyalty and obedience to the ruler. In this way, the army is not necessarily the strongest existing institution. The issue of political succession represents one of the most salient problems in both authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. However, it could be a way to dismantle regime alliances and ushers in the possibility of change. While transition in authoritarian regimes often take the form of negotiations or the withdrawal of the military’s support from the regime, transition in totalitarian regimes is often enforced by violence that could easily develop into an armed conflict.

STATE’S AND DISSIDENTS’ COALITIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE REVOLUTION

In both Egypt and Libya, support for the revolution was the common denominator among the political actors that comprised the negative coalition that overthrew Mubarak and Gaddafi. Because the revolution caught everyone by surprise, there was no clear vision of how to manage the transitional period or clear common goals apart from the slogan of ‘protecting the revolution’ or ‘achieving the goals of the revolution’.

Looking at the Egyptian case, the negative coalition was comprised as follows: the civil/secular elites, youth movements, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists (later to be largely organized in the Salafist al-Nour party and al-Fadila party), the former violent Islamists, such as the Islamic group, individual Copts (the church itself did not encourage dissent). They all shared antagonism towards Mubarak’s police regime. Although overthrowing Mubarak was not on the agenda of the planned demonstrations, the coalition soon perceived the unexpected crowd as an opportunity to raise the ceiling of demands. The army’s apparent decision not to open fire on protestors while the police fought until the end, was an opportunity to put an end to the hereditary state. It was later revealed that the military was reluctant to approve Gamal Mubarak’s ascendance to power. Some accounts also mentioned the army’s increasing uneasiness towards the rising influence of the police and Gamal’s crony businessmen (Al-Houdaiy, 2014, pp. 5, 8). The army therefore perceived the uprising as an opportunity to put an end to the hereditary scenario. This explains why the army did not open fire on the protestors while the police fought until the end, along with the businessmen and the party cadres (Al-Houdaiy, 2014, p. 8). This inter-division explains why, immediately after Mubarak stepped down, the deep state kept a low profile. After all, it was under attack: the police capabilities faltered faced with the angry crowds, the NDP’s headquarters were burned down ushering in its political demise, and there were calls for Gamal Mubarak’s business elite to be brought to justice. This did not mean surrender, however. After all,

7. After an emotional speech by Mubarak on 1 February 2011, thousands of his supporters attacked the encampment in Tahrir riding on horses and camels. The two parties clashed for many hours, after which the Tahrir revolutionary succeeded in holding their ground. On the night of the same day, the Tahrir encampment was under attack by Molotov cocktails and live ammunition from unknown persons who occupied the roofs of the buildings looking over the square. The fact that there were snipers seen by the demonstrators led the latter to accuse the police of orchestrating the attack. See Egypt’s Revolutions Turns Ugly as Mubarak Fights Back (2011, February 2). The Guardian. Retrieved January 10, 2015, from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/02/egypt-revolution-turns-ugly
the military’s perception of the new social and political order was one of Mubarakism without Mubarak. It soon became clear for the different isolated allies in the deep state that their survival depends on their mutual interdependence, shaking the negative collaboration, and controlling the masses. The military found the Islamists, particularly the MB, a perfect fit for the job.

As for Libya, the negative coalition was comprised of a wide array of groups that mainly shared anti-Gaddafi sentiments. These groups were the experienced politicians who quickly established the National Transitional Council (NTC), the Islamists (those espousing the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafists), the brigades that were formed during the war, anti-Gaddafi tribes and their militias, and the Eastern federalists. The coalition was too broad and contradictory to survive. Immediately after overthrowing Gaddafi, the goal of safeguarding the revolution from the ‘pro-Gaddafi’ forces started shaking the alliance that had just been born (Sharqieh, 2013, pp. 14-15). The first signs of inter-coalition division were seen in the different perception of who the pro-Gaddafi forces were. While some groups limited their definition to those who remained Gaddafi’s allies until the last minute (for example, loyalist tribes such as Warfalla and Magarha, the political and business elites who tied their fate with that of the regime), others considered Gaddafi’s entire elite as a threat (Rosan, 2013, pp. 15-16). The Benghazi demonstrations in 2012 were the early manifestation of this disagreement. In the demonstrations, the armed groups questioned the legitimacy of the NTC and accused it of being elitist, connected to the Gaddafi regime and thus lacking the revolutionary credentials (Rosan, 2013, p. 23). Behind these claims lies a dominant perception that, as phrased by Luis Martinez, “the state can never be an autonomous agent taking care to protect its territory and inhabitants” (Martinez, 2014, p. 2). We cannot understand the regional and ideological rivalries plaguing the Libyan transition without reference to the legacy of Jamahiriyya. The lack of any institutional structure for peaceful mobilization resulted in capitalizing on identity, either tribal or regional (Tabib, 2014, p.2).

THE ELECTIONS

The first election that followed the overthrow of the two regimes in Egypt and Libya was the first step in exposing the fragility of the negative coalition and paving the way to its dismantling. After all, negative coalitions in both cases have little in common and their historical, political and ideological rivalry soon took precedence.

In Egypt, the negative coalition lacked a clear vision of the transitional period. As a result, the SCAF took charge of managing the transitional period. Mindful of its vested interests and determined to retain order in the streets, the SCAF apparently opened channels with the Islamists, perceiving them as the most organized civil group that could control the masses (Al-Houdaiby, 2014, p. 9). The army also saw the election-first trajectory as a means of containing dissent and overriding the myriad interests in Tahrir. For their part, Islamists, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, were confident of their organizational capabilities and electoral experiences. They were also afraid of a possible comeback by Mubarak’s allies. Therefore, they also pushed for the election-first trajectory. They were probably also worried about the army’s presence in the political scene but, at the same time, did not have a revolutionary agenda to clash with it. For their part, the youth revolutionaries and the secular civil elite perceived the first trajectory as an attempt


to marginalize their role in the political landscape and adopted, instead, the constitution-first trajectory. For them, the congruence between the Islamists’ and the army’s view with regard to managing the transitional period was a deal according to which the army guarantees the political rise of the MB and, in return, the latter guarantees the main interests of the army and keeps its leaders unaccountable.\(^{10}\)

A demarcation was therefore drawn between ‘hardline revolutionaries’, represented mainly by the youth movements (allying with the civil forces), and the moderate or ‘soft’ revolutionaries represented by the Islamists. The civil forces were apparently allying with the revolutionary movements not for the sake of the revolution but to exert more pressure on the SCAF to grant them a greater share of power. What proves this point was their promotion of the idea of ‘supra-constitutional principles’ and their willingness to grant the army special status.\(^{11}\) For its part, the ‘deep state’ has been given the kiss of life by this rift and invested in deepening it. On the one hand, the army adeptly established itself as the arbiter between the political actors and, on the other hand, the private media, largely dominated by the remnants of Mubarak’s regime, intensified their messages to deepen the rift between the former allies in Tahrir and slowly turn public opinion against the revolution itself, associating it with chaos and the destruction of the Egyptian state.

The first rift was thus established: Islamists versus the rest. The rift became deeper with every electoral event. The more electoral gains the Islamists made, the more they distanced themselves from the other civil constituencies and the more they inclined towards the more conservative ones (Alaa, 2014). In contrast, with every electoral loss, the youth movements intensified their radical approach and, consequently, became more alienated from the military as well as society at large, which was in favour of more stability. As for the secular elites, the more electoral loss they experienced, the more they became convinced of the impossibility of reaching power through the ballot box and the more they became worried about their influence in the post-revolutionary regime.

The 2012 presidential election was another major manifestation on the unsustainability of the negative coalition. This was clearly apparent in its failure to support a single candidate to confront the counter-revolutionary contender, Ahmed Shafiq. Threatened by the possibility of the return of the old regime, most of the influential youth movements backed Mohammed Morsi in the second round. For them, although the MB was not trusted, its hands were not yet tainted with blood. The old regime was still perceived as the most dangerous threat to the revolution. The personality of the candidate of the counter-revolution also encouraged such an alliance. Some of the secular elites rallied around Morsi only after extracting the most painful promises from him and the MB.\(^{12}\) Others preferred to stay neutral waiting to see who would win the race, while a third group chose to back Shafiq rather than Morsi. For them, Morsi’s victory and his new legitimacy were more threatening to them rather than the old regime. At that moment, the perception of the different parties of the negative coalition of

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11. The then Deputy Prime Minister Ali al-Selmi proposed a document suggesting a number of ‘supra-constitutional principles’ that would guide the constitution-writing process. The document dealt with the concerns of liberals who feared the rise of Islamists. It adopted the principle of a ‘civil state’ and detailed a number of liberal rights that must be preserved in the new constitution. The document actually entrenched the power of the military in domestic governance. For further discussion, see Moustafa, T. (2012). Drafting Egypt’s Constitution: Can a New Legal Framework Revive a Flawed Transition? Brookings Doha Center, no. 1. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from http://www.brookings.edu/research/2012/9/12-egypt-constitution-moustafa/new1-drafting-egypts-new-constitutionen03.pdf

12. This was formulated in what came to be known as the ‘Fairmont Agreement’, where diverse groups of political players and revolutionaries met with Mohammed Morsi prior to the second round of the election to announce their support for his candidacy on condition that he would form a national salvation government, formulate a national unity project, and form a presidential team comprising members from across the political spectrum. See Wahab, N. (2013, June). How to Win an Election and Lose a Presidency. Atlantic Council. Retrieved January 20, 2015, from http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/how-to-win-an-election-and-lose-a-presidency.
the SCAF as an integrated part of the deep state – the most influential component, indeed – was substantiated. This would later affect the strategies and coalition-building process of the different actors. The presidential election was also the moment in which the counter-revolutionary coalition put itself back together and started to strike back. Apart from the media campaign in support of the candidate of the counter-revolution, the military issued a constitutional declaration stripping the would-be president of almost all his powers; the military was to be the actual ruler of the country (Hill, 2012). Such a move enticed the revolutionary youth movements, which were already clashing with the military (especially after the clashes of Mohamed Mahmoud and Maspero13). That pushed them to back to Morsi, as mentioned above. It was also at that moment that the regime coalition realized that, despite its capabilities, it was still in need of broadening its coalition if it was to restore the pre-25 January regime. Like Egypt, elections were also a demarcating moment between the ‘hardline’ vs. ‘moderate/cen-
trist’ revolutionaries in Libya. In contrast to Egypt, in Libya Islamists were the hardliners who advocated a complete break with the past, while the more liberal, who adopted a more accommodating agenda, were the moderates. The hardline coalition consisted of the MB, represented by its political party, the Justice and Construction Party (JCP), and the Salafists, bri-
gades from revolutionary strongholds like Misrata, Islamist brigades, and the federalists from the east. Eastern federalists have historical animosity towards the vested interests of the favoured regime elites and regions. Under Gaddafi, the Eastern region was kept underdeveloped and completely marginalized and ignored. This is why after the revolution, demands for federalism appeared in Cyrenaica. For these rea-
sons, federalists politically backed the hardliners in the beginning despite their different constituencies (Wehrey, 2014, p. 27). The moderates comprised those with vested political and economic interests in the Libyan state, such as the politicians and bureaucrats united in the NTC – which later largely formed the National Front Assembly (NFA) –, and the tribal brigades that were former allies of Gaddafi but departed him early during the revolution, such as the Zintan (Smits, 2013, p. 23-24).

Despite their different agendas, the hardliners perceived the existence of past vested interests as the most dangerous threat to the revolution. For them, undermining these interests was a high priority that deserved the unity of all the revolutionaries (Smits, 2013, p. 24). After all, the Libyan revolution is in essence "a revolution of the regions and rural areas against a central authority, an authority which has been perceived for the last half-century as being abusive and arbitrary" (Martinez, 2014, p. 6). For their part, the pro-revolution centrist forces perceived the revolutionary influence as threatening and promoted a more pragmatic and inclusive approach. This position enabled them to win the majority of votes in the first General National Congress (GNC) elections and nominate its president, Mohammed Magarief. The pattern of shifting alliance of the independent members14 soon challenged the numerical dominance of NFA in parliament. The rivalry between these two camps reached its climax during the passing of the ‘law on political isolation’ that excluded the former regime officials from the country’s public life (Smits, 2013, p. 24).


14. There were 120 independent deputies in the GNC who were primarily representing the interests of their cities, tribes or even families. Local loy-
As we can see, in both Libya and Egypt the State's and Dissident's coalitions were trying to solve their own dilemmas by endeavouring to maintain and broaden their alliances. They were also trying to overcome their Hobbesian dilemma, which is concerned with establishing a certain social and political order. In Egypt, the state's Hobbesian dilemma revolved around how to restore the pre-25 January regime and contain dissent, while the dissidents' Hobbesian dilemma was how to establish the new regime and what the desired nature of the regime was. In Libya, the state's coalition wanted a political and social order that somehow protect the vested interests created by the old regime. In contrast, the hardliners wanted an order that makes a total break with the past.

THE INCLUSIVITY VS. THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Soon after the elections, Morsi grabbed power from the SCAF, a move that was apparently not part of the deal. His attempts to trim Mubarak’s remnants in the judiciary (an institution that became openly hostile to the president and before with his group through different controversial rulings), highly alerted the state’s coalition, solidifying its plan to overthrow him. The deep state elite felt challenged by the new elite that, theoretically, enjoys popular and legal legitimacy. It perceived Morsi’s move as an introduction to exclude them from the post-Mubarak regime. The coalition was, however, aware that any claims of authority had to emanate from the street; in other words, it had to have a revolutionary cover. It is now clear that the aim was not only to overthrow Morsi and the MB but also impede any future dissent by tarnishing the most organized ally in any possible future negative coalition.

Morsi’s disastrous performance, and his failure to meet his pre-election promises, facilitated the mission of the old regime coalition. Morsi and the MB probably knew that they were fighting the deep state but instead of joining forces and uniting approaches in dealing with it as one entity, they diversified their strategies from open hostility (as in the case with the judiciary) to one of co-optation (particularly in dealing with the army and, somehow, the police). They spared no effort in losing every probable ally in their coalition. They perceived every move as a threat and part of a conspiracy against them. This led them to exclude everyone from the decision-making process and, consequently, become isolated from the rest of the negative coalition. Media messages, the active street protests, and the judiciary rulings and actions were, as they perceived them, evidence that plots were being hatched. Although this perception was probably partially true, Morsi and the MB failed to delineate the effective strategy to foil them. Not only did they alienate themselves from the rest of the political actors, but also from the rest of the society. This, of course, paved the way for their utter suppression.

For their part, the revolutionary youth movements felt entitled to impose their views in return for their support to Morsi in the presidential elections. Their more radical approach clashed with the non-confrontational strategy of the MB, especially when it comes to dealing with the police and the military. The slower Morsi was in dismantling the interest and corrupt networks of Mubarak’s regime, the more antagonized the youth movements became. This was particularly the case with the demands to restructure the Ministry of the

15. On this move, see http://www.skynewsarabia.com/web/article/39150/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%B7%D9%86%D9%B7%D9%A7%D9%88%D9%8A-%D9%8B%D9%B9%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF

16. Alaa, B. (2014). Al-Khuruj min al-Midan: Kayf lam Na’ud Namtalik Hululan (Getting Out of the Square: How Do We No Longer Have Solutions). Fairforum, Retrieved from http://fairforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/tahrir-square-exit.pdf and Al-Houdiby, I. (2014). Changing Alliances and Continuous Oppression: The Rule of Egypt’s Security Sector. Arab Reform Initiative, pp. 5, 8. Retrieved from http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%20%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%81%D9%8A.pdf
Interior. In addition, the low power sharing provoked the secular forces, who also felt challenged by the neo-Islamists elites and were concerned about their social status.\(^3\) Refusing to deal with the MB except on their conditions, these forces pushed Morsi more towards his inner circle of trust: the MB. This substantiated the other forces’ perception that Morsi mainly governed only for the sake of his ‘people’, the Muslim Brotherhood, irrespective of the goals of the revolution. Therefore, while all parties had the same interest in overcoming Mubarak’s deep state, they did not pursue a cooperative strategy.

Morsi’s November constitutional declaration,\(^4\) followed by Al-Ittihadiya clashes\(^5\) ushered in an irrevocable rift between the MB and the revolutionary youth movements. It was also an open invitation to the state’s elite to broaden its coalition. This is when the National Salvation Front was established, an alliance between liberals, Naserrites, leftists, and some remnants of the old regime. This time they were united against a common enemy: the MB. The coalition moved slowly but steadily to get rid of Morsi under the pretext of saving the state from the “ikhwanization project” (Massad, 2013). Together, they started knocking the doors of the military either directly by calling on the army publicly to intervene, or indirectly by increasing the level of violence in the street and intensifying the clashes with the police, on the one hand, and the members of the MB, on the other. The army apparently welcomed this invitation either because it was planning to re-seize power or because this was perceived as an opportunity to redeem much of its popularity and status that were relatively affected when the SCAF was in power. For the army, it was also an opportunity to overcome its Hobbesian dilemma by establishing the desired social and political order that the MB failed to establish. In this way, the alliance between the state coalition and most of the Tahrir negative coalition was established. It was still lacking a final touch.

The Tamarod (Rebel)\(^6\) youth movement, mobilizing the people through the media, and the support of the other revolutionary youth movements in the 30 June demonstrations were enough to add the needed revolutionary touch. On 3 July, Morsi was removed from power by a coalition led by General Abdel Fattha al-Sisi, the Minister of Defence at that time, supported by the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, the Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Head of the Supreme Court, a representative of the Salafist al-Nour party, the female liberal journalist Sekina Fouad, the liberal – and, for some, the iconic figure of the 25 January Revolution – Mohammed al-Baradei, and representatives of the youth movement Tamarod which had played a significant role in mobilizing Egyptians against the deposed president. This was visual evidence of the resilience of the ‘old regime’, and the breakdown of the revolutionary coalition that forced Mubarak to step down. Despite the frequent characterization of this revolutionary-coalition breakdown as polarization along the Islamic-secular division, a closer look suggests a more complicated pattern of alliance and re-alliance building. The July coalition included al-Azhar, the oldest Islamic institution in Egypt and the main representative of moderate Islam, along with the Salafists, representing the more conservative version of Islam. These two Islamic-oriented allies have agreed

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17. Most probably, this was the perception with regard to appointing an Islamist minister of cultural affairs. Intellectuals, artists and actors objected to this appointment and encamped in the minister’s office denying him access.


to overthrow an Islamic-oriented president. Interestingly, the secular liberals who have long called for separation between religion and politics, agreed to sit side by side with the two main religious institutions in Egypt to legitimize a political act. The Salafist al-Nour party threw in its bid where the balance of power lies. It also had the ambition of replacing the MB as the most influential opposition. Al-Azhar is itself an institution that has long been co-opted by the old regime and may also have felt threatened by a rising Islamist elite that could challenge its monopoly of the representation of moderate Islam. The Orthodox Church is an institution that shares many characteristics with the Mubarak regime and which also felt threatened by the increasingly sectarian discourse on the part of the new ruling elite. For their part, the revolutionary and secular elites agreed to stand side by side by the old regime (consciously or unconsciously) to get rid of the MB. The first was naïve in thinking of the situation as a second revolutionary wave that would deter the army from assuming power. The second was opportunistic in thinking of reaching power though bullets after failing to acquire it via ballots. The deep state has actually reasserted itself and protected its interests as was reflected in the 2014 Constitution. Rather than establishing fully-fledged state institutions, the Constitution reflected a system of personal fiefdoms.

As for Libya, the law on political isolation accelerated the rift between the moderates and hardliners. The pattern of coalition that each party forged contributed to its success or failure in achieving its political agenda. The hardliners forged a coalition based on animosity to Gaddafi’s elite. Among the same coalitions, different motives were employed. The two main Islamic currents in the GNC, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, despite their ideological differences and competition, both wanted to attain political dominance over the NFA-controlled government (Smits, 2013, p. 26). The JCP was also able to mobilize fellow revolutionary forces – most notably the federalists, local groups and Jihadist forces – to back the Islamists’ ambition to influence national politics.

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24. The old faces of the Mubarak regime, after being acquitted by the judiciary, have made a strong public comeback. Some of them were even planning to play a political role. The most flagrant example is Ahmed Ezz, the business tycoon of Gamal Mubarak’s cronynism. Ezz was an influential leader in the National Democratic Party and was famous for orchestrating the rigged results of the 2010 parliamentary elections.

25. Many of the youth symbols of the 25 January Revolution are now in jail. The most famous are Ahmed Maher, Alaa Abdel Fattah, and Mohamed Adel.
Despite Islamists’ criticism of federalists’ objectives, and the fact that both parties (Islamist and federalists) have distinctive constituencies, they shared the common interest of combating the vested interests of Gaddafi’s former elite and allies. The federalists had their historical grievances in terms of the marginalization and underdevelopment they suffered during the Gaddafi era (Smits, 2013, p. 27). The JCP also attracted many of the independent members within the GNC, who mainly represented their local and tribal interests and wanted to prove themselves in post-revolutionary Libya. Changing alliances on the part of independent members explains how the hard-line camp was able to change its fortune and became the dominant coalition in politics at the expense of the once-dominant NFA-led coalition (Smits, 2013, pp. 27-28).

The NFA and former Gaddafi allies perceived the law on political isolation as a step to exclude them from the emerging political scene. Simultaneously, former and current army officers perceived the increasing influence of the militias as a challenge resembling that of Gaddafi’s security brigades. They feared another marginalization in the new regime similar to the one they suffered under Gaddafi. They also despised the state’s favourable treatment of the revolutionary militias (Wehrey, 2014, p. 26). Moreover, worried about repeating the Egyptian scenario, the Islamist coalition ordered armed allies from the Libya Shield Force (most of its members come from Misrata) to Tripoli. As a result, Zintan perceived the rise of Misrata in the capital as a worrying threat. Therefore, it quickly started reviving old tribal alliances with powerful western tribes, several of which fought with Gaddafi during the revolution (Smits, 2013, p. 31). This perception strengthened the NFA-Zintan coalition.

After undermining the NFA, the federalists objected to the new political agenda of the leading coalition in the GNC, perceiving it as conducive to their marginalization. They resorted to controlling the oil refinery sites to exert pressure on the dominant coalition (Smits, 2013, pp. 32-33). Realizing that it has to forge new alliances to maintain its political existence, the NFA-Zintan coalition opened its door to the federalists to join them in a tactical alliance.

In this way, perception of eastern exclusivity (represented by the federalists), the desire for a stronger military (former and current military officers) and the determination in playing a political role in post-Gaddafi Libya (NFA-Zintan) were the basis of what came to be known as ‘Operation Dignity’ under the command of retired Brigadier General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar was one of the young officers who stood with Gaddafi to seize power from King Idris in 1969. He remained a close ally of Gaddafi until the humiliating Libyan defeat in Chad in 1987. After his defeat, he went into exile in the US and only returned to Libya when the revolution started in 2011.²⁶

Playing on the grievances of ex-Gaddafi military officers, particularly in the east, Haftar was able to integrate many of them into his coalition. A considerable number of those officers loathed many of the GNC’s policies and perceived them as a conspiracy against the army in favour of the Islamist armed groups. Haftar also managed to ally with powerful tribes in the east, such as the Ubaydat, the Awaqr, and the Baraghitha. As for the Western region, the General’s coalition included the Zintan-based armed groups such as the Qaqa, Madani, and Sawaiq Brigades (many of them are rumoured to include ex-soldiers from Gaddafi’s security units). Moreover, the commander of the military police, and tribal armed groups from Warshafana and the area outside of Tripoli also joined Haftar’s fight. Politically, Haftar’s move was welcomed by the NFA and other Libyan politicians, such as former Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, and the former National Council Chairman Mustafa Abd al-Jalil (Wehrey, 2014, p. 21).

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Meanwhile, the Islamists in the east perceived Haftar’s wide definition of terrorism as an existential threat, one that attempts to deny them any role in politics. This urged them to join forces in what came to be known as the Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council (Wehrey, 2014, p. 22). This coalition was the nucleus of what is now known as Libya Dawn, which can be described as Islamist, Misratan, anti-Zintan, and anti-federalist (Wehrey, 2014, p. 13). Libya Dawn comprises the following groups: the Chamber of Command of Libya Revolutions, the Libya Shield Forces, Misrata Brigades, some tribes in western Libya, and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council.

In these two umbrella coalitions, the armed groups and militia had fought side by side in the revolution to overthrow Gaddafi. Now they are fighting each other and they sometimes even find it imperative to fight in the same camp with the pro-Gaddafi entourage. Expectedly, each of the two coalitions currently promotes a different narrative. The Libya Dawn coalition claims that they are fighting a counterrevolution led by Gaddafi’s elite and cronies. Meanwhile, the partners in Operation Dignity claim that they are fighting against an Islamist/terrorist takeover. The division results in a failed state with two parliaments (one in Tripoli and the other based in Tobruk) and two rival claims to governance, each backed by a different constellation of regional powers.

In both the Libyan and Egyptian transitions, the interaction between the State’s and Dissidents’ Dilemmas resulted in a zero-sum game and a complicated Hobbesian dilemma. In Egypt, the status of the military and its 3 July Alliance facilitated its crushing of Islamists and the installation of a more authoritarian regime – one that controls power and eliminates dissent – to put an end to this Hobbesian state of affairs. The balance of weakness among the Libyan parties led to the state of ‘war of all against all’ where the prospect for establishing any kind of political regime is dim.

**EGYPTIAN AND LIBYAN TRANSITIONS AND THE PATTERN OF EXTERNAL ALLIANCES**

In general, the international and regional contexts were not encouraging to the revolution, let alone a real political transformation, in both cases. In Egypt, this attitude was obvious from the comments of Western and Arab countries (apart from Qatar) during the early days of the revolution. These comments ranged from supporting the then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (the case with some Arab countries) or expressing the need to starting a process of democratic transition without directly calling on Mubarak to step down. The US and EU adopted the latter position. They were balancing between supporting democracy and freedom on the one hand, and maintaining stability on the other.

After Mubarak stepped down, financial assistance was not quickly offered to Egypt despite the deter-
riorating state of the economy. It was particularly noticeable how the Gulf State’s assistance was delayed. When Mohammed Morsi came to power, the Gulf States’ anxiety over the political rise of the MB was apparent (especially on the part of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait). This unwelcoming attitude manifested itself in, for example, hosting the symbols of the Mubarak regime in the UAE like Omar Suliman (the former director of the Egyptian General Intelligence and the vice-president, whom Mubarak appointed during the revolution) and Ahmed Shafiq (Mubarak’s last prime minister and the presidential candidate against Morsi). The rumours had it that both the KSA and UAE were financing the counter-revolution. For its part, Qatar supported the rise of Islamists in the Arab Spring states. Building bridges with these political groups, which were believed to have the most fortune in ascending to power, was perceived as an opportunity for Qatar to have regional advantage and expand its sphere of influence. Islamists needed the cash flow and the financial support of a rich ally.

The Gulf States’ position was crystal clear after 3 July coup. There was some news on Saudi-Emirate funding of the opposition and the protest movement that destabilized the country during Morsi’s year in power (Chumley, 2013). Moreover, after the 3 July coup, these countries embarked on pumping cash and aid into the Egyptian economy to support the new/old regime.

As for Libya, the pattern of regional alliances of the different political actors resulted in a lack of confidence among the different groups of the negative coalition. The NFA and its allies were closer to the UAE while the MB and its allies were closer to Qatar. Both parties were reported to receive military and financial aid from their regional sponsors. However, the near balance of power between the two main political camps opened paths for some kind of political arrangements.

However, the internal developments in Egypt after 30 June 2013 had negatively affected the political process in Libya, especially with regard to weighing the military solution. For example, when Ali Zeidan, the former NFA-backed prime minister, visited Egypt after the coup, the JCP members in the government were upset and threatened to withdraw from it (Ali, 2013). It is noticeable here how after the visit Zeidan criticized the MB and its political arm for the first time. Some analysts pointed out that the NFA had actually changed its positions since then and increasingly drifted away from the political compromise approach that it used to cherish (The Tripoli Post, 2013). According to this view, the NFA was under increasing external pressure from its allies who insisted on excluding Islamists from the Arab political scene after the revolutions. The NFA’s early call to terminate the GNC on 7 February 2014 on the pretext that it exceeded its mandate period represented one of these manifestations.

In both transitions, the pattern of external alliances, particularly on the regional level obstructed the political process and consolidated the zero-sum game mentality.

In addition, since launching his operation, Haftar was drawing similarities between events in Egypt and Libya. He was trying to portray himself as Libya’s al-Sisi-style strongman who would eliminate the threat of Islamists and save the country from chaos and preserve its identity (Smits, 2013, p. 23). Furthermore, both the UAE and Egypt were reported to perform air strikes against Libya’s Islamist militias (Goodenough, 2014). Recently, Egypt launched air strikes against particular locations in Libya. The Egyptian narrative frames this action as retaliation for the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians at the hands of the ISIS branch in Libya. However, many analysts see these strikes as an attempt to support Haftar’s coalition after his failure to prevail militarily.
In both transitions, the pattern of external alliances, particularly on the regional level, played an important role by affecting the strategies and choices made by the main political actors. It actually obstructed the political process and consolidated the zero-sum game mentality.

CONCLUSION

The Egyptian and Libyan cases show how two different modes of transitions led to almost the same dilemmas, albeit with different intensity. Social division, polarization and the security deficit plague the two experiences.

It is interesting how each country, while observing the other’s trajectory, fail to learn the lessons. Libyans should have realized that at times of transition it is inconceivable to restart the whole political process and expect the desired outcomes. Moreover, delegitimizing and trying to eradicate political opponents cannot end well, particularly when those opponents represent substantial constituencies. As for Egypt, weakening the civil society, announcing the death of politics, demonizing a considerable constituency of the population and playing the different political actors against each other, all lead to a more violent path of resistance. This is what is really going to make Egypt look more like Libya.

The Libyan and Egyptian transitions show how the choices of the main actors from both the regime and the opposition largely determine the chances of success and failure. There is a relation between divided elites, political instability and floundering democratic transition. Political instability takes different forms: political violence, demonstrations, the frequent change of governments and finally a coup d’état. A successful transition requires a strong political will, especially among the opposition, coupled with popular support and backing from civil society.

In this regard, it is not important for transitional steps to be very quick but they have to be continuous in order to block the chances for anti-reform forces to restore their power and reorganize themselves. The existence of political will does not mean the need for a comprehensive consensus among the opposition. What is necessary is agreeing on the minimum demands related to the transition, and most importantly agreeing on the mechanism to resolve their differences. The skilful political engineering changes the formula of political contestation into a non-zero-sum game.
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