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Revolutionary Action in the Arab Spring: A Typological Theory on Popular Revolution

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Revolutionary Action in the Arab Spring: A Typological Theory on Popular Revolution

by

Majed M. Kassem

A Dissertation Presented to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the 2010-2012 Arab Spring. It addresses two research questions: 1) what are the Arab Spring events instances of, and 2) what gave rise to the variation across the Arab Spring outcomes? The ultimate objective of this research is to go beyond theorizing the Arab Spring to advance a typological theory on popular revolution. To that end, the study reviews several bodies of literature in the social sciences, and employs a structured, focused comparison approach to analyze variance across six Arab Spring cases: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. As a result, four theoretical types of revolutionary action have been identified: elite-imposed popular evolution (EIPR), foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR), foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR), and elite-blocked abortive revolution (EBAR). In addition, the research found EIPR to have been the case in Tunisia and Egypt, FIPR in Libya and Yemen, and FBAR in Syria and Bahrain; EBAR was an empty cell in the Arab Spring. Furthermore, the study proposes that cases of EIPR are likely to culminate in a quasi-coup by autonomous elites; FIPR in a foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) by international intervention; FBAR in a foreign-imposed regime maintenance (FIRM) by foreign patrons; and EBAR in an elite-imposed regime maintenance (EIRM) by subservient elites. The contingent generalizations offered by this theory should help scholars and policy makers approximate the trajectory of future revolutionary events by tracing them to the above theoretical types. This should help them improve their overall response to recent and ongoing revolutionary events, especially in the area of conflict resolution.
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Project

In December 2010, the dramatic death of a Tunisian fruit vendor gave ignition to an irrepresible domestic upheaval in Tunisia. Within a month the turmoil mutated into a national uprising and forced the departure of President Zen El Abedin Ben Ali. Moreover, the spectacular breakdown of Ben Ali’s 23-year authoritarian rule sent shockwaves across the Middle East and North Africa. Subsequently, a wave of Tunisian-style popular mobilizations swept through the Arab World.

Spearheaded by youth and facilitated by modern technology, Arab revolutionary movements proliferated, occupying public spaces, and demanding an immediate break with the past. “The people want to topple the regime,” protesters dared to chant; to the shock of Arab security forces, whose initial brutality got quickly checked by the newly-found power of social media. In the following weeks and months, three long-standing Arab dictatorships were brought down in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, respectively.

Other, close-by Arab regimes, namely in Syria and Bahrain, fought vehemently to defy deposition. At the time of writing, the above regimes continue to fight for their survival, albeit with varying degrees of ruthlessness. Furthermore, numerous regimes in the vast Arab World, from Morocco on the Atlantic Ocean to Oman on the Arabian Sea, had to face and put down significant anti-government protests. However, those events have essentially failed to produce revolutionary situations.

Such was the drama in the Arab World between December of 2010 and February of 2012; one that was famously dubbed by Western media as an Arab Spring - an allusion to the Prague Spring of 1968, and the 1848 Spring of Nations. Though manifestly catchy, the term Arab Spring has shown early signs of being problematic, not only due to
semantic deficiencies. For that the supposed “spring” has been one of rather disparate temperatures, and extremely various harvests.

**The Research Problem**

Some scholars call them revolutions. Others prefer to employ the term uprisings. Others still use various generic terms, often interchangeably, to refer to the Arab revolutionary events. Indeed, what had appeared at the beginning of 2011 as a homogenous set of events eventually produced various processes, and culminated in diverse ways and outcomes. For instance, the popular mobilizations of Tunisia and Egypt have remained brief, relatively non-violent, and largely free from international interference. Likewise, they have both culminated in the abrupt abdication of Ben Ali and Mubarak respectively.

On the other hand, the Libyan popular mobilization has rapidly transformed into an armed insurrection against the Gaddafi regime. Moreover, with the help of a multi-state coalition and NATO airstrikes, the insurrection has culminated in the overthrowing, and killing, of the Libyan leader. Thus, Libya’s prolonged and violent struggle has significantly differed from the brief and relatively peaceful events in Tunisia and Egypt. Also, unlike those events, the Libyan instance has been characterized by the presence of a substantial international intervention.

Furthermore, the complexity of the Libyan case was extended to Yemen, whose autocrat Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced into signing an internationally brokered power-transfer deal. Before that, he had narrowly escaped death by a bomb planted in his palace, which injured him severely, and killed a number of his aides. Yet the prolonged struggle in Yemen remained largely peaceful, though plagued with intermittent episodes of
violence, and incessant international interferences. Still, the Yemeni instance is not the most complex among the Arab Spring cases.

Before it took its current civil war form, nearly every word in the dictionary of upheavals had been used to describe the Syrian revolutionary struggle. Indeed, the rapid transformation of its processes had rendered the Syrian instance elusive to classification. Further, though significantly less violent, the revolutionary episode in Bahrain resembles the Syrian case in many ways, not least in being a prolonged struggle, characterized by heavy international interference. Also, like the Syrian instance, it has not culminated in the deposition of power holders.

In light of all those variations in processes as well as in outcomes, it becomes clear that the term Arab Spring hardly encapsulates those events. Why, then, does the term continue to persist in the media as well as in the public discourse? Moreover, why has it gone unchallenged by social scientists and policy makers despite its apparent deficiencies? In my opinion, the term Arab Spring continues to persist because it serves a certain function; a double function, to be more accurate.

First, it masks a problem of conceptual deficit in the field of revolution study. For that the field is yet to reach consensus on what is, and what is not, a revolution; what is, and what is not, an uprising, an insurrection, a rebellion, and so on. Moreover, the task of issuing a revolutionary verdict seems to be entirely delegated to historians, whose rulings often take many years, even decades, to arrive. This problem continues to cause an unmistakable designation dilemma vis-à-vis recent revolutionary events.

Secondly, the term Arab Spring also serves another function, which is to conceal a problem of theoretical insufficiency. It gives the false impression that the events of the
Arab World can only be understood in terms of a transition from one condition to another; from a harsh winter to a breezy spring. Such mechanistic explanations are extremely condition-centric, and often fail to account for variance across cases, let alone empty cells. They expose the limitations of the available theoretical avenues, and largely explain why we are yet to see a consistent theory on the Arab Spring that holds across the full range of its cases.

The above-mentioned problems, and their implications, are the subject of the following discussion.

**What are the Arab Spring Events Instances of?**

As I have already noted, the term Arab Spring hardly captures the essence of the Arab revolutionary events. Yet it continues to be used, alongside other generic terms such as uprisings, protests, insurrections, and rebellions, to describe what some scholars deem revolutions, and others deem otherwise. In fact, this is the main reason why I have resisted thus far to use the word revolution in reference to any of those events, electing to not instigate a controversy from the outset.

Clearly, the problem here is not with the term Arab Spring *per se*, despite its obvious deficiencies. Rather, it is with what the term masks; namely, our inability to give those various events appropriate designations. For instance, were those events instances of revolution, or something else less worthy of the name? Additionally, can a revolution also be an uprising, a revolt, an insurrection, or a rebellion? Can it be all those instances at the same time? These seemingly simple questions remain largely unanswered, as we shall see next.
**Arab Spring… revolutions?** Let us first ask: were the events of the Arab Spring instances of revolution? The literature on the subject provides disparate, and often confusing, answers to this basic question. Almost every term in the book of domestic upheavals has been used to refer to those events: from demonstrations, protests, and uprisings, to rebellions, insurrections, and revolutions. In fact, some scholars even call those events unfinished revolutions, which complicates any effort to systematically investigate the Arab Spring cases as a single universe.

However, it must be noted that most of the literature on the Arab Spring has come from multiple fields in the social sciences, some of which have little to do with the methodical study of revolution. Therefore, it is perhaps judicious to focus our preliminary search for an answer to the revolution question on the scholarly work of revolution specialists. Here also, discrepancy is unmistakable among revolution scholars in their initial assessment of the Arab Spring events.

For instance, while Goldstone (2011a, 2011b) was categorical from the outset in deeming the Arab Spring events as revolutions, Goodwin (2011) has taken a more cautious approach. He uses the generic term uprising alongside the word revolution, without attaching the latter term to any of the Arab Spring events. Zimmerman (2015) took a similar approach, although he used the word rebellion instead of uprising. Foran (2012) had also managed to defer his judgment using a similar approach, before eventually terming the cases of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya as “political revolutions” (Foran, 2014, p. 18).

To think that this discrepancy is related to the time of publication, or primarily rooted in the variation across the Arab Spring cases, is not entirely accurate. In fact,
revolution scholars continue to disagree on many aspects with regard to what constitutes a revolution. This is perhaps rooted in the fact that the conceptual and empirical ranges of revolution have hardly been delineated – a peculiarity in the study of a phenomenon that is largely defined in terms of outcomes.

**What is revolution?** In order for us to be able to speak of Arab Spring revolutions, we must first get an idea about the measures by which revolution scholars qualify and/or disqualify cases. It is rather a simple matter of verifying observable effects on the dependent variable as per the widely accepted definition(s) of the phenomenon. Here is precisely where we encounter the first obstacle: there hardly is a widely accepted definition for revolution. This perhaps is rooted in the peculiar way in which the study of revolution has evolved.

For that the first serious attempt to define revolution came not from the early students of revolution, but from the second wave of revolution scholars (Goldstone, 1980). Before that, most of the systematic inquiries into revolution had been largely a work of history geared towards producing a social-scientific analysis; not the other way (as has later become the case in many comparative studies of revolution). To those early scholars, revolution was self-evident – a great transformational event like nothing on earth, to paraphrase Brinton (1938/1965).

Although those early studies have given us countless insights as to how revolutions and revolutionaries evolve, their contributions in terms of providing conceptual clarifications remained largely limited (Foran, 1993). However, from their elaborate descriptions, later scholars managed to identify a number of essential components, with which the construction of various definitions of revolution became
rather possible. Above all, most of those definitions emphasize the coincidences of violence, structural transformation in state and/or society, and the alteration of dominant myths and values.

Next, I shall survey a number of prominent definitions that have transformed, and in some cases revolutionized, the study of revolution. Specifically, I shall cite the definitions of Huntington (1968), Skocpol (1979), Goodwin (2001), and Goldstone (2001). This exercise should help us uncover the reasons behind the discrepancy among scholars in their initial assessments of the Arab Spring. Also, it should allow us to identify the most suitable definition, if any, for our universe of Arab Spring cases.

**Samuel Huntington’s definition of revolution.** In the course of presenting his *political institutionalization* theory, Huntington (1968) advanced a definition for revolution, in which it is “a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies” (p. 264). This definition was hardly the first attempt to demarcate revolution, but it was lauded for its remarkable ability to capture the essence of a small universe of cases, known as the *Great Revolutions* (Pettee, 1938/1971).

However, Huntington’s definition had been too restrictive that it excluded many historical events deemed by historians and social scientists alike, as true revolutions. The English Revolution is a case in point, where Huntington believed that the transformational process had not gone far enough for the English instance to be considered a revolution. Yet, due to the lack of another term, Huntington continued to
refer to the English instance as revolution, even after his definition had practically disqualified it.

Moreover, instead of opting for the obvious, which is to propose *types* of political and social revolution, Huntington (1968) elaborated on two other types: *Western* and *Eastern revolutions*. Although his typology came rich with accurate observations, there was little enthusiasm among social scientists for such classification. Therefore, students of revolution never embraced Huntington’s typologies. Nevertheless, his definition has, in effect, provided a good foundation for later definitions and further classification of the phenomenon.

**Theda Skocpol’s definition of social revolution.** In *States and Social Revolution*, Theda Skocpol, unlike Huntington, opted for the obvious. She advanced a definition for *social revolution* as “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures; accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below” (Skocpol, 1979, p. 4). Skocpol further clarified, “the English Revolution was a successful political revolution, whereas the German Revolution [of 1848] was a failed social revolution” (p. 140). Consequently, Skocpol has also effectuated another type, namely political revolution.

**Jeff Goodwin’s definition of political revolution.** In *No Other Way Out*, Jeff Goodwin (2001) advanced a definition for *political revolution* as “any and all instances in which a state or political regime is overthrown and thereby transformed by a popular movement in an irregular, extraconstitutional, and/or violent fashion” (p. 9). This definition has been constructed to fit a unique universe, namely revolution in peripheral societies. No
wonder, then, it seems more amenable than most definitions to fit a study about the Arab Spring. But, that is not the only reason for its appeal.

By specifying, rather than assuming, that regime change signals the beginning of state transformation, Goodwin has made a clever move down the ladder of abstraction. Thereby, he was able to cover over a dozen cases of revolution in various geographical regions with disparate transformational outcomes. Indeed, the more revolutions we study, the better our understanding becomes of this rare phenomenon. As we shall see next, a move in the opposite direction on the ladder of abstraction could also produce similar effects.

**Jack Goldstone’s definition of revolution.** Goldstone (2001) defines revolution as “an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities” (p. 142). Clearly, this definition is the least restrictive among all the above-cited definitions. Consequently, it enables researchers to study instances of failed revolutions, which may reveal, as noted by Lipsky (1976), why similar conditions produce revolution in some societies and not in others.

**Arab Spring… revolutions?** After surveying some of the prevailing definitions in the field of revolution study, we are now better positioned to understand why Goldstone has been able to speak of Arab Spring revolutions. Moreover, we also have a better understanding as to why Goodwin has been cautious, Zimmermann continues to hedge, and Foran was able to defer his revolutionary verdict for three years. Clearly, there are several problems behind this unmistakable discrepancy.
First, for some reason, scholars seem to insist that revolution is an outcome, “a rare outcome” as Zimmermann (2015, p. 180) reminds us. Strangely, there has hardly been a consistent effort to operationalize that outcome, which in this instance is revolutionary transformation. Accordingly, it appears that all the Arab Spring cases may or may not be instances of revolution; it all seems to rest, rather critically, on the subjective interpretation of the inquirer.

Moreover, as noted by Stone (1966), there is a wide range of cases where regime change is neither a mere substitution of personalities nor a prelude to a fundamental structural transformation. This can cause a great deal of confusion among scholars. Consider, for instance, the Tunisian case in the Arab Spring, where the revolutionary harvest had been somehow too modest for the instance to be called a political revolution, yet too significant to be dismissed as a non-revolution. What are we then to call this historical episode?

There is also the issue of post-revolutionary setbacks, such as counterrevolutions and civil wars, to consider. For example, does the 2013 counterrevolution in Egypt nullify the outcomes of the 2011 uprising? Moreover, does the 2014 Libyan civil war invalidate the 2011 deposition of Gaddafi? To call either of those events a political revolution is clearly an overstatement; yet, to dismiss them as non-revolutions carries the risk of mischaracterizing a historical episode, let alone offending those who risked their lives to participate in those momentous events.

For such reasons, revolutionary events are usually kept in limbo for many years, often decades, pending a ‘yea or nay’ verdict from historians. Until that happens, social scientists are often discouraged from examining those “moving targets”. At first glance
this cautious approach appears to be judicious. However, upon close examination of its implications, it becomes clear that this practice has several disadvantages, the most significant of which is the research embargo on recent revolutionary events. This embargo affects the study of revolution in many ways.

First, the more we procrastinate in issuing a revolutionary verdict, the more lingers the confusion about the topic in both the public discourse as well as in the early academic literature on the topic. This problem ultimately affects the quality and efficacy of primary and secondary sources, which could otherwise enrich academic research. Secondly, due to the research embargo on “moving targets”, scholars often miss the opportunity to extract the kind of knowledge that allows them to make timely contributions to policy analysis, and offer relevant policy recommendations.

In my opinion, those problems could be mitigated, if not completely resolved, if we are to readjust our view of revolution. That is, instead of overemphasizing the outcome aspect in the conception of revolution, perhaps we need to recognize the phenomenon as both a process and an end result. To that end, the conceptual and empirical ranges of revolution need to be delineated and outlined in a model that anatomizes the phenomenon, and facilitates its study.

**Uprisings, revolts, insurrections, and rebellions… revolutions?** In addition to the problem of conceptual incongruity, and perhaps in part because of it, the typologies of revolution have largely remained underdeveloped. Noticeably, events such as the Arab Spring often expose this problem, as we tend to see generic terms being used interchangeably to describe what is essentially the same event. For example, scholars
frequently refer to the Arab Spring events, individually and/or collectively, as uprisings, revolts, insurrections, rebellions, and, sometimes, as revolutions.

The question then becomes: can a revolution also be an uprising, a revolt, an insurrection, or a rebellion? Else, can it be all those terms, all those events at the same time? In the following subsections, we shall seek answers to those questions by looking at how social scientists have attempted to classify revolution. For that revolution to some scholars is a unique class of events in its own right; to others a type; and to others still a sub-type.

**Revolution as a unique class of events.** Like many scholars before him, Samuel Huntington viewed revolution as a unique class of events. He believes that revolution is a peculiarity of modern times, and applies a taxonomical approach to classify this phenomenon. Revolution, Huntington (1968) asserts, are rare events, and profoundly different from other forms of domestic upheavals:

Revolution are thus to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups, and wars of independence. A coup d’état in itself changes only leadership and perhaps policies; and rebellion or insurrection may change policies, leadership, and political institutions, but not social structure and values… what is here called simply ‘revolution’ is what others have called great revolutions, grand revolutions, or social revolutions. (p. 265)

Unlike Huntington, Theda Skocpol does not believe that all revolutions are necessarily *social* revolutions. Yet, like Huntington, she employs an empirical approach to assess and classify social revolutions, by stipulating “the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social
transformation” (Skocpol, 1979, p. 4). Thus, it is improbable to speak of an uprising and
social revolution in the Skocpolian sense; just like it is unthinkable to speak of an
insurrection and a revolution in the Huntingtonian sense.

**Revolution as a type.** In his view of revolution, Huntington (1968) might have
dismitted instances like the American Revolution and the Algerian Revolution as wars of
independence, and the Turkish Revolution as a coup d’état. Yet, people in those countries
will still call those events revolutions. Moreover, scholars, often with a good reason,
include those events in their universe of revolutionary cases, like Moore (1966) did with
the American Revolution, Wolf (1973) with the Algerian Revolution, and Goldstone
(1991) with the Turkish Revolution.

Further, in light of the ever-growing autonomy (and hegemony) of the modern
state, cross-class coalitions – not class struggle – seems to be the recurrent theme in
recent revolutionary episodes, including the Iranian (social) Revolution of 1979 (Parsa,
2000; Goldstone, 2001). Additionally, when it comes to revolutionary outcomes, there is
a wide range of success and failure to be accounted for. For those reasons, student of
modern revolutions started to readjust their view of the phenomenon to encompass the
enormous variety of revolutionary processes and outcomes (Goldstone, 2003).

Those scholars seem to have found in Harry Eckstein’s typology of *internal war* a
fitting answer to the designation dilemma that tend to result from that variety. According
to Eckstein, revolution is a *type* of internal war, along with other types such as “civil war,
revolt, rebellion, uprising, guerrilla warfare, mutiny, jacquerie, coup d’état, terrorism,
[and] insurrection” (Eckstein, 1965, p. 133). The distinction between those types was
later made possible by Rummel (1966) who proposed two dimensions, *revolutionary* and *subversive*, to distinguish between instances of internal war.

**Revolution as a sub-type.** In presenting his *political violence* theory, Gurr (1970) built on the work of Eckstein (1965), and Rummel (1966), to advance a typology of his own. He used five variables, namely violence, organization, popular participation, and Rummel’s revolutionary and subversion dimensions, to distinguish between three types of political violence: *turmoil, conspiracy, and internal war*. For Gurr, revolution was a sub-type of political violence, as he considered it to be a form of internal war.

Moreover, Gurr (1970, p. 11) was able to classify as *turmoil* a number of localized upheavals that contain a subversion rather than a revolutionary dimension, such as strikes, rebellions, and riots. Further, coups, mutinies, and other instances of organized violence with limited popular participation were classified as *conspiracy*. Additionally, revolution was grouped with guerilla wars, civil wars, and other instances of *internal war* – an organized and highly violent mass popular mobilization, designed to change the political order.

Gurr’s typology is far from complete, and his theory is not without limitations (Aya, 1979). However, although Gurr’s empirical work is widely cited and recognized by scholars of revolution and social movements, his fine work in terms of typology development seems to be rather underappreciated. For that scholars and policy makers continue the practice of interchangeable use of various generic terms with little regard to Gurr’s typology, or to the ensuing implications as far as policy making is concerned.

**Uprisings, revolts, insurrections, and rebellions… revolutions?** It must go without saying that every action draws a different set of implications, and thus instigates a
distinctive policy response and/or conflict resolution strategy. That is why, in the process of formulating a response to an emerging situation, policy makers tend to ask what is the ongoing event an instance of? (George & Bennet, 2005). Then, if uprising is not synonymous with insurrection, and the latter is not with rebellion, then why do we use those terms interchangeably? Perhaps an example would clarify the risks associated with this practice.

In July 2016, the Turkish military attempted to overthrow the democratically elected government in Ankara. Major media outlets reported the event as both a coup d’état and a military uprising (“Oil rises after apparent military uprising in Turkey,” 2011). Although the term uprising, like other typology of internal war has never been well-defined, we do at least know that, unlike coups, uprisings belong to the domain of mass popular mobilization (Gurr, 1970). Astonishingly, the term “uprising” was also used in a statement by no less than the US. Department of State (State Dept, 2016).

To further highlight the problem, let us now contrast the implications of each of those instances to the U.S. Government. In the case of an uprising, the U.S. administration could initially refrain from taking sides, as long as violence is not excessively used by or against the government of its NATO ally. Simply, the White House and the State Department could issue ambivalent calls for restraint while waiting for things to unfold. Moreover, the Pentagon would be under no obligation, moral or legal, to halt its critical anti-terrorism operations from the İncirlik air base in Turkey.

On the other hand, in the case of a coup d’état, the U.S. government cannot possibly remain neutral as the Turkish military topples a democratically elected government. Moreover, the U.S. military must technically pack and leave Turkey; and the
Pentagon would be very concerned as to whether the coup plotters had used American-made weaponry in operations that resulted in loss of human lives. Indeed, the Egyptian instance of 2013, where a military coup was being portrayed by its plotters as an uprising, is a case in point on the moral and legal implications of condoning a coup d’état.

One might think that the implications become less consequential as we move away from the domain of limited popular participation – such as coups and mutinies – to the domain of mass mobilization; but that is hardly the case. For instance, it is plausible to suggest that foreign governments tend to develop varying responses to events of popular mobilization based on many factors, not least among which is the level of violence employed by or against the political order. Moreover, localized mobilizations, regardless of the size of popular participation, must also be distinguished from nationwide phenomena.

Not only do we need to differentiate between what is and what is not revolutionary, but also between various instances of revolutionary action. However, is it not true, as Eckstein (1965) notes, that those instances tend to coincide during the course of a revolutionary event? The answer here is yes. Then, is it justifiable, as he suggests, to use the “generic concepts alongside, or even in place of, the more specific terms” (p. 133)? In my opinion, it is not; especially when it comes to major stakeholders.

Not only do major stakeholders (e.g. national governments, revolutionaries, IGOs, NGOs, investors, etc.) need to know what specific instance is largely in play, but also its predisposition to transformation. Only then can a proper response be formulated to emerging and ongoing situations. Moreover, conflict resolution strategies tend to vary significantly based on many factors, such as the type of conflict and the stage during
which an intervention is attempted. That is, an uprising, for instance, instigates a different conflict resolution response to an insurrection, not to mention civil wars.

Then, it is safe to suggest that the persistence of the second problem – the interchangeable use of generic terms – has several implications on policy making. It may lead policy makers to misdiagnose those events and fail to respond to them adequately. Moreover, it may affect the efficacy of their conflict resolution strategies. Therefore, to avoid such pitfalls, we need to further develop the typologies of revolution. Fortunately, this work will also facilitate the development of a conceptual framework for the study of revolution.

**What Gave Rise to the Variation Across the Arab Spring Outcomes?**

So far, I have discussed two facets of a designation problem, whose remedy does not require as much research as it demands a careful work on conceptual clarifications. The second problem, however, comprises the research part in this study. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Arab Spring brought into question a number of theories and concepts that, for many years, had dominated several fields and sub-fields in the social sciences.

Specifically, the sudden arrival of the Arab Spring has brought scrutiny to dominant theories of revolution. Moreover, the efficacy and profile of the Arab revolutionary movements have led some scholars to question the relevance of social movement theory in explaining collective action in the 21st century. Furthermore, the spectacular breakdown of Arab autocracies brought into question a number of concepts that had dominated Middle East studies for the past two to three decades.
Indeed, during the Arab Spring, social scientists have evidently been caught in the headlights. Their knowledge seemed to overemphasize pre-revolutionary conditions, and their analytic frameworks failed to provide meaningful and/or timely contributions to policy analysis. However, as we shall also see in the next chapter, those calls for theory reconsideration appear to be largely premature. For that our current state of knowledge on revolutions, social movements, and the Middle East are not as obsolete as some scholars have been trying to portray.

In fact, we do know a great deal about the above subjects. Yet our knowledge seems to lack the necessary synthesis and consolidation for it to be relevant to policy making. This, in my opinion, reflects a problem of theoretical insufficiency. Simply put, the available theories and analytic frameworks are excessively condition-centric, and offer too little in terms of explaining revolutionary processes and outcomes. Moreover, the inability of social scientists to approximate the trajectory of such events has rather exposed the limits of their offerings in terms of policy recommendations.

Thus, we must pause to ask: how satisfied should we be with a body of knowledge whose utility is largely limited to the provision of post hoc analyses. Unfortunately, most studies of revolutionary episodes seem to overemphasize the question of historical pathways. Such sociological orientation often produces research designs that overstress pre-revolutionary conditions, and pay little attention to the causal relations and mechanisms that give rise to variance across cases. This study aims to avoid that pitfall.

By exclusively focusing on the Arab Spring’s processes and outcomes, this research aims to rectify the problem of theoretical insufficiency. Ultimately, this study
aims to identify the configurations of factors that gave rise to success and failure of revolutionary action. As a result, not only will we be able to explain the variance across the Arab Spring cases, but also approximate the trajectory of similar events in the future. In that, this study deviates from a long tradition in revolution study of employing a comparative historical analysis (CHA) methodology.

To be sure, this is not to say that the previous CHA studies have improved nothing but our ability to explain revolutions in hindsight. On the contrary, the impressive amount of knowledge that revolution study has managed to accumulate over the past decades is a testament to the strength of CHA. However, those studies have also exposed the limits of social inquiry, especially in relation to the development of reliable predictive models. At this point, we all know that the Arab Spring had been completely missed by social scientists.

What should concern us about the Arab Spring need not be why we have missed the Arab Spring, as revolutions will continue to “happen” (Eckstein, 1965), “come” (Skocpol, 1979), and “surprise” (Kuran, 1995). Rather, what should distress us is the fact that our state of knowledge appeared extremely limited as those events were transpiring, transforming, and climaxing in ways that surprised us. The point here is: while forecasting revolutions has evidently been an elusive enterprise, the prediction of their behavior may well be a more sensible undertaking.

That is where our focus ought to be, if we are to help prevent the next humanitarian disaster. Today, the Arab world is home to three active civil wars, responsible for the loss of hundreds of thousands of human lives, and some of the most pressing threats to global security, namely the refugee crisis and global terrorism. Those
threats have been fueling populist politics around the world, especially in Europe and the United States.

In Europe, the historic Brexit vote has reflected a surge in nationalism, which may well lead to the disintegration of the European Union. In the United States, the dramatic rise of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders signaled the birth of two radical movements to which the Tea Party had been but a precursor. Whether the Arab Spring has been responsible for all of those developments is arguable; whether it has contributed to them at all is beyond reasonable doubt.

What gave rise to the Arab Spring is perhaps what should have given rise to the much-anticipated revolutions in Africa that never happened. That is not to suggest that no revolution is in the African horizon. It only means that when revolutions erupt, they do so regardless of think-tanks’ indexes, academicians’ predictive models, and intelligence agencies’ forecasts. In a social world, where human reflexivity is constantly in action, most efforts to develop general laws vis-à-vis large-scale social phenomena seem to be doomed to failure.

Hence, this study aims at the development of a typological theory, rather than attempting to advance a general theory on revolution.

**Significance of Study**

This dissertation is expected to make three significant contributions to the study of revolution and the practice of conflict resolution. First, it will fill a gap in the Arab Spring literature by offering a consistent theory on the Arab Spring; one that holds across the full range of its cases. Not only will this theory improve our understanding of what has happened in the Arab World between 2011-2012, but also about what could happen
in the future, anywhere in the world. In that, it lays the foundation for a theory on popular revolution.

Secondly, this research is also expected to advance the study of revolution by offering a number of conceptual clarifications that bring a much-needed structure and clarity to the methodical study of revolution. The scope of those clarifications includes providing the field with 1) a conceptual framework for the study of revolution, 2) new typologies of revolution, 3) a new type – popular revolution. In their totality, those clarifications will enable scholars to move beyond their conceptual differences to advance the study of revolution.

In addition, theorizing the new type of popular revolution should ultimately improve the practice of conflict resolution. For that when practitioners are provided with theoretical insights that allow them to approximate the trajectory of revolutionary crises, they become better prepared to respond to those crises, both on the diplomatic and humanitarian levels. Ultimately, the aim is to help policy makers improve the cohesiveness of their diplomatic response to future revolutionary events, and optimize their conflict resolution strategies.

The Task Ahead

Chapter 2 will survey the Arab Spring literature to assess the available scholarly explanations concerning the Arab revolutionary events. Chapter 3 will prepare the ground for the research phase by a) providing conceptual clarifications, and b) laying out the research strategy. Also, this chapter will advance a typological theory on the Arab Spring. Chapters 4-6 will offer analytic explanations of each case and its themes. Finally, chapter
7 will provides a cross case analysis, and conclude the study with the advancement of a typological theory on popular revolution.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is an unmistakable sense of indictment in much of the scholarly literature on the Arab Spring. Indeed, the sudden arrival of those events has led some scholars to question the current state of knowledge in the field of revolution study. Moreover, the tools, profile, and efficacy of the Arab revolutionary movements has brought into question a number of fundamental premises in social movement theory. Further, region experts found themselves on the defensive as observers started to cast doubt on a number of long-standing concepts in Middle East studies.

Ironically, the rift among scholars about the Arab Spring somehow resembles the division among intellectuals which, according to revolution scholars, signifies the coming of a revolution. The question then becomes: will the Arab Spring revolutionize the study of revolution? Additionally, will it cause a reconsideration of theories of social movement? Further, will it effectuate the reconsideration of dominant concepts and notions in Middle East Studies, namely authoritarian resilience and cultural exceptionalism? Luckily, the answer to those questions will reveal itself as we assess the Arab Spring literature.

This chapter focuses on the evaluation of scholarly explanations of the Arab Spring. I shall begin each section by citing the main question/criticism to the above academic fields. Afterwards, I will discuss the premises, and promises, of each line of theories, before exploring their proponents’ response to the Arab Spring. From their insights, I shall conclude each section by specifying the variables that have been deemed key in explaining the variation across the Arab Spring cases. Lastly, the chapter will be
concluded with a discussion of those variables to assess their inclusion in the study at hand.

Revolution Theory and The Arab Spring

Why did we Miss the Arab Spring?

In one way or another, most of the early literature on the Arab Spring contained some form of this question. And, in many cases, this question had been followed by a criticism to the current state of knowledge in the field of revolution study. Does this mean we need to reconsider the existing theories of revolutions in light of the unannounced arrival of the Arab Spring? To answer this question, we must examine the basic premises and promises of revolution theory, as well as its proponents’ response to the Arab Spring.

Transitions, reforms, and crises. The study of revolution, and the very conception of the phenomenon, have seen a steady evolution over the past six decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, a pre-revolutionary society would be the unit of analysis in most studies of revolution. In doing so, scholars then advocated a more holistic approach, and produced highly abstract explanations to the causes of revolution. Those explanations, theories or else, have been primarily rooted in two social scientific traditions: A Marxian tradition that produced structural theories, and a Durkheimian tradition, which produced structural-functional theories.

Moreover, the dominant theme in those theories was one of transition – a major disruption to society’s economic organization and class structure; a transition from feudal to a capitalist society (Wolf, 1969), agrarian to industrial (Paige, 1975), traditional to modern (Huntington, 1966), and so on. The logic here is very simple and straightforward: a defective transition disrupts human life and creates vast grievances, the accumulation of
which generates mass discontent, which then leads to revolution. Nevertheless, human suffering has not always been presumed in all the 1960-70s theories of revolution.

For instance, in his theory of rising expectations, Davis (1962) argued that those who initiate most revolts are not the miserable among humans, but the ones who rather bear great expectations of life. Revolution, according to Davis, tends to coincide with a sharp “J-turn” – a sudden turnaround that interrupts a perceived march towards prosperity, which typically results from reforms. Similarly, Gurr (1970) spoke of relative deprivation – the discrepancy between what people have and what they believe they deserve – as a cause for political violence. Those theories are known as the social psychological theories of revolution.

In the 1980s, a new line of theories emerged with a narrower focus, namely on the state as the unit of analysis. This state-centered perspective, which presumes the autonomy of the state (Skocpol, 1979), has produced most of the theories that currently dominate the field of revolution study. Here, the dominant theme is one of crises: military, financial, and/or political crises. Such crises, coupled with state structural weakness, instigate elite alienation/defection (Goodwin, 2001), accelerate state breakdown (Goldstone, 1991), and contribute to the consolidation of competing ideologies and revolutionary coalitions (Foran, 2005, Parsa, 2000).

**When, where, or why do revolutions happen?** As I have already mentioned, the early literature on the Arab Spring appears to question the relevance of revolution theory in the 21st century. Yet, most of the calls for theory reconsideration seem to lack a solid ground to merit their consideration. To be sure, any call for theory reconsideration becomes merited on two grounds: 1) when a theory loses its explanatory power, and 2)
when a new theory emerges with a better explanatory leverage. The question then becomes: have we learned anything new from the sudden arrival of the Arab Spring?

The answer to the above question is yes, to be sure; but almost nothing substantial in terms of the unpredictability of revolutions. To my knowledge, revolution scholars have hardly claimed that revolutions could be foreseen. In fact, the only widely-accepted prophecy about revolutions has been made by Kuran (1995), in which he predicted the unpredictability of future revolutions due to the problem of preference falsification\textsuperscript{iv}. Preference falsification, as Goodwin (2011) reminds us, largely explains why no social scientist had been able to foresee the Arab Spring.

Moreover, while some scholars might have experimented with the development of predictive models, this does not mean that they underestimate the complexity of the social world with its inherent problems of reflexivity and equifinality. Further, it also does not mean that they fail to realize the complications of making inferences about large-scale social phenomena from small-N studies. Now that we have addressed the premises and promises of revolution theory, we can turn to see how students of revolution have responded to the Arab Spring.

**Sultans, elites, coalitions, and patrons.** One of the early attempts to theorize the Arab Spring came from Goldstone (2011a), in which he attributed the Arab Spring popular mobilizations to the failed and repressive policies of the Arab sultanist regimes (sometimes called personalist). Further, he ascribes the success (and failure) of popular mobilization in the Arab Spring countries to the coincidence (or lack thereof) of four factors:
For a revolution to succeed, a number of factors have to come together. The government must appear so irremediably unjust or inept that it is widely viewed as a threat to the country's future; elites (especially in the military) must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself (Goldstone, 2011a, p. 8).

Foran (2014) also puts regime type at the center of his analysis as he superimposes his own theory of revolution to analyze the Arab Spring. Basically, he argues that the personalist Arab regimes were especially vulnerable because of the type of dependent development that they espouse. Further, those dependent states often produce weak structures, which tend to crumble in the face of economic downturn. Consequently, a culture of opposition is born, and its consolidation is inadvertently facilitated by the regime’s repressive practices.

Zimmermann (2015) also provides a similar view, which he outlines in a causal model for regime change. In his view, sultanism is the root cause of economic and institutional inefficiency in the Arab Spring countries. Moreover, the structural ineptitude that is part and parcel of sultanism results in lack of public goods and oppressive, yet structurally fragile, states that normally fail to withstand large-scale popular mobilizations. Again, regime type seems to be the cornerstone in Zimmermann’s analysis of the Arab Spring.
Additionally, many scholars have explained the breakdown of Arab sultanist “republics” in light of the apparent resilience of their monarchical counterparts. Indeed, of the eight Arab monarchies, not one has been overthrown during the Arab Spring. This stark contrast led some scholars to speak of a “monarchical exceptionalism” in the Arab World (Yom & Gause, 2012). Explanations for this supposed exceptionalism vary, but they all seem to underscore two factors: oil-wealth, and the political cultures of Arab monarchies.

Goldstone (2012) and Yom and Gause (2012) emphasize the imperative of oil-wealth in maintaining broad status quo constituencies. Other scholars believe that oil-wealth allows monarchies to buy off populations and demobilize dissent (Gause, 2011, Bellin, 2012, Gelvin 2015). Moreover, Weyland (2012) and Menaldo (2012) maintain that monarchs reign over cohesive societies, whose unique political cultures tend to deter political unrest. Further, Gelvin (2015) and Goldstone (2012) underscore the political structures of Arab monarchies, which allow monarchs to shift the blame to the executive branch, and float above the fray.

To sum up, in their assessments of the Arab Spring, revolution scholars have employed multiple analytical frameworks, which were essentially, but not always entirely, structural. They put the state at the center of analysis, and emphasize regime type, elites (especially in the military), cross-class coalitions, and international powers as crucial variables. Their accounts, though compelling, seem to overlook several irregularities, as we shall see later in this chapter. Nevertheless, revolution theorists remain among the most capable in the social sciences to explain the preconditions of revolutions, if not always the variation in their processes and outcomes.
Social Movement Theory and The Arab Spring

Did the Tech-savvy Youth Make the Arab Spring?

Most of the queries that have been directed towards the study of social movements tend to boil down to the above question. Indeed, throughout the Arab Spring, youth seemed to have spearheaded everything, everywhere; from demonstrations and clashes with the police, to new media activism and old media coverage. Therefore, given their high visibility, online and offline, perhaps it was not unthinkable on the part of some scholars to conclude that the tech-savvy youth had made the Arab Spring.

Moreover, the Arab revolutionaries appeared to operate without a clear ideological and/or organizational framework. Further, they also seemed to act, and interact, with little political calculations, if any at all. Thus, many scholars have reasoned that the Arab Spring should change our very conception of collective action. Others, however, have taken a more cautious approach, and refrained from making such inferences before allowing students of social movements a chance to reflect on the Arab Spring.

Notably, Dupont and Passy (2011) have managed to gather all those queries, and put forth a long list of questions for students of social movement theory. Additionally, they invited a number of prominent scholars to explore the effects of the Arab Spring on the main three dominant theoretical avenues in the study of social movements: framing, resource mobilization, and political opportunity. So, what exactly are the premises of those theories? And, how did the Arab Spring brought them into question, if at all?

**Consciousness, organization, and opportunity.** Framing theory emphasizes consciousness transformation as a precondition for collective action (Snow, Rochford,
Worden, & Benford, 1986). Indeed, there was little evidence on the eve of the Arab Spring to suggest that the Arab masses had undergone such transformation. Moreover, the common narrative suggests that the Arab Spring mobilizations were initiated, and largely orchestrated, by politically unaffiliated, ideologically “uncontaminated” youth. Further, the elites in all the Arab Spring countries had seemed content with the existing ruling bargain, and shown no sign of being unable to continue living in the old way.

The other theory that is being questioned is resource mobilization theory, which underscores the imperative of organization to the success of any popular mobilization (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988). That is, it is nearly impossible to defeat the armed and trained state apparatus without demonstrating high levels of discipline, organization, and resource management. Again, the common narrative stresses that the Arab popular mobilizations had been but an impulsive reaction to the events in Tunisia. It also suggests that any seeming organization was rather improvised than being intentionally devised.

Lastly, political opportunity theory (aka political process) stresses the factors that facilitate, or constrain, collective action (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). Perhaps the best synthesis to social movement theory came in Charles Tilly’s seminal work *From Mobilization to Revolution*. According to Tilly (1978), no effective collective action is possible without the articulation of a shared identity (framing), a unifying structure that provides organization and resource-pooling (resource mobilization), and an opportune moment to act collectively (political opportunity).

In light of the common narrative, which casts doubt over the above theoretical avenues, how did students of social movements explain the Arab Spring?
Youth and social media… both, either, or none? Before we discuss how students of social movements have responded to the Arab Spring, it is imperative to point out that the tech-savvy-youth-made-the-Arab-Spring narrative has quickly faded, for several reasons. First, empirical evidence has shown that while the youth did play a significant role in the Arab mobilizations, they were hardly alone. Community organizers, political activists, and members of labor unions and professional syndicates were equally, if not primarily, responsible for the mobilizations in Tunisia and Egypt (Bishara, 2011, Gelvin, 2015, Allinson, 2015).

Moreover, the role of traditional social networks in the mobilizations of Libya and Yemen cannot possibly be overstated (Fraihat, 2016). Furthermore, unlike mainstream media, academia abhors sensationalism, and cannot tolerate it for long. Therefore, simplistic narratives such as “Western-technology-made-the Arab Spring” were doomed to oblivion. To be sure, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), not social media alone, has indeed played a big role in the Arab Spring. However, as Diani (2011, p. 469) reminds us, “Technologies do not make collective action. Men and women do.”

Then, what role has ICT played in the Arab revolutionary events? And, how did it affect the Arab Spring’s processes and outcomes?

Diffusion, synergy, and cost. Many scholars argue that the World Wide Web, with its countless benefits that range from anonymity to interstate connectivity, had been transforming the Arab public space for more than a decade prior to the Arab Spring (Lynch, 2012). Indeed, the internet had allowed Arab peoples to bypass state and social control to construct a new, parallel reality. Online, expectations surged among Arab
peoples, and a new consciousness has been slowly, but steadily, taking shape (Gelvin, 2015).

However, while the internet was an important factor in the process of consciousness transformation, satellite television had also played a key role in the causal story of the Arab Spring. Television networks, especially Al Jazeera, had played a significant role in transforming the Arab public space, by framing local grievances into a coherent regional narrative (Lynch, 2012, Bishara, 2011). The Internet and satellite television had both played a significant, and complementary, role in the years that led to the Arab Spring.

Social-media activism and citizen journalism have also played a substantial role in facilitating transnational communication among Arab revolutionaries on the one hand, and between them and the outside world on the other. Those novel tools and practices seem to have inspired copycats, widened the range of tactics for revolutionaries, and rather overwhelmed the governments’ capacity to control communications (Gelvin, 2015). Moreover, social media has also allowed individuals and groups to share resources in ways that dramatically reduced material cost on the part of revolutionaries, and increased repression cost on the part of Arab governments.

Indeed, ICT has been transforming every aspect of our life for nearly three decades, and collective action is not an exception in that regard. In fact, some scholars even argued that the availability, or lack thereof, of advanced ICT infrastructure, particularly mobile phones, has directly affected the odds of success and failure of Arab revolutionary movements (Hussain & Howard, 2013). However, many scholars contend
such claims about a potentially decisive role for ICT in the Arab Spring, for several reasons.

First, Internet penetration and ICT infrastructure had been generally low in most of the core Arab Spring countries (Gelvin, 2015); they had also been higher in the Arab monarchies where revolutionary action has either failed or never taken place (Kuhn, 2012). Further, social media had evidently failed to overwhelm the governments of Iran and Moldova – arguably the first “social media revolutions” (Gelvin, 2015). And, lastly, our pre-ICT history is filled with incidents of revolutionary diffusion, from 1848 Europe to the 1919 Arab World (Anderson, 2011), and beyond.

Furthermore, the role of social and communal networks in organizing and maintaining coalitions is undisputable in most revolutionary episodes throughout history. Thus, it is hard to imagine, maintains Diani (2011), that the broad coalitions that had waged sustained campaigns and managed to bring down brutal autocratic regimes were merely a byproduct of ICT alone:

ICT may certainly facilitate the spread of shared beliefs among sectors of the public opinion that already share certain basic characteristics (e.g. young age, or a certain level of education), but it is more difficult so see its impact over a much large population with limited Internet. ICT may surely contribute to the rapid growth of ad hoc coalitions among actors, united by their opposition to corrupted autocrats, and support a short-times [sic] revolt. It is, however, more doubtful whether it can create from scratch the longer-term solidarities that are an essential component of sustained collective action in the form of social movements. (Diani, 2011, p. 473)
Hence, the role of the internet and social media in terms of influencing the processes and outcomes of the Arab Spring seems to have been exaggerated (Gelvin, 2015), sometime to the extent of being a distraction (Fuchs, 2012). Nevertheless, while the role of ICT is debatable as far as framing and resource mobilization are concerned, its role in emboldening the Arab revolutionaries and increasing the moral and political cost to the Arab regimes is almost unquestionable.

Nepstad (2011, 2013) argues that televised repression has increased the political, moral, and honor cost of loyalty to Arab regimes, especially among the military elites. Diani (2011) makes a similar point by suggesting that the high visibility of the events had basically trapped the embattled regimes. On the one hand, it increased the political cost on the part of the regime, thereby decreasing the overall cost of collective action; on the other hand, it augmented the moral cost of supporting the regime on the part of the local elites.

Alimi and Meyer (2011) argue, “As the visibility of regime defectors increased, more diverse elements in society saw their interests served by throwing in with the protestors (p. 477).” In short, throughout the Arab Spring, ICT seems to have influenced the trajectories of the Arab Spring events. It has emboldened the revolutionaries, and contributed to elite defection and/or alienation. Moreover, ICT has also checked regime repression (e.g. Tunisia and Egypt), and when it failed to do so, it galvanized International pressure, and paved the way for foreign intervention (e.g. Yemen and Libya).

However, ICT does not seem to have created similar effects in Bahrain and Syria, where coalitions appeared to lack the efficacy and diversity of Egypt and Tunisia. Also,
the high visibility of events did not appear to have changed the political opportunity structure (Tarrow, 1998) in those countries. Thus, the available explanations provided by social movement scholars for such variations are far from complete, and often lack parsimony. This is perhaps why we are yet to see a full-fledged attempt on the part of students of social movements to theorize the Arab Spring.

To sum up, social movements scholars were able to put the role of technology in those events into perspective, albeit without offering a theory on the Arab Spring. Moreover, some of their contributions came rich with theoretical insights, specifically on the factors that influenced the behavior of Arab regimes and their foreign patrons (Alimi and Meyer, 2011), military elites (Nepstad 2011, 2013; Schneider, 2011), and revolutionary coalitions (Goldstone, 2011b). Yet, there is not a standout variable that students of social movements would deem key in explaining the variance across the Arab Spring outcomes.

**Middle East Studies and the Arab Spring**

**Did the Arab Spring End Authoritarian Resilience?**

Most of the early literature on the Arab Spring seems to have singled out for criticism the authoritarian resilience paradigm. This concept had been dominating studies of the Arab World for nearly three decades. It had brought the democratization paradigm into question at a time when Arab dictators seemed to reign and rule unchallenged. So, what are the basic premises of the authoritarianism paradigm? And, how exactly, if it all, has the Arab spring brought them into question?

**Rents, ruling bargains, and culture.** In contrast to the democratization paradigm, and revolution study for that matter, the authoritarianism paradigm
problematizes the stability, rather than instability, of political regimes in autocratic societies. In doing so, political scientists have managed to advance enduring explanations regarding the resilience of authoritarian leaders in the Arab World. Basically, proponents of the authoritarian resilience paradigm emphasize the conditions under which regimes gain and maintain control over their populations.

As far as the Arab World is concerned, authoritarian resilience is rooted in the peculiarity of the modern Arab state. Born out of decolonization rather than revolutionary struggle, most Arab states are weakly structured, and lack most the fundamental institutions of normal states. Moreover, the availability of rent revenues has allowed Arab regimes to keep taxation, and thus representation, to a minimum. It has also allowed them to finance extensive patronage networks, to ensure elite loyalty, which often guarantees regime resiliency.

Ultimately this peculiar formula has produced societies of highly depoliticized populations, and extremely politicized, yet often divided, elites. Moreover, instead of ruling by a social contract, Arab regimes tend to carefully craft and enforce a ruling bargain, which is often endorsed by religious and tribal elites. That is perhaps why many political scientists tend to inject a cultural dimension to the formula, by stressing the cultural exceptionalism of Middle Eastern societies. However, not all proponents of authoritarian resilience do necessarily subscribe to the notion of cultural exceptionalism.

To suggest that this line of thinking has transformed Western policy towards the Arab World is an unnecessary amplification; yet, to say that it continues to inform Western policy makers is beyond reasonable doubt. For that the foreign policy of Western governments towards the Middle East have always seemed rather burdened by
the proclaimed commitment to promote and support democracy. In fact, when it came to the Arab World, realpolitik has often been the true north in the West’s compass, so to speak. And then came the Arab Spring.

The sight of revolutionary movements chanting pro-democracy slogans had *almost* compelled Western governments to change their attitude towards the region. That, however, did not happen before the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak. In that context, the authoritarianism paradigm came under criticism, and some prominent region experts has even admitted being humbled by the Arab Spring (Gause, 2011). However, the somewhat modest harvest of the Arab Spring has allowed other scholars, notably Bellin (2012) and Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds (2013), to argue against the quick dismissal of the authoritarianism paradigm.

**Wealth, elites, and succession.** In his initial response to the Arab Spring, Gause (2011) identified three areas that had been largely ignored by region experts prior to the Arab Spring: 1) military role in Arab politics, 2) the effects of economic reform on political stability, and 3) the salience of a cross-border Arab identity (p. 40). Many scholars agree with Gause on the influential role of Arab armies (Nepstad, 2011a, 2011b; Anderson, 2011), the effects of neoliberal policies on political stability (Fuchs, 2012, Foran, 2014, Kaboub, 2013), and the evolution of a new *Pan-Arabism* (Gelvin, 2015, Lynch, 2012, Bishara, 2011).

However, Gause’s early account has been more of an effort to outline an analytical framework than an attempt to theorize the Arab Spring. Bellin (2012), on the other hand, took it a step further, and advanced a theory on the Arab Spring. Without underestimating the role of international powers, she suggests that the standout variable
across the Arab Spring cases was the “army posture” during the uprisings, and specifically its will to repress. This will, or lack thereof, is influenced by four factors:

Extraordinary access to rent and international support, combined with the less extraordinary proliferation of patrimonially organized security forces and low levels of social mobilization, together gave rise, in the lion's share of countries, to coercive apparatuses that were endowed with extraordinary capacity and will to repress. This capacity and will to repress accounted for the region's exceptional resistance to getting swept up in the third wave of democratization (Bellin, 2012, p. 129).

However, Brownlee et al. (2013) found this theory wanting. Essentially, they dismiss all accounts that overplay the assumed professionalism of the Tunisian and Egyptian armies. Before the uprisings, they argue, no one would have been able to distinguish the army from the regime in those countries. Therefore, crediting the structure of the army or even the agency of military elites is, according to the authors, “An exercise in post hoc reasoning that read the generals’ preferences from their actions” (p. 31).

Alternatively, Brownlee et al. (2013, 2015) employ a strictly structural framework to analyze the Arab Spring. Consequently, they advanced a theory on regime change and continuity “based on two preexisting regime traits: oil wealth and hereditary rule” (p.41). Oil wealth, according to the authors, is a major source of rent revenue, and those who have it in abundance, possess a significant comparative advantage. Without direct taxation, representation and civil society become merely a decorative façade. In that context, governments tend to govern, reward, and punish as they will.
Moreover, the precedent of hereditary succession, according to Brownlee et al. (2013, 2015), is another indicator of regime resiliency. Such transfers, according to the authors, “Signal that the state’s repressive agents have rallied around the executive” (p. 33). Indeed, in the past two decades, there were nine hereditary successions in the Arab World, eight of them by convention in Arab monarchies, and one by invention in the Syrian Arab Republic. No popular mobilization has managed to depose power holders in any of those countries.

According to Brownlee et al. (2013), the existence of either characteristic, oil wealth or hereditary succession, “is enough to ensure that the regime will retain power” (p. 42). Remarkably, this theory seems to hold across the whole range of cases in the Arab Spring. However, like the accounts of revolution scholars on the Arab Spring, this theory is not without a few inconsistencies, as we shall see later in this chapter. Wealth, if not hereditary succession, is a central piece in another theory about the Arab Spring.

Yom and Gause (2012) advanced a theory about what they deem as a *monarchical exceptionalism* during the Arab Spring. They argue that the exceptional ability of Arab royals to weather the political storm is not rooted in some unique institutional structure. Also, the authors refuse to ascribe the resiliency of their rules to a unique cultural tradition. Instead, Yom and Gause argue that that resiliency of Arab royals stems from their ability to maintain – through hydrocarbon rents – cross cutting domestic coalitions, and secure the support of international patrons.

This is another compelling theory from scholars of the Middle East about that Arab Spring. Yet, it is also another *partial* explanation of the wave of revolutionary events that swept the Arab World. Additionally, like the theory of Brownlee et al., this
theory is likely to hold until the next Iran-style revolution, or any successful popular mobilization against an Arab monarchy. Nevertheless, Middle East scholars seem to have advanced some of the most compelling analyses about the Arab Spring.

To sum up, Middle East studies provide us with three different theories. Bellin (2012) emphasized “military posture” and its will to repress, which is influenced by several domestic and international factors. Moreover, Brownlee et al. (2013, 2015) provide a parsimonious theory that emphasizes preexisting characteristics to predict regime survival, namely oil wealth and hereditary succession. Further, Yom and Gause (2012) propose a theory about monarchical exceptionalism based on the presence of three overlapping variables: 1) broad coalitions, 2) hydrocarbon rents, and 3) support of international patrons.

Those variables and others are the subject of the following discussion.

Discussion

As illustrated above, revolution scholars have given us multiple state-centered analytical perspectives. Their accounts tend to emphasize regime type, elites (especially in the military), cross-class coalitions, and international powers as key variables. Moreover, social movement scholars have helped us put the role of technology into perspective, without advancing a theory on the Arab Spring. Further, in addition to the four variables identified by students of revolution, scholars of the Middle East have pointed out two additional variables, namely oil wealth and hereditary succession.

Among the above listed six variables, only a few of them seem to hold across the full range of Arab Spring cases. For instance, with regard to regime type, it is worth mentioning that the vulnerability of autocratic dictatorships to popular mobilization is
hardly a new insight in the study of revolution (see Wickham-Crowley, 1992, Snyder 1998, Goodwin, 2001, and Foran, 2005). Yet, the tsunami that was the Arab Spring did not seem to distinguish authoritarian regimes (i.e. Tunisia, Egypt) from personalist rules (i.e. Libya, Yemen), or a dynastic “republic” (i.e. Syria) from an established monarchy (i.e. Bahrain).

Moreover, even during an extraordinary season of transnational upheavals, several sultanist regimes proved impervious to large-scale popular mobilization, let alone to deposition (e.g. Algeria, Sudan). Further, in the core Arab Spring cases, the number of sultanist regimes that have managed to withstand the initial mobilization (i.e. Libya, Yemen, and Syria) has exceeded the number of regimes that abdicated under the pressure of popular mobilization. In fact, the deposition of power holders in Libya, and Yemen, had not appeared possible at any point before the intervention of international powers.

Furthermore, even after the internationalization of the Syrian conflict, the deposition of Bashar al-Assad remains to this day elusive, and the regime’s core structure is still intact despite five years of civil war. Here, it is worth mentioning that the Syrian regime has never possessed the vast oil wealth that the Libyan regime, for instance, used to enjoy. Moreover, though not as oil-rich as its neighbors in the Gulf, the small Kingdom of Bahrain is by no means an oil-poor country. Yet, the Bahraini regime had to put down one of the largest Arab Spring uprisings, in terms of per capita.

The above facts seem to undermine any explanation that overemphasizes regime type and/or oil wealth. To be sure, Morocco and Jordan are two monarchies with little natural resources; yet they have not been impervious to popular mobilization. Also, unlike oil-rich Libya, they have not been susceptible to regime change. Still, we cannot
say that Arab monarchies, or those with a precedent of hereditary succession for that matter, are impervious to regime change. For that we have seen the fall of several monarchies during the 20th century (i.e. Egypt, Tunisia, and Iraq in the 1950s; North Yemen and Libya in the 1960s).

On the other hand, one cannot overstate the significant role of revolutionary coalitions during the Arab Spring. Indeed, revolutionary movements have seemed most effective where they had managed to assemble broad coalitions. Yet, there seems to be an unnecessary redundancy in talking separately of cross-cut coalitions on the one hand, and elites on the other. Often, the diversity of coalitions is measured and verified by the scope of defections among the elites. Thus, for purposes of parsimony, this study is treating those two variables as one, namely elite defections.

Conversely, the complex role of international powers during the Arab Spring seems to be overgeneralized by scholars. Indeed, we have seen different levels of international interventionism, from withdrawal of support (Tunisia, Egypt), to the imposition of regime change (Libya, Yemen), to regime maintenance (Syria and Bahrain). Then, we need to be sensitive to the variety of roles that international powers tend to play in Third World conflicts. Hence, in addition to the domestic-level variable of elite defections, this study is taking into consideration two additional international-level variables - internationalization of conflict, and withdrawal of foreign patron support.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 2 surveyed the Arab Spring Literature to evaluate the scholarly explanations of the Arab revolutionary events. This exercise allowed us to identify several variables, the inspection of which led to the elimination of some, and the
inclusion of others, with minor adaptations. Specifically, three independent variables have been identified as key in explaining the variation across the outcomes of the Arab Spring (i.e. elite defections, internationalization of conflict, and withdrawal of foreign patron support). The task ahead is to assess the influence of those three variables on the dependent variable; that is, success, and failure, of revolutionary action.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Clarifications and Research Methodology

This chapter consists mainly of two sections: 1) conceptual clarifications, and 2) research methodology. In the first section, I shall advance a concept of revolutionary action. This concept will provide the foundation for the development of a typology for revolution. Moreover, I shall create a new type of revolution - popular revolution, and state the measures by which it is distinguished from other types, namely political and social revolutions. At that point, the first of our two research problems, namely the designation dilemma, will have been resolved.

Moreover, the work on conceptual clarifications will ultimately facilitate the development of a conceptual framework to guide the study’s research strategy, which is presented in the second section of this chapter. Here, the research methodology will be discussed, and its procedures explained. Finally, I shall develop a map of the property space, and advance a theory on the Arab Spring. This theory will lay the groundwork for a typological theory on popular revolution. Meanwhile, it is imperative before we take any step further to restate the research problem.

Problem Statement

The events of the so-called Arab Spring continue to defy classification. While some scholars deem them revolutions (Goldstone, 2011a, Foran, 2014), others beg to differ (Zimmermann, 2015), hedge (Goodwin, 2011), or simply refer to those events as unfinished revolutions (Lynch, 2012, Davis, 2013, Fraihat, 2016). This designation dilemma reflects a problem of conceptual deficit in the study of revolution. Also, it creates several problems to social scientific research as well as to policy making.
The interchangeable use of generic terms creates a confusion in the public discourse and in the early literature on the topic about the true nature of those events. Often, such confusion tends to distort primary and secondary sources, which could otherwise enrich scholarly research. Moreover, holding Arab Spring events in a revolutionary limbo effectively imposes a research embargo on those cases. It also complicates any effort to investigate the Arab Spring cases as a single universe.

Consequently, the Arab Spring is likely to remain under-theorized, which further complicates the task of policy makers to respond adequately to similar events in the future. This problem of theoretical insufficiency is reflected in the early literature on the topic, which lacks a consistent theory on the Arab Spring. That is, despite decades of knowledge accumulation in revolution study, scholars failed to advance a theory on the Arab Spring that holds across the full range of its cases.

To remedy the above problems, this research aims to provide a conceptual framework that allows scholars to move beyond their differences to advance the study of revolution. In addition, it also aims to develop a theory on the Arab Spring, whose contingent generalizations may be extended to other cases; that is, a typological theory on popular revolution. Ultimately, the aim is to help scholars and policy makers improve their overall response to recent and/or ongoing revolutionary events.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**On the Nature, Forms, and Outcomes of Revolution**

Not all collective actions are revolutionary, nor all revolutionary actions are violent. Additionally, not all revolutions are political revolutions, nor all political revolutions are social revolutions. Therefore, there is an essential difference between
actions that are revolutionary, and those that are not. Also, there is a qualitative
difference between forms of revolutionary action, as well as in the consequences thereof.
Most novice students of revolution struggle to grasp those basic differences, and this
should not come as a surprise.

For that the conceptual and empirical ranges of the phenomenon have hardly been
delineated. To my knowledge, the study of revolution is yet to advance a conceptual
framework that outlines the various stages in the revolutionary process, and specify the
full range of revolutionary outcomes. Such distinctions are imperative for the
advancement of the field. Thus, the development of a conceptual framework for the study
of revolution is an evident priority; and such effort must begin with a work on the
typologies of revolution.

The nature of revolutionary action. By revolutionary action, henceforth RA, is
meant an organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order,
designed to effect the extralegal deposition of power holders, in an effort to transform
state and/or society. Then, RA is distinguished from other forms of collective action by
the presence of the following six characteristics, namely organization, duration, popular
participation, target, revolutionary dimension, and objective. A description of the
aforementioned components follows.

Organization. Unlike other forms of spontaneous action, such as riots, brawls,
and similar forms of civil disorder, RA is a deliberate and calculated action, not one of
angry reaction. In that, RA tends to be highly organized, and often directed by a proactive
leadership that is well versed in matters of framing, coalition-building, and political
calculations.
**Duration.** Unlike other forms of temporary bursts of anger or demonstration of solidarity, such as marches and rallies, RA is a sustained effort over an extended period of time.

**Popular participation.** Unlike political upheavals of limited or exclusive popular participation, such as localized rebellions, strikes, mutinies, and coup d’états, RA is distinguished by mass popular participation over a wide-spread geographical area.

**Target.** RA is an action directed towards the political order. That is, it is a struggle between the population, or segment thereof, and a sitting government. Thus, it is to be distinguished from civil wars, in which the government may or may not be a primary party.

**Revolutionary dimension.** RA is distinguished from subversive actions, such as insurgencies, guerilla warfare, and rebellions, by the presence of a *revolutionary dimension* (Rummel, 1966). While those actions are designed chiefly to subvert the government, RA aims to overthrow it.

**Objective.** Unlike other forms of reform-based actions, such as protests and demonstrations, RA does not simply aim to change policies and/or governments by the available lawful means. Rather, it is an extralegal effort that aims at the transformation of state and/or society, of which the unlawful deposition of power holders is but a steppingstone.

The variables I use herein to distinguish RA from other acts of domestic upheavals are similar, but not identical, to the ones used by Gurr (1970) in his *political violence* typology. Moreover, whereas Gurr uses an additional variable, namely violence, to distinguish between types of political violence (i.e. Turmoil, Conspiracy, and Internal
War), I reserve the violence component to distinguish between forms of RA. Thus, unlike Gurr, I do not view revolutions as necessarily highly violent.

**Forms of revolutionary action.** Based on empirical evidence from recent revolutionary events (e.g. Iran and Nicaragua, 1979; The Philippines, 1985; Eastern Europe, 1989; The Color Revolutions, 2000s; The Arab Spring, 2001) we can suggest that there are two distinct forms of revolutionary action: uprising and insurrection. Those two forms of RA are distinguished from each other by a *revolutionary violence dimension*. By revolutionary violence we mean the systematic use of firearms by a revolutionary movement to depose a sitting government.

Accordingly, an *uprising* is largely a peaceful form of RA. Thus, it could be defined as a nonviolent, organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order, designed to effect the extralegal deposition of power holders, in an effort to transform state and/or society. Conversely, an *insurrection* is essentially an armed struggle. Hence, it could be defined as a violent, organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order, designed to effect the extralegal deposition of power holders, in an effort to transform state and/or society.

**Outcomes of revolutionary action.** Revolutionary action has the potential to produce different consequences that vary in scope as well as in time. For instance, in itself, deposing a sitting government may signify, but not guarantee, the transformation of political life in a state. Similarly, a political transformation does not always guarantee the reorganization of society. Thus, it is plausible to distinguish between types of revolution based on the scope of change that results from RA.
Additionally, while the displacement of power holders, or lack thereof, is an immediate consequence of RA, other goals concerning the transformation of state and society take many years, often decades, to unfold, if at all. Thus, when scholars emphasize the rapid nature of revolutionary change, they must also underline the relative nature of the word rapid. Accordingly, it is sensible to suggest a temporal distinction between the short-term, medium-term, and long-term consequences of RA.

**Short-term consequences of revolutionary action.** An RA is successful when it leads to the deposition of power holders in the government, and their replacement with a figure/body accepted by the revolutionaries. That includes military figures and/or juntas, provided that the change is preceded and driven by RA. We shall refer to such instances as *popular revolution*; that is, any instance in which an organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order *effects* the extralegal deposition of power holders, in an effort to transform state and/or society.

*Figure 1. Short-Term Consequences of Revolutionary Action*

*Note.* † = causal path/mechanism; N = No; Y; Yes
By government we mean a “specific political and administrative institutions” (Stone, 1966, p. 159). It is, then to be distinguished from regime – the constitutional structure of a state. Further, an RA that fails to depose power holders and/or replace them with a figure/body accepted by the revolutionaries is an instance of failed popular revolution, or simply abortive revolution (see figure 1). In such case, the incident retains its original designation, which reflects the dominant form of RA during the revolutionary situation (i.e. uprising; insurrection).

**Medium-term consequences of revolutionary action.** A successful political revolution is one that goes beyond the mere displacement of political and administrative institutions to transform a state’s constitutional structure – its regime, to be sure. Often, this kind of change takes many years to materialize, if at all; for that it involves a fundamental transformation of the myths, values, and institutions that legitimate political power. Then, it is plausible to suggest that political revolution is a potential medium-term consequence of a successful RA.

Thus, political revolution can be defined as any instance in which an organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order effects the extralegal deposition of power holders, and transforms the state’s constitutional structure. Further, a popular revolution that attempts and fails to transform the constitutional structure of the state is a case of failed political revolution. However, for simplicity purposes, such instance is to retain its original designation as popular revolution (see figure 2).
Figure 2. Medium-Term Consequences of Revolutionary Action

Note. ↓ = causal path/mechanism; N = No; Y; Yes

**Long-term consequences of revolutionary action.** A successful social revolution involves the transformation of a society’s communal relations, economic activities, and collective consciousness, all on the back of a political revolution. Thus, it involves a fundamental reorganization of society – its class structure, to be sure. Moreover, by its very nature, social change is slower, more complicated, and harder to achieve than political change. Accordingly, social revolution is ought to be thought of as a potential long-term consequence of a successful revolutionary action.
Then, based on our building-block approach, we can propose a definition for *social revolution* as any instance in which an organized, and sustained mass popular mobilization against the political order *effects* the extralegal deposition of power holders, and *transforms* the state’s constitutional structure and society’s class structure. Note that a political revolution that fails to reorganize society and transform its class structure is a case of failed social revolution. However, it is to retain its original designation as political revolution (see figure 3).

*Figure 3.* Long-Term Consequences of Revolutionary Action: An Integrated Conceptual Model for The Study of Revolutionary Process and Outcomes

*Note.* † = causal path/mechanism; N = No; Y; Yes
Implications for the Study of Revolution

The above conceptual clarifications have several implications on the study of revolution. First, by advancing a concept for *revolutionary action*, we can now speak of the instances of uprising and insurrection as two distinct pathways to revolution. Thereby, we have effectively subordinated those instances to the phenomenon of revolution, and reorganized the typologies of *internal war* (Eckstein, 1965, Gurr, 1970). Ultimately, this solution will help scholars and policy makers to avoid the ill-advised practice of interchangeable use of generic terms.

Secondly, by advancing a new type of revolution – *popular revolution* – we provided scholars with a solution to overcome the designation dilemma vis-à-vis recent revolutionary events. That is, scholars should no longer struggle with designating recent events that produced some, but not the full range of, revolutionary outcomes. Moreover, we now have a clear idea as to the measures by which we are to distinguish between types of revolution. More importantly, we can now conceive revolution as a process *and* as an end result.

Finally, our work on conceptual clarifications has also produced a conceptual model for the study of revolutionary processes and outcomes (see figure 3). This model delineates the conceptual and empirical ranges of the phenomenon that is revolution. Further, our conceptual framework brings a much-needed structure to the methodical study of revolution. That is, it will help future researchers to focus their efforts on uncovering specific causal paths/mechanisms in various stages of the revolutionary process.
Research Methodology

An Overview of Case Study Research

The case study approach has been frequently employed in the study of revolution. This, however, has not been a matter of preference as much as a compulsion imposed by the rare occurrence of the phenomenon. Revolutions are rare historical episodes; and rare social phenomena often do not lend themselves to statistical methods. Most revolution studies, therefore, have employed the case study approach both as a research strategy as well as a methodology.

As a research strategy, case study is defined by Yin (2014) as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). Moreover, as a methodology, Creswell (2013,) defines case study, as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection… and reports a case description and case themes” (p. 97).

Further, George & Bennet (2005), whose method of structured, focused comparison is employed in this research, define the case study approach as “the detailed examination of an aspect of an historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” (p. 5). In the research at hand I employ the case study approach as a methodology. This choice has been made with an awareness of the limitations of case study research in general, as well as in relation to the study at hand.
**Limitations of case study research.** A significant limitation of the case study approach is its relative inability to determine the frequency and/or representativeness of cases (George & Bennet, 2005). Moreover, case study research, like most qualitative methods, is known for its weak capability of estimating the causal effect of a particular variable. Additionally, with regard to the Arab Spring, a potential limitation is the lack of independence of cases. This problem often leads researchers to learn and make inferences by diffusion (George & Bennet, 2005).

Evidently, most studies of revolution tend to display some, if not all, of the problems cited above. Unfortunately, those are limitations that students of rare social phenomena are compelled to live with. When coupled with the problem of human reflexivity, the domain of theorizing rare social phenomena becomes rather extremely challenging. Yet, recent advances in qualitative methods, along with the codification of research practices and procedure, have significantly mitigated some of the above problems.

For instance, one way qualitative researchers try to deal with the problem of indeterminacy is by aiming at the development of probabilistic models when causal modeling proves too complex or hard to achieve (Little, 1996). Further, another way of dealing with the problem of indeterminacy is by aiming at the development contingent generalizations, which is what this study is aiming at. This unmistakable moderation of research ambition reflects a greater attentiveness to the complexity of the social world, and the inherent limits of social theory.

Nevertheless, the moderation of research ambitions, along with the introduction of rigorous practices/procedures, has been serving the case study
approach rather well. Today, case study researchers pride themselves for a unique capability to identify the subtlest causal interactions, as well as the most complex causal paths and mechanisms. Indeed, the flexibility of the case study approach, which allows for constant iteration between theory and data, have helped case study researchers to achieve high levels of conceptual validity.

Case study researchers often show a great capability to uncover new variables, and/or reinstate ones that other researchers had rather imprudently chosen to omit. In that, case study research has increasingly evolved from a case-centered approach to a variable-oriented methodology, especially in comparative studies. Thus, it is my belief that the unique features of the case study approach compensate for its limitations, and make it a desirable methodology for the study at hand.

**Philosophical underpinnings.** I must, at this point, state the three things that I, as a researcher, bring to this study. First, I bring with me a growing tendency to view the social world through a constructivist prism. Increasingly, I have been growing more appreciative of the crucial role that human agents tend to play in influencing social structures (which are human-made after all). Therefore, I perceive human agents and structures as mutually constitutive. Yet, I believe that a good theory on revolution must essentially be structural.

Secondly, I also bring with me what is perhaps an unhealthy amount of cautiousness with regard to making sweeping generalizations about the social world. Individually and collectively, humans have a unique capability to reflect and alter their reality, or adapt to it when alteration thereof is perceived undesirable, costly, or perilous. Thus, where human reflexivity is in action, humans often find a way to find
a new way that takes them from point A to point B. This multiplicity of pathways, or *equifinality*, renders me doubtful about law-like generalizations in the domain of complex social phenomena.

Lastly, I also bring with me what can be described colloquially as personal baggage. For reasons that have to do with my growing up among Arabs, I do not write dispassionately about the Arab World. Having seen first-hand the atrocities in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, I fear that my overall reasoning, to one degree or another, may be influenced by the terrors I continue to witness on a daily basis. That, however, does not necessarily mean that I have developed a certain predisposition towards the value of revolution.

To be sure, I applaud any human endeavor for progress, especially when it involves a struggle for freedom from tyranny. Nevertheless, in hindsight, one cannot but question the wisdom of some in the Arab World who have decided to ride the revolutionary wave while armed with nothing but a mere enthusiasm for eradicating injustice. After all, grievances, real or perceived, are not a framework for collective action; and a march into the unknown could sometimes prove to be as immoral as dictatorial repression.

I sincerely hope that this study will offer something useful to all the parties involved in the Arab Spring - regimes and revolutionaries alike. I also hope that my worldview and sensitivity to the problem of equifinality will not affect in any way the overall quality of the research at hand. Fortunately, the case study approach is flexible enough to accommodate various philosophical orientations and research designs, which makes my task somewhat less arduous.
The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett have developed the method of structured, focused comparison to provide researchers with a systemized framework for theory building and testing. Moreover, although this method suits various types of research designs, it has been developed with typological theorizing in mind.

Typological theorizing, as defined by George & Bennett (2005), “Is the development of contingent generalizations about combinations or configurations of variables that constitute theoretical types” (p. 233).

Characteristics of the method of structured, focused comparison.

According to George & Bennet (2005), The method is *structured* in that it asks of researchers to develop a set of standard questions, and seek answers to those questions from each case under study. Moreover, the method is also *focused* in that it must be undertaken “with a specific research objective in mind and a theoretical focus appropriate for that objective” (p. 69). Above all, the structure and focus provided by this method help researchers to remain focused on making systematic comparisons and accumulate policy-relevant findings.

Research Strategy: A Deductive Approach

This study employs a deductive approach for the development of a typological theory. First, I shall restate the objective of the study, and specify the variables under examination. Then, I shall put forth the research question(s), along with the procedures for data collection and analysis. Afterwards, the property space will be discussed, and a map thereof outlined. Finally, I shall advance a typological theory based on the observations from the map of the property space.
Study objective. This building-block study aims to advance a typological theory on the Arab Spring, whose contingent generalizations can be extended to other cases – a typological theory on popular revolution. Specifically, the study aims at the identification of particular types of success and failure vis-à-vis one type of revolution, namely popular revolution. To that end, the study will assess the effects of three independent variables (elite defections, internationalization of conflict, withdrawal of foreign patron support) on the outcome of revolutionary action (success/failure).

Research questions. The central concerns of this research are, as follows:

1. What are the Arab Spring events instances of?
2. What gave rise to the variation across the Arab Spring outcomes?

This leads to a variety of sub-questions underpinning the central concerns of this research, namely:

2.1 What specific role have elite defections played in shaping the Arab Spring outcomes?
2.2 What specific role has the internationalization of conflicts played in shaping the Arab Spring outcome?
2.3 What specific role have foreign patron played in deciding the outcomes of the Arab Spring?

In addition, the following standardized questions will be asked of each case under study as part of the within-case analysis:

- From crisis to revolutionary action: What are the events that gave rise to revolutionary action?
• From revolutionary action to revolutionary situation: How did decisions made by the regime and the revolutionary movement lead to a revolutionary situation?

• From revolutionary situation to revolutionary outcome: How did decisions made by various stakeholders, including elites, international powers, and foreign patrons, decide the revolutionary outcome?

**Procedures for data collection and analysis.** As illustrated above, this study will ask a number of specific questions of each case, as per the requirements of the method of structured, focused comparison. Moreover, answers to those questions will be sought using multiple sources of data in Arabic and English – the two languages I read most easily. Those sources of data include books, journal articles, encyclopedias, newspaper coverages, and archived audiovisual material from Arabic and Western media networks.

The data analysis process starts with the development of within-case analyses using the technique of process tracing (George & Bennett, 2005). Here, a description of each case and its themes will be developed and presented in the form of analytic narratives (Chapter 5-6). Following the presentation of all cases, a cross-case analysis will be presented in Chapter 7, which will put in place the final puzzle piece in our typological theory on popular revolution.

**Towards a Typological Theory on Popular revolution**

According to George & Bennett (2005, p. 244), the deductive approach of creating a typological theory “requires that the investigator first construct a theory-based map of the property space by defining variables and types these variables
constitute through all their mathematically possible configurations” (p. 244). Before we populate our map of the property space, however, we need to explore various ways to reduce it. Three measures will be taken in that regard: delimitation, case selection, and elimination of types that are theoretically uninformative and/or socially not possible.

We could initially delimit the scope of our research by marking *revolutionary situation* as our point of departure; and *revolutionary outcome* as our point of arrival. Revolutionary situation is characterized by the presence of “dual power” (Trotsky, 1932) or “multiple sovereignty” (Tilly, 1978). Revolutionary outcome, on the other hand, “is the displacement of one set of power holders by another” (Tilly, 1978, p. 193). Accordingly, anything before or after the above-mentioned boundaries is therefore beyond the scope of our research (see figure 4).
To clarify, this study is only interested in the cases of actual revolutionary events. That is, where revolutionary action has actually taken place, and led to a revolutionary situation. Therefore, the Arab Spring protests and demonstrations that have not transformed into national crises and failed to produce revolutionary situations are not included in this study (see figure 5). This parameter significantly reduces our universe of cases. Also, it decreases the number of variables under examination, and, thus, the property space.
The property space. So far, our typological framework includes three independent variables (elite defections, internationalization of conflict and withdrawal of foreign patron support), and one dependent variable (outcome of RA). All variables are dichotomous, with possibilities of yes/no for the independent variables, and successful/failed for the dependent variable. That gives us the opportunity to identify 16 possible types (i.e. $2^n$). Below is a description of each variable in our typological framework, followed by a populated map of the property space (see Table 1).

Elite defections. The withdrawal of support to power holders and/or the active dissent against them among institutional elites in the coercive apparatus of the state (i.e. the military and security forces).
Internationalization of conflict. The interference of a powerful third party to alter a conflict through the threat or actual use of force and/or coercion (e.g. regional/international powers and organizations).

Withdrawal of foreign patron support. The withdrawal of diplomatic, financial, and/or military support to the embattled regime from its foreign patrons.

Successful RA. The successful deposition of power holders in the government, and the replacement thereof with a figure/body accepted by the revolutionaries.

Failed RA. The failure of RA to effect the deposition of power holders in government and/or their replacement with a figure/body accepted by the revolutionaries.

Table 1
A Map of the Property Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arab Spring Case</th>
<th>Elite Defections</th>
<th>Internationalization of Conflict</th>
<th>Support of Foreign Patron</th>
<th>Outcome of RA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=No; Y=Yes
Libya did not have a foreign patron, and its regime was not nested in any meaningful political alliance/structure.

In terms of revolutionary outcomes, a successful RA is an instance of popular revolution; and a failed RA, is a case of abortive revolution. We now have an idea of the configurations of variables that lead to the success and failure of revolutionary action. However, our interest goes beyond that to the creation of theoretical types of success and failure. Those types will allow us to advance a theory on the Arab Spring, whose contingent generalizations may be extended to other cases.

In that spirit, I shall proceed to identify types of popular and abortive revolutions. As I have already mentioned, the number of variables in our property space gives us the opportunity to identify 16 possible types (i.e. $2^4$). However, not all of those types are theoretically informative and/or socially possible; such types will, thus, be disregarded. Moreover, after the elimination of types that are theoretically uninformative, I was able to identify four instances of success and failure (see Table 2).
Specifically, I have identified two types of successful RA, namely *elite-imposed popular revolution (EIPR)*, and *foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR)*. Moreover, although the Arab Spring had given us only one type of failed RA, namely *foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR)*, I was able to deduce another type – *elite-blocked abortive revolution (EBAR)*. As illustrated above, Table 2 provides a typological theory on the Arab Spring. Moreover, my observations on Table 2 can be summed up in the below causal model for short-term outcomes of RA (See figure 6).
Figure 6. A Causal Model for Short-Term Outcomes of Revolutionary Action

Theoretical premises. We are now ready to generate hypotheses based on our observations on Table 2. For the sake of simplicity, I shall denote the independent variables as follows: \( x = \) elite defection, \( y = \) internationalization of conflict, and \( z = \) withdrawal of foreign patron support.

\textbf{H1.} If \( x \) and \( z \) are present, and \( y \) is not, then RA will succeed and result in an Elite-Imposed Popular Revolution (EIPR).

\textbf{H2.} If \( y \) and \( z \) are present, and \( x \) is not, then RA will succeed and result in a Foreign-Imposed Popular Revolution (FIPR).

\textbf{H3.} If \( x \) and/or \( y \) are present, but \( z \) is not, then RA will fail and result in a Foreign-Blocked Abortive Revolution (FBAR).
**H4.** if neither x, nor y are present, then RA will fail and result in an Elite-Blocked Abortive Revolution (EBAR).

Accordingly, as we proceed to carry out the cases, we can make the following propositions:

**Proposition 1.** RA will succeed and lead to an elite-imposed popular revolution (EIPR) where elite defections are widespread, conflict is not internationalized, and regime fails to secure the support of a foreign patron.

**Proposition 2.** RA will succeed and result in a foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR) where conflict is internationalized and regime fails to secure the support of a foreign patron, regardless of elite defections.

**Proposition 3.** RA will fail and result in a foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR) where regime manages to secure the support of a foreign patron, regardless of elite defections and internationalization of conflict.

**Proposition 4.** RA will fail and lead to an elite-blocked abortive revolution (EBAR) where there are neither elite defections, nor internationalization of conflict.

The task ahead is to examine the Arab Spring’s cases to assess the above propositions, build on them to further enrich our theoretical types, and finally, to use the new insights to advance a typological theory on popular revolution.
Chapter 4: Elite-Imposed Popular Revolutions: Tunisia and Egypt

Tunisia

From Crisis to Revolutionary Action

It all seems to have started on December 17, 2010 in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid. On that day, protests broke out following a tragic act of self-immolation by a local fruit vendor named Mohammed al-Bouazizi. The 26-year-old Bouazizi set himself ablaze in front of a government building in what appeared to be a symbolic act of protest. According to his relatives, Bouazizi acted out of extreme frustration with a life of poverty and unemployment, capped that very day by humiliation at the hands of local police.

Reportedly, a policewoman had ruthlessly confiscated Bouazizi’s produce following a heated argument over his unlicensed cart. Moreover, when his appeals to authorities at the local municipality went unheeded, he left the government building in a state of fury, only to return with a container of paint-thinner, a lighter, and a burning desire to put an end to his undignified being. Unfortunately for Bouazizi, his misery would not end that day. His attempted suicide initially failed to end his life, leaving 90% of his body covered with third-degree burns.

The fact that Bouazizi did not immediately die seems to have exacerbated an already combustible situation. The anger among his relatives and fellow townsmen was so great that the first protest erupted shortly after the incident. In a few scant hours, protesters were joined by members of the local branch of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) – a national federation with a membership of over 500,000 workers, and a history that predates the Tunisian independence.
This development gave an unmistakable impetus to the protests – a function of the UGTT’s vast experience in collective action. In the following three days, the protests would grow bigger, the protesters angrier, fueled by updates concerning Bouazizi’s ever-deteriorating condition. Additionally, the perpetuation of protests seems to have been aided, rather inadvertently, by the passive-aggressive behavior of the local police. Reportedly, the police chief had refused to even meet with The Boazizis to defuse the situation (Lageman, 2011); such hubris would only fuel further turbulence.

Yet, with an astounding display of restraint uncharacteristic of rural dissent, the protests remained peaceful. Instead of directing their anger at the police or vandalizing government buildings, the protesters seemed rather focused on one thing: getting out the story of Bouazizi and his turbulent hometown. Although this tragic story needs no sensationalism, by the time it reached Al Jazeera, the storyline ran something like this: A young university graduate sets himself on fire to protest police corruption, after being slapped by a female officer for refusing to pay a bribe.

We now know that the above storyline is hardly accurate. Bouazizi was never a university graduate (Abouzeid, 2011), and the policewoman who allegedly slapped him was later acquitted of all charges in a post-revolution court (Day, 2011). At this point, it is hard to ascertain whether the inaccuracy in the reporting was in fact intended, or merely a function of our social-media age. What we do know, however, is that the hyperventilated version of the story immediately resonated with the Tunisian youth, whose cyber-activism would serve the Sidi Bouzid cause rather well.

Straightaway, the regime realized the menaces associated with publicizing the turmoil. Accordingly, Sidi Bouzid was blockaded, and its power and internet feeds
suffered multiple outages in an effort to suffocate the news and prevent a potential spillover. A government delegation was sent to the raging town in a crisis-management mission – a visit that state media would cover, and thereby confirm the existence of a turmoil. Despite promises of a multimillion job-creation program, the delegation failed to abate the protests.

If there was any hope that the protests would wind down with news about Ben Ali’s personal effort to provide the best available medical care for Bouazizi, another young and unemployed man from Sidi Bouzid made sure that this did not happen. On December 22, Hussein Falhi, aged 22, committed another act of spectacular suicide; this time by electrocution (Ryan, 2011). Not only did this incident give a fresh impetus to the Sidi Bouzid protests, but it also marked their spillover to neighboring towns.

On December 24, demonstrations broke out further south to the towns of Menzel Bouzaiane, al-Regueb and al-Miknassi. At that point, if the involvement of the UGTT in the Sidi Bouzid protests was only suspected by the regime, the new events confirmed those fears. Indeed, the protests in those towns demonstrated a distinctive organizational capacity, exemplified by the uniformity of actions. It was truly fascinating how those protests would often start or end in front of a union building, chant strictly social demands, and determinedly avoid clashes with the police.

The new protests also exhibited an enhanced capacity to communicate with the outside world. At that point, Al Jazeera was broadcasting footage never seen before on social media. Several international human-rights organizations started to publish regular and well-sourced reports about the events in Tunisia. Those were but a few indications that behind the aggravated youth stood a core of militant activists – unionists, to be sure
(Ryan, 2011). Those unionists learned valuable lessons from previous confrontations with the state, especially during the 2008 Gafsa Mines Protests.

At the Gafsa protests, Tunisian activists came to fully comprehend the limits of collective action in a police state. While most Tunisians either unaware or simply looking away, police brought to a brutal end a collective action of over six months which spanned miners, unionists, women, students, and unemployed youth. Moreover, they also came to appreciate the limits of cyber activism, with state media being tightly controlled, Al Jazeera banned from Tunisia since 2006, and International media simply not interested in a story from a remote province in North Africa.

In Tunisia, as in most parts of the world, for an event to become “real”, it must be on television. Tunisian activists learned from the Gafsa events that in order to capture the imagination of the Tunisian public, they needed to partner with major international media platforms. Such platforms, they also understood, are not always interested in stories from remote provinces (especially during the 2008 global financial crisis). Therefore, they needed to partner with international NGOs, in order to attract media coverage, and shame the world into action.

Indeed, Tunisian activists have come a long way since the 2008 Gafsa mines protests; while the regime had not evolved. Whether due to sheer hubris or lack of experience with highly publicized dissent, the Tunisian security forces resorted to the same tactics by which it had employed to crush the Gafsa protests. That is, to skirmish their way to brutal repression, using whatever force deemed necessary to suppress popular dissent. The use of this tried-and-tested method is often encouraged by the regime.
Little did the regime know that activists around the country were being readied for such a prospect to arise. When an 18-year-old protester was shot dead in the town of Menzel Bouaiane, the turmoil immediately spilled over in all directions. By December 27, the protests had crisscrossed the country: from Sfax in the East to Kasserine in the West, and from Ben Gardane in the South to Tunis in the North. The regional crisis has now become a national uprising.

From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation

However wrong and unfair it may sound, events that remain outside big cities often do not receive the same attention as those in metropolitan areas. That is why, when the protests eventually reached Tunis and Sousse on December 27, Ben Ali appeared the next day on national television. His message was firm and uncompromising: “The law will be enforced with all firmness” he warned, before accusing the protests of being orchestrated by extremists, and manipulated by political forces:

It is not acceptable that a minority of extremists and agitators in the pay of others, and against the country’s interests, resort to violence and street disturbances as means of expression, whatever their form is in a State of law like ours. This is a negative and anti-civil behavior that presents a distorted image of our country and impedes the flow of investors and tourists which impacts negatively on job creation, while we need them to curb joblessness. Law will be enforced rigorously against these people. (“Speech by President Ben Ali, 27 November 2010,” 2010)

Shortly after the speech, Ben Ali dismissed three members of his cabinet, as well as several other high-ranking officials in his regime. Whether their dismissal was related to their performance during the crisis, or merely an exercise in scapegoating politics, was
not clear at that point. What was evident, however, is that Ben Ali was ready to micromanage the crisis. Instructions were given for various state institutions to quell the protests.

While the internal security forces demonstrated eagerness to escalate repression in places like Gafsa, Monastir, Chebba, and Sbikha, the army started to send mixed messages in all directions. Without refusing orders of deployment, military units remained largely on the sidelines of protests, limiting their activities to the protection of national assets and critical infrastructure. To be sure, the behavior of the military did not go unnoticed by international capitals, nor by the political and economic elites in Tunisia.

Meanwhile, ordinary Tunisians barely noticed the turn of the year, as they spent the first week of 2011 watching the protests grow exponentially, with various professional syndicates now joining the uprising. There was also another significant development that took place during that week. On January 5, Mohammed al-Bouazizi passed away in the hospital. The doctors failed to save his life, and, consequently, Tunisia from what was to come. Following his death, massive rallies swept across Tunisia, and general strikes effectively paralyzed the nation. The police force was unprepared and overwhelmed.

When it became clear to the state that the army was not willing to lend a hand, the regime quite literally summoned its dark forces. Snipers wearing dark suits seemingly came out of nowhere to assist the police in putting down a massive protest in the western city of Kasserine. Allegedly, those involved were members of a special militia that fell under the command of the presidential guard (Ryan, 2011). Their mission was clear and
simple: to terrorize the population. What resulted was a massacre that transformed the situation.

Between January 8 and 12, at least 21 people were killed in Kasserine and Tala, mainly by assassins’ bullets (‘‘Tunisia: Hold Police Accountable for Shootings,’’ 2011). Those events caused a massive backlash against the regime in Tunisia and around the world. What happened following the massacre in Kasserine, between Ben Ali on one hand and his generals and foreign allies on the other, was perhaps more than what the protesters could discern from official statements. Nevertheless, at that point, the protesters had had enough, and were ready to chant a demand of no historical precedence: *Ash-sha‘b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām* (Arabic: *The people want to topple the regime*).

**From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome**

Perhaps there is no clearer statement than *Ash-sha‘b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām* to announce the arrival of a revolutionary situation. This famous Arab Spring mantra, which would soon echo in several Arab capitals, was first chanted in Tunis on Dec 13, 2011. Thousands of angry Tunisians shouted those words at the Avenue of Habib Bourgiba – The father of the Tunisian Independence, who was removed from office by Ben Ali. That was their response to Ben Ali’s latest concessions, which he made during a televised speech following the Kasserine massacre.

In that speech, the Tunisian President appeared to have lost his characteristic hubris while making one concession after another. Among those concessions was a promise to not run for reelection in 2014. He also vowed to institute a wide-range of social, economic, and political reforms. Additionally, he pledged to investigate all the killings that happened during the uprising, and bring justice to their perpetrators.
“Enough firing of real bullets,” he exclaimed, “I refuse to see new victims fall.”


Not only did that seem schizophrenic on Ben Ali’s part, but it also appeared as if the Tunisia President was merely parroting an order that was given to him. At that point, all eyes were on the army following reports about extreme displeasure among its top echelon. Opposition leaders were spreading the word that Ben Ali had dismissed General Rachid Ammar, the army’s chief of staff, because the latter had refused to carry out specific orders, not the least of which concerned shooting at protesters.

Understandably, Ben Ali was desperate for the army to send a message of state unity. However, the only unity the army leadership was interested in at that point was that of its own institution. For that, the events in Kasserine and Tala posed a serious test to the unity of the army. Reportedly, the military rank and file have explicitly expressed solidarity with the protesters, and even protected them from police repression in more than one occasion (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

Moreover, the army leadership had little interest, if any, in defending a regime that had made sure, for coup-proofing reasons, that the military remained small, underfunded, and counter-balanced by multiple internal security forces. In addition, nothing came from Washington, or Paris, throughout the uprising to suggest that the Tunisian regime had the backing of its Western allies. If anything, the ambivalence in the statements that came from the White House and the Élysée has only fueled suspicions among army generals that Ben Ali was no longer supported by his foreign patrons.

In fact, the American State Department might have encouraged the army to step in when it issued a statement following the events in Kasserine to express its deep concerns
over the excessive use of violence by the Tunisian government (Maclean, 2011). An even stronger statement came from Paris in which the French Prime Minister François Fillon blatantly criticized the “disproportionate use of force” by the Tunisian authorities (“Tunisia riots: French Prime Minister condemns ‘disproportionate’ use of force,” 2011). Now that Ben Ali’s actions are alienating his foreign allies, the army had no reason to remain cautious.

In the early hours of January 14, there were numerous media reports about unusual military activity in Tunis, especially concerning actions at the international airport. Emboldened by implications of a potential coup, tens of thousands of Tunisians started to fill the Avenue of Habib Bourgiba in Tunis, defying government orders that forbade public assembly. They all shouted in one voice: Ben Ali, dégage (get out). That night, Ben Ali and his family left Tunisia on a plane that headed initially to France, but somehow ended up in Saudi Arabia.

Reportedly, the French President Nicholas Sarkozy refused to let Ben Ali’s plane land in Paris. Indeed, that would have been too politically risky in a country with a sizable Tunisian community. Moreover, Sarkozy was already under attack by the opposition Parti Socialiste, which was demanding the resignation of then defense minister Michele Alliot-Marie. Alliot-Marie had enraged the opposition twice: first when she offered her country’s help to quell the Tunisian protests (“French Foreign Minister Alliot-Marie quits over Tunisia,” 2011), and then when a shipment of riot gear was discovered before making its way to Tunisia.

Ben Ali was not welcome in Paris, and his plane had to make a turn near Cyprus to head instead to Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the revolutionary situation did not end
when it was announced that Ben Ali had landed in Jeddah. Despite the initial jubilation, Tunisians remained on the streets, anxiously watching the political elites trying to fill the power vacuum, albeit under the watchful eyes of the military leadership. To their credit, the military generals never seemed interested in taking charge after Ben Ali.

In fact, the army made its disinterest in power clear when it allowed prime minister Mohammed al-Ghannouchi to assume the role of Interim President. The Tunisian revolutionaries, however, rejected Ghannouchi’s self-appointment for several reasons. First, they found it suspicious to refer to article 56 of the constitution, which provides guidance in the event of a temporary vacancy in the position of president. Second, Ghannouchi was widely perceived as a member of the establishment; what Tunisians really wanted was a clean break with the past.

Consequently, the revolutionaries refused to leave the streets. In the following day, the matter was taken to the Tunisian Constitutional Court. The court ruled that the Speaker of the House was to become Interim President. It referred in its ruling to article 57 of the constitution, which is concerned with the issue of the permanent vacancy in the office of the presidency. Accordingly, Fouad Mbazza was sworn in on January 15 as Interim President – a decision that was accepted by the revolutionaries.

What followed next was the usual disorder that is the hallmark of every post-revolutionary period. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that by the end of February 2011, the revolutionary situation was largely over, when Beji Caid Essebsi replaced Mohammed al-Ghannouchi as prime minister. Under the interim presidency of Mbazza, and the premiership of Essibsi, Tunisia navigated its way to hold its first free election after the
revolution; an election that would bring Mouncif al-Marzouqi, an opposition figure under Ben Ali, to the presidency of Tunisia.

Marzouqi was sworn in on December 12, 2011, five days short of the anniversary of Mohammed al-Bouazizi’s self-immolation.

**Egypt**

**From Crisis to Revolutionary Action**

It is likely that the story of Bouazizi will receive further embellishments in future retellings. After all, no story is more inspiring to the ever-hopeful human soul, more edifying to the student of history, than one of an underdog who sparked a revolution. However, for such a narrative to endure, it needs to turn a blind eye to some undisputed facts, chief among them the fact that Bouazizi’s tragic action was far from being unusual in the Tunisian Society.

Sadly, between 2005 and 2010, there were 61 incidents of self-immolation in Tunisia (Ben Khelil et al., 2016). Clearly, Bouazizi’s self-immolation, which took place in the last month of that period, is at the bottom of that long list. Did those people not matter then to their fellow Tunisians? To be sure, we do not know how much publicity those incidents have actually received, if any at all. Nevertheless, if every publicized self-immolation is likely to spark an uprising, then Algeria should have been the next Tunisia.

By the same measure, Egyptians would have taken to the street on January 17, 2011 - when Egypt found its own Bouazizi. That day, a young unemployed Egyptian sat himself on fire in front of the parliament building in Cairo, heralding a series of copycat suicides across the country. None of the Egyptian Bouazizis managed to generate a single
Sidi Bouzid in Egypt. Again, does that mean that those individuals did not matter to their fellow countrymen? Certainly, the cyber sphere provided evidence to the contrary.

In fact, those incidents were as infuriating to many Egyptians as was the police murder of the Alexandrian blogger Khalid Said in 2010. Like their fellow Tunisians, those who initiated the uprising in Egypt knew that revolutionary action is far from being a spontaneous response to a horrifying incident. When Egyptian activists made a call for a nationwide protest on January 25, 2011, they were hardly reacting to a domestic precipitating event. Their action was inspired, triggered, and informed by the Tunisian revolution.

The fact that it took the Egyptian activists a mere ten days to wage their revolutionary action is rather telling. For that, contrary to common narratives, the Egyptian revolutionary movement was hardly an impromptu youth mobilization. Throughout the years that led to the uprising, political activists and community organizers have managed to mobilize Egypt’s youth and workers at several junctures: From the 2008 Mahalla protests to the 2010 scandalous elections, and beyond. During such events, Egyptian activists learned to coalesce in a mutual struggle against state repression.

New movements also emerged during those events. For instance, The April 6 Youth Movement was born of the Mahalla adversity. The National Association for Change emerged during the 2009-2010 election season. These new movements were loose enough, structurally and ideologically, to embrace all those who share a vision for a just republic – a struggle pioneered by the Kefaya Movement in the early 2000s. As a
result, a cross-generational anti-regime movement has emerged; and its consolidation was facilitated by the regime’s failed policies and indiscriminate oppression.

Further, this anti-regime movement spanned countless activists with various affiliations, including students, unionists, and members of traditional opposition parties. Those were the people who called for a nation-wide protest on the 25th of January. Their collaboration was facilitated by modern technology, not created by it. They transferred their organizational skills to the cyber space, and implored their fellow Egyptians to make the 25th of January a “day of rage” (Nowaira, 2011); and rage was what they got.

On January 25, 2011, tens of thousands of ordinary Egyptians joined the young activists in a nationwide protest. From Cairo to Alexandria, and from Suez to Aswan, protesters took to the streets, chanting familiar slogans that originated less than a fortnight ago in Tunisia. Cunningly, Egyptian activists chose Police Day to mark the beginning of their protest against state repression. Being a national holiday, activists were hoping for a major turnout; and their calculations were right in that regard.

Perhaps they also reckoned, given the occasion, that the police would be at their best possible behavior. On this point, they were wrong. Hostilities began when protestors seemed to target regime symbols in downtown Cairo, including the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party. Things did not turn ugly until protesters at Tahrir Square started to chant “depart Mubarak” (Shenker, 2011). At that point, police started firing tear gas and using batons and water cannons to disperse the protesters. The day ended with four deaths across the nation.

Protests refused to abate the following day, largely due to the growing interest from major international media outlets. Not only were the protests fueled by police
repression, but also by encouraging signs from the outside world, especially from the United States. By the early hours of January 26, 2011 Egyptians learned where Washington stood regarding the events in the Arab World. In his State of the Union address, President Obama had emphatically stated:

> And we saw that same desire to be free in Tunisia, where the will of the people proved more powerful than the writ of a dictator. And tonight, let us be clear: The United States of America stands with the people of Tunisia, and supports the democratic aspirations of all people (“Remarks by the President in State of Union Address,” 2011).

This was a major blow to Mubarak, and all Arab autocrats for that matter. For Obama to celebrate the revolutionary outcome in Tunisia is to encourage its replication elsewhere in the Arab World. Ever since the Iranian Revolution, Middle Eastern autocrats have become suspicious of all U.S. Democratic-party administrations. They believe that Carter’s reluctance to support the Shah is what caused the latter to appear weak, and eventually lose the support of the Iranian elites who could have otherwise rescued him. Mubarak feared that he was in essence, the Shah of Egypt.

Though there was nothing at that point to suggest that Mubarak would lose the support of the Egyptian institutional elites, he knew that President Obama had effectively put him under the mercy of the deep state. The fact that he was a son of the army institution was no longer reassuring, having witnessed a fellow military man in Tunisia being deposed by his generals in what amounted to a quasi-coup. Mubarak hated to see the loyalty of his generals being tested during a mass popular mobilization.
Accordingly, instructions were given to the police force to take full charge of the situation without asking for any help from the army. However, everything the police did on January 26 and 27 appeared to be counter-productive. The more injuries police caused among protesters, the bigger the backlash they generated - the more arrests they made, the larger the protests grew. Consequently, on January 28, Mubarak found himself compelled to deploy the army in Egypt’s major cities.

This was the kind of decision that any autocrat would take with bitterness, as it projects nothing but weakness. Yet, by the end of the day, it became clear that the regime was in fact preparing to transform the crisis by instigating a showdown with the Muslim Brotherhood – the largest opposition body in the land. The police started a campaign of arrests that targeted leaders of the Brotherhood, based on unsubstantiated claims that they were orchestrating the protests.

Indeed, this was a shrewd move by the regime. Such an accusation was likely to rob protesters of their moral high ground. For that the Muslim Brotherhood is technically a banned organization over allegations that ranged from political violence to terrorism. Moreover, the Brotherhood operates with an Islamist agenda that makes it dreaded by Cairo’s allies. However, the leaders of the banned organization insisted on distancing themselves from the protests, largely because they in fact had nothing to do with them - up to that point anyway.

Then, it was clear that, by bringing back the bogeyman that is the Muslim Brotherhood, the regime was desperate to secure the support of its allies, foreign and domestic. Little did the regime know that those very measures would engender fatal consequences. Not only did the protesters manage to dismantle the political landmine, but
also to welcome the Brotherhood and its large reservoir of resources into the movement which, at that point, started to chant the borrowed, “Ash-sha‘b yurūd isqāt an-nizām”. Egypt was on the verge of a revolutionary situation.

**From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation**

In the early hours of January 29, Mubarak addressed the nation for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. In his televised speech, he announced the dismissal of his cabinet, and promised that the new government would be more responsive to the current climate. He also vowed to take all necessary decisions to restore order, without giving the slightest hint as to whether his own resignation was among those options.

In response to his defiant speech, riots broke out in multiple Egyptian cities, the bloodiest and most chaotic of which was in the city of Suez. When the day broke, Cairo’s Tahrir Square was transformed into a massive tented camp. Mubarak’s speech has evidently failed to achieve its intended outcomes. Rather, his words seem to have given the protesters a renewed sense of purpose. Consequently, the sit-ins and protests continued unabated, and so did the clashes with the police. A new concession was inevitable.

It was announced later that day that Mubarak had decided to appoint a vice president – a position typically kept vacant in most sultanist regimes. The man he chose to fill that position was Omar Suleiman, the head of the General Intelligence Directorate. Perhaps, in other circumstances, such an appointment would have been hailed as a significant political reform in Egypt. However, in the context of the crisis, this was too little - and too late.
For a long time, Mubarak refused to appoint a vice president, not only to maintain his “indispensable status”, but also because he was grooming his son Gamal to succeed him as president. Mubarak’s plan to establish a dynasty was in fact the worst kept secret in Egypt, and is perhaps what laid the seeds for the uprising. Therefore, Mubarak reckoned that by appointing a vice president, he was practically tackling the root of the problem. But he was mistaken.

Popular demands at that point had exceeded calls for reform to demand the immediate departure of Mubarak himself. Additionally, Egyptians in Tahrir Square were asking for a clean break with the establishment, of which Suleiman was a prominent member. Thus, protesters responded to the appointment of Suleiman by setting fire to the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party in downtown Cairo. This was a major development in the crisis.

The sight of flames eating away the ruling party’s building was aired on almost every major network in the world. The fact that The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities resided a few meters away from the fire drew worldwide audiences to the events in Downtown Cairo. But the priceless artifacts from the Egyptian civilization were hardly the real story in the corridors of power around the world. What was being witnessed is the born of dual power – a revolutionary situation.

**From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome**

Thought it started leaderless, the Egyptian revolutionary movement had quickly won the support of numerous widely-regarded figures in Egyptian society, some of whom possessed enough credentials to replace Mubarak. One of the hottest personalities at that time was Mohamed el-Baradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy
Agency. Baradei’s international profile, as well as his recent advocacy for democracy in his home country, made him an attractive candidate for the leadership of the Egyptian revolutionary movement.

What Baradei lacked in oratory, he made up for in enthusiasm. In one of several speeches he gave at Tahrir Square, Baradei seemed capable of electrifying the protesters as he stated, “What we started can never be pushed back. As we said, we have one main demand: the end of the regime and to start a new phase” (“Egypt’s protesters defy curfew, surround opposition figure,” 2011). Despite demonstrating in later stages that he was far from being the leader that Egypt needed at that phase, the enthusiasm about Baradei during the Egyptian Revolution cannot be overstated.

Baradei also received broad attention from international media outlets that somehow reflected the mood about him in international power corridors. It was not surprising to see his dismissal of Suleiman’s appointment as a “desperate attempt by Mubarak to stay in power” being echoed in Western capitals (“Egyptian opposition leader ElBaradei calls for Mubarak to leave,” 2011). “This is not about appointments”, emphasized the US Press Secretary, when asked about the appointment of Suleiman, “this is about actions” (“Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs,” 2011). Obama’s spokesperson went on to call for an “orderly transition” to begin in Egypt.

Following the White House’s remarks, things took a turn for the worse as far as the Egyptian regime was concerned. The European Union called for free and fair elections in Egypt (“Catherine Ashton Remarks on Egypt and Tunisia,” 2011). Israeli officials started to panic about the prospect of regime change in Egypt (Ravid, 2011). International capital along with foreign nationals started to flee Egypt and activists were
mobilizing for a million-man march. Mubarak, on the other hand, was doing everything he could to control the situation.

He announced a new government, and instructed his cabinet to increase subsidies to vital commodities. When that failed to calm the situation, Mubarak appeared on national television to announce that he would not stand for re-election. In addition, he promised a wide-range of economic, political, and constitutional reforms. Immediately after his speech, opposition leaders deemed Mubarak’s concessions not worthy enough to resolve the situation. Baradei considered Mubarak’s promise to not stand for re-election as “an act of deception” (“ElBaradei rejects Mubarak speech and says he must go,” 2011).

Though deemed insufficient by the revolutionary movement, Mubarak’s latest concessions appeared to satisfy Egypt’s institutional elites, especially in the army. Certainly, the end of the succession saga, as well as Mubarak’s promise to introduce economic reforms, appeared to serve the army’s interests rather well. With Gamal Mubarak no longer the heir apparent, the army institution, which gave Egypt all its presidents since the abolishment of the monarchy, was likely to retain the position of presidency.

In addition, the curtailment of Gamal’s political influence could well lead to the obstruction of the neoliberal policies that enriched the president’s sons and their cronies at the expense of the army’s interests. Since the 1952 coup that abolished the monarchy, the army has enjoyed a control over one-third of Egypt’s economy. Nothing has ever threatened that position of power like the prominence of Gamal Mubarak. It is, then, not
unthinkable to suggest that Mubarak’s concessions were primarily meant to appease Egypt’s institutional elites, not its revolutionaries.

The message seemed well-received. The army suddenly appeared to take a firm stance with the protesters, despite previous promises to not hurt them. Moreover, the military started to flex its muscles by deploying tanks and armored vehicles throughout Egypt. This was a reminder to everyone, including Western capitals, that the Egyptian army was the only power structure that possessed the necessary means of coercion to decide the outcome of the revolutionary situation. Washington seemed to take note.

Following the military’s demonstration of power, President Barack Obama praised the army for its “patriotism and professionalism” (“Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt,” 2011). The U.S. President seemed to reemphasize this stance by urging the military to “continue its efforts to help ensure that this time of change [emphasis added] is peaceful”. Obama also said that he had spoken to president Mubarak, and informed him that “an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now.”

To that, the army responded by turning a blind eye to pro-government goon squads as they wreaked havoc in Tahrir Square on February 2nd and 3rd. This was a clear indication that the army institution was willing to stand behind Mubarak. However, by doing so, the army was risking 1.5 billion dollars in annual aides from the United States. The Egyptian generals were also risking the unity of their institution should defections start to occur within the military’s rank and file.

While the army leadership was carefully monitoring the situation, Egyptian activists pronounced the next day a “day of departure” (“Egypt holds ‘Day of
Departure,” 2011). Fridays were increasingly becoming the regime’s worst nightmare; a curfew was unthinkable on a day of mass prayer, and protests were increasingly becoming swelled by massive numbers of people who leave the mosques to join the protesters. That day, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians left Cairo’s mosques to join the protest at Tahrir Square. However, Mubarak’s departure was still in question.

Perhaps at that point it dawned on the Egyptian activists that the success of their revolutionary action hinged not on the size of their popular mobilization. Meanwhile, the army threatened to forcefully evacuate all protesters from Tahrir Square. In the following days, the general mood among the young protesters in Cairo was one of anxiety and melancholia. They learned from media reports that several opposition leaders, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, had participated in a government-sponsored, national dialogue.

In addition, the protesters also learned from NGO reports that the death toll had exceeded 300 since the beginning of the uprising. They felt deceived and betrayed; but they remained defiant. Protests continued unabated, and gained significant momentum when they were joined by tens of thousands of labor unionists. General strikes paralyzed the country, and the Egyptian regime appeared to be preparing the world for the worst when Vice President Omar Suleiman pronounced the situation in Egypt as untenable, and warned of a coup (Tran, 2011).

As the regime was preparing to give final orders to the army to crush the protests, the worse happened. The Egyptian President learned that The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), over which he presided, had been in session without his knowledge. Though we may never know what happened in that meeting, one can safely
assume that the outcome of the revolutionary situation was decided in that room, on that day – 72 hours before Mubarak’s departure.

Following that meeting, the army started to suddenly ingratiate itself with the protesters, promising them to stand in their defense. This rapprochement with Tahrir Square coincided with an unmistakable aloofness towards the regime. Cairo grew anxious, and its chief diplomat Ahmed Aboul Ghiet may have revealed too much of the regime’s suspicions in an interview with PBS on February 9, 2011. In that interview, Aboul Ghiet described the U.S. exhortations to the Egyptian regime as “infuriating” and “not helpful at all”, before warning:

Do we want the armed forces to assume the responsibility of stabilizing the nation through imposing martial law, and army in the streets [sic]. The army is in defense of the borders of the country and the national security of the state. But for the army to rule, to step in, to put its friends on the scene, that would be a very dangerous possibility. (“Egypt’s Foreign Minister Tells U.S. Not to Impose Its Will,” 2011).

On February 10, 2011 SCAF issued a brief televised statement labeled as “Communiqué No. 1” (“Text of Egyptian military communique No. 1 Thursday, Feb. 10,” 2011). In that statement, the army’s supreme council described the popular demands as legitimate, and promised to remain in session until the situation in Egypt was resolved. Though vague and brief by design, the statement was widely perceived as a prelude to a coup, owing to the use of the word “communiqué” in its title. Following the broadcast, protesters in Tahrir Square were unmistakably elated, signaling to the army that they would accept a coup to depose Mubarak.
The head of The Egyptian National Television later revealed in an interview with
CNN Arabic that the person who delivered the SCAF statement had instructed him to air
it without notifying the government (“Mubarak himself made the decision to step down,”
2017). Mubarak must have been apprehensive when he watched the statement, and a
defection of a member of his cabinet on that day made him look even weaker. Later that
night Mubarak addressed the nation amid rumors that he would announce his resignation.

Tahrir Square was packed in anticipation of the speech, and a large TV screen
was installed for the occasion. However, when Mubarak announced his intentions to
remain in power until September, thousands of protesters raised their shoes in the air to
his picture on the TV screen. On February 11, 2011 millions of angry Egyptians took to
the street across the nation, demanding the army to remove Mubarak. That afternoon,
Vice President Omar Suleiman appeared on national TV to announce that the president
had decided to resign, and that SCAF will “run the affairs of the country” (“Egypt’s
Mubarak resigns after 30-year rule,” 2011).

Protesters around Egypt received the news with celebratory chanting. Egypt is
now ruled by a military Junta, headed by Mubarak’s Defense Minister Mohammed
Hussein Tantawi. On February 12, 2011, Egypt’s new military rulers issued a statement,
in which they promised to hand power to a “to a legitimate and popularly elected civilian
authority (“Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces: Statements and Key
Leaders,” 2011). The army also vowed to abide by international treaties, signifying a
commitment to the 1979 peace accord with Israel.

Ultimately the revolutionary situation was largely over by March 7, 2011, when a
new interim cabinet was sworn in. The Supreme Council would rule Egypt unchallenged
until November 2011, when protesters returned to Tahrir Square to protest what they perceived as the hegemony of the army. However, neither then, nor at any point during the military’s 15-months rule, did Egypt witness a return of the revolutionary situation. Despite repeated procrastinations, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces did keep its word, and handed power to an elected president.

On June 30, 2012, Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood became Egypt’s first elected president in the post-Mubarak era.
Chapter 5: Foreign-Imposed Popular Revolutions: Libya and Yemen

Libya

From Crisis to Revolutionary Action

On the back of yet another successful revolutionary action in the Arab World, calls for a Libyan “day of rage” broke out on the internet immediately after the fall of Mubarak. Libyan activists, mostly in exile, implored their fellow citizens to heed what had become a regional outcry for emancipation from dictatorship, and to start their own revolutionary action on February 17, 2011. In that, they seemed far more concerned about exploiting an internationally favorable context than in ensuring a peaceful and effective popular mobilization.

Consequently, it was not surprising to see protests erupt rather extemporaneously two days before the set date. On February 15, 2011, the arrest of a human rights activist in the eastern city of Benghazi sparked a protest in front of the police station where he was being interrogated. Fathi Terbil was far from being the prominent opposition leader in a country where political organization was strictly prohibited. He, however, was one of a small number of activists recognized by the regime as “trouble-makers”.

It was not clear at that point whether Terbil was in fact an agitator for Libya’s “day of rage” or merely a scapegoat in a plot to forestall a widely-anticipated collective action. What was evident, however, is that popular pressure had succeeded in forcing the release of Terbil after a few hours of his arrest. Moreover, the success of that collective action seems to have further emboldened the protesters as they took their protest to the city center, where they were joined by scores of young Benghazians.
Though unprecedented in Gaddafi’s Libya, protests had largely been anticipated in light of the events in Tunisia and Egypt. Having already witnessed, and denounced, the deposition of Ben Ali and Mubarak, Muammar Gaddafi was bracing himself for a similar challenge; one that he was determined to meet with uncompromising firmness. Therefore, when the Benghazi protesters started to chant slogans perceived as anti-regime, they were not given the benefit of the doubt. Immediately, security forces attacked the protesters, killing several among them, and injuring dozens.

Nevertheless, instead of intimidating those who were planning to participate in Libya’s day of rage, the repression in Benghazi appeared to be counterproductive. The Libyan cyber space exploded with pictures and videos that exposed the regime’s excessive use force – something that infuriated ordinary Libyans across the country. Consequently, on the afternoon of February 17, 2011, thousands of people took to the streets across Libya to protest state repression. For the first time in the history of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the people called for an end to regime corruption.

As was widely expected, the first protests broke out along the unruly northeastern coast, in the cities of Ajdabiya, Benghazi, al-Bayda, and Derna. However, as the day progressed, al-Zintan, among several other western cities, joined the protests. This development came to clear speculations that the looming crisis was going to take the form of an eastern rebellion. Before the day was out, more than a dozen of protesters were killed, and many more injured. At that point, Libyans across the country were already shouting “down with Gaddafi” (“Deadly ‘day of rage’ in Libya,” 2011).

The rapid transformation of events in the first day of the Libyan revolt was rather alarming. It exposed the menaces associated with the near-complete absence of a Libyan
civil society. There was no formally organized body to guide and rationalize the protests. In addition, the Libyan activists seemed to lack the proficiency and experience of the Tunisian unionists; the political acumen and savvy of the Egyptian community organizers. Consequently, it was not surprising to see most protests descend into sheer riots.

Any hope that the Libyan mobilization would emulate the largely peaceful uprisings of Tunisia and Egypt quickly evaporated with news coming from Barqa between February 18 and 19. Reportedly, protesters in the city of Benghazi forced their way into seizing a military garrison after a suicide bomber had driven a car into its front gate. The appropriated arms were then immediately used to “liberate” the cities of Tobruk and Derna. What was supposed to be a Tunisian-style uprising has quickly transmuted into an insurrection.

Though regime practices have certainly contributed to that transformation, the susceptibility of ordinary Libyans to reciprocate violence cannot be overstated. On February 20, 2011, the Libyan insurrectionists stunned the world when they declared the “liberation” of Benghazi, Libya’s second largest city, after a bloody battle with security forces in which dozens were killed (“Libya protests: Reports of intense Benghazi violence,” 2011). Those developments fueled speculations that the Libyan regime was one the verge of rapid collapse. Such speculations proved wide of the mark shortly after a televised speech by Saif al-Islam Al Gaddafi – Muammar’s second son and heir apparent.

“Libya is not Egypt or Tunisia” warned Saif al-Islam, “it is a country [composed] of tribes, clans, and alliances, not civil society and political parties” (“Full Transcript of Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi’s Speech,” 2011). The young Gaddafi went on to caution that
Libya, for historical reasons, is prone to division, and that its oil wealth makes the scenario of a civil war highly probable. Ironically, despite exhorting Libyans to not “mimic Tunisians and Egyptians”, Saif Al Islam’s appeared willing to borrow from Ben Ali and Mubarak, not least in terms of dog-whistling threats to Libyan elites and foreign powers.

However, his father was in no mood for manipulative tactics. On February 21st, less than 24 hours of the young Gaddafi’s speech, military helicopters started to shell the insurrectionists who were, at that point marching towards Tripoli (Raghavan & Fadel, 2011). On the ground, tanks and heavy artillery were used to push the anti Gaddafi forces back towards Benghazi with hundreds killed in the process. The use of military force to suppress the popular mobilization drew worldwide condemnations, and led to the defection of military pilots, Libyan diplomats, and several clans throughout the country.

As a result, anti-Gaddafi protests proliferated across Libya; and the insurrection reached the point of no return.

**From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation**

On February 22, 2011, Gaddafi appeared on national television for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. It was not surprising that his first appearance coincided with regime victories on the ground. In his rather angry speech, he labeled all protesters as “drug addicts”, and all insurrectionists as agents of Al Qaeda (“Gaddafi accuses Qaeda of being behind Libya revolt,” 2011). Despite portraying the conflict as a struggle against radical Islamists – which was, at least partially, true – the world turned against Al Gaddafi, for several reasons.
The sight of warplanes shelling residential neighborhoods was something the international community could no longer tolerate. Having passively witnessed human atrocities in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the international community had finally made a commitment in 2005 to prevent similar massacres by adopting the norm of Responsibility to Protect. This norm has been invoked in several Security Council resolutions, most notably in Darfur. A similar measure regarding Libya appeared to be forthcoming on February 23, 2011, when Ban Ki Moon, the U.N. Secretary General, stated:

I am sure that the international community are considering a broad range of options… The reported nature and scale of the attacks on civilians are egregious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. I condemn them, loudly and without qualification. Those responsible for brutally shedding the blood of innocents must be punished. (“Ban strongly condemns Qadhafi’s actions against protesters, calls for punishment,” 2011)

Another reason as to why the international community was eager to intervene in Libya had to do with Ghaddafi himself. The Libyan leader was an international pariah par-excellence. His behavior in the international arena has gained him few allies, if any; and more enemies than a Third World dictator could afford – a function of a long involvement in state-sponsored terrorism and transnational conspiracies. Moreover, Gaddafi’s peculiar, and seemingly immoral, character has also fueled suspicions about his capacity to commit a crime against his own people.

In addition, the Libyan crisis was also a critical juncture in the so-called Arab Spring. Western powers, especially in Europe, had no shortage of scores to settle with the
Libyan regime. They also had a massive stake in the stability of Libya, for reasons that ranged from oil exports to migration and terrorism. Moreover, having missed the revolutionary bandwagon the first time in Tunisia and to some extent in Egypt, many Western leaders were eager to exploit the Libyan crisis to repair their relations with the Arab masses.

The early defection of Mustafa Abdul Jalil, Gaddafi’s Minister of Justice, appears to have been construed as a prelude to broad defections among Libyan elites. To be sure, those widely anticipated defections have never actually happened - not among the regime’s most influential institutional elites anyway. Nevertheless, the perpetual use of military power to quell the insurrection was in itself sufficient to cause the internationalization of the Libyan conflict. Accordingly, European powers, led by France and the United Kingdom, rallied the world against Gaddafi.

On February 26, 2011, the U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions against the Libyan regime, and asked of the International Criminal Court to investigate Gaddafi for alleged crimes against humanity (“Libya: UN Security Council votes sanctions on Gaddafi,” 2011). Meanwhile, a group of opposition leaders, led by the defected Minister of Justice Mustafa Abdul Jalil, was preparing to establish a political body to represent the insurrection. On March 5, they announced the creation of the Transitional National Council (TNC). The TNC declared itself the sole representative of Libyans, and sought domestic and international recognition as such (“Libya’s opposition leadership comes into focus,” 2011).

Libya’s revolutionary situation had finally arrived; albeit at a time when regime forces were gaining significant advantages on the ground.
From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome

The establishment of the TNC had undoubtedly provided the insurrectionists with a timely and much-needed platform, not only to make competing legitimacy claims, but also to seek protection and support for the insurrection. At that point, it became clear that the regime had managed to mobilize its forces, and manufacture a devastating comeback. After a brief momentum that took the insurrectionists to the outskirts of Tripoli, they were forced to retreat to the East - under heavy gunfire and aerial bombardment.

To prevent a human atrocity, and perhaps to save the insurrection, NATO stepped in on March 7, 2011 to surveil the Libyan airspace. This timely intervention evidently saved the insurrection from sinking into oblivion, or, at best, dwindling into an insurgency. Nevertheless, helicopter gunfire quickly exposed the limits of surveillance, which led the UN Security Council to establish a no-fly zone over Libya, and authorize Member States to take “all necessary measures … to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack” (“Security Council approves ‘no-fly zone’ over Libya, authorizing ‘all necessary measures’ to protect civilians,” 2011).

Subsequently, on March 19, 2011, military forces from France, Britain, and the United States led an international coalition against the Gaddafi regime, and launched Operation Odyssey Dawn (Townsend, 2011). Though short-lived, this military operation managed to suppress the Libyan regime’s air defenses, and degrade its missile systems. More important, it encouraged Arab States to participate in the alliance, thereby shielding it against potential accusations of neocolonialism. Arab States, especially the oil-rich, threw their financial clout behind the international alliance. They, too, had scores to settle with the Libyan leader.
After securing all legal, political, and financial requirements to impose regime change in Libya, the international alliance had abruptly decided to delegate most military operations to NATO. This action was not necessarily planned, after all, coordinating a large, multinational, military operation was never going to be an easy task. In addition, the situation on the ground was so dire that it begged for a decisive intervention – something that an established power structure like NATO was more likely to succeed at.

By the end of March 2011, NATO had taken full command of all military operations in Libya, including actions to protect civilians and civilian centers. Meanwhile, France, Britain, and Italy started to send military advisors to work with the Libyan insurrectionists on the battleground. Those actions seemed to immediately alter the conflict in favor of the insurrection. Certainly, they caused enough damage to the regime that the Libyan megalomaniacal leader decided to write a personal appeal to President Obama. In that letter, the ever-peculiar Gaddafi pleaded:

> We have been hurt more morally that [sic] physically because of what had happened against us in both deeds and words by you. Despite all this you will always remain our son whatever happened… Nato [sic] is waging an unjust war against a small people of a developing country… Hence, to serving world peace... Friendship between our peoples ... and for the sake of economic, and security cooperation against terror, you are in a position to keep Nato off the Libyan affair for good. (“Gadhafi asks Obama to end NATO bombing,” 2011)

There was no doubt in the United Stated that Al Gaddafi himself was the author of that letter. In response, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that NATO strikes would stop only if the Libyan leader decided to step down (“Gadhafi asks Obama to end
NATO bombing,” 2011). When he did not, NATO airstrikes appeared to target Gaddafi when a missile landed on a residential building at his Tripoli compound of Bab al-Aziziyya. Al Gaddafi emerged that night unharmed, but, he lost his son Saif al-Arab, along with three grandchildren who were killed in that airstrike.

By the beginning of May, and despite NATO bombardment, the Libyan regime was still able to cling to power. The vast majority of Libya’s institutional elites remained loyal to Gaddafi, and the regime forces seemed well-provisioned to continue the fight for several more months. The international alliance appeared undeterred by the stalemate on the ground. At a meeting in Rome on May 5, members of the alliance pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure the continuity of military operations in Libya.

To be sure, not all the funds raised in Rome went to finance NATO operations. The insurrectionists no doubt received a significant amount of those funds in the form of arms and supplies. Despite fears about the day after, some members in the alliance started to arm the insurrectionists to break the stalemate on the ground. Those efforts were largely rewarded when the insurrectionists announced on May 15 that they had seized the western city of Misrata – a key moment in the battle for Libya.

At that point, it became clear that any revolutionary outcome was not likely to favor Gaddafi. His last hope for a political settlement was lost when an attempted mediation by the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, was refused by the international alliance and the TNC. The regime’s despair was only compounded on June 27, when the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam, and his chief of intelligence Abdullah al-Senussi, over alleged crimes against humanity.
Meanwhile, early in July of 2011, the TNC gained formal recognition as the sole representative of Libya from the United Nations. Shortly thereafter, the same recognition was attained from the United States, thereby giving the TNC immediate access to over $30 billion dollars in frozen Libyan assets. By the end of the month, the TNC had gained another recognition from the United Kingdom, which became the second major European power, after France, to take that step.

In parallel with the TNC’s political triumphs, the insurrectionists were achieving significant victories on the ground. Building on their seizure of Misrata, the anti-Gaddafi forces started to advance towards Tripoli, under the cover of NATO airstrikes. By mid-August, the anti-Gaddafi forces were able to capture most of al-Zawiya – a key city to the west of the capital. The end result being Tripoli had for all intents and purposes, come under siege as the insurrectionists controlled all approaches to the Libyan capital.

Moreover, when the insurrectionist finally reached Tripoli on August 21, Gaddafi was apparently not ready “to die as a martyr” as he had frequently promised (Raghavan & Fadel, 2011). His whereabouts were unknown, but not the whereabouts of his children. The anti-Gaddafi forces somehow managed to capture two of his sons, though Saif al-Islam was not one of them. Still then, this was a major blow to Gaddafi, whose weakness was further exposed when the national TV aired an audio-only message from him to the Libyan people.

In that speech, Gaddafi rallied his loyalists to the defense of Tripoli, which they did rather fiercely. The battle for Tripoli could not be ameliorated, and was largely over when the anti-Gaddafi forces entered the Bab al-Aziziya compound on Aug 23, 2011. Again, Gaddafi could not be found in his house, which led the TNC to announce a
massive financial reward for his capture. This offer was followed by a promise of amnesty to any member of the Libyan regime who could capture, or kill, Gaddafi.

Although Gaddafi’s whereabouts remained unknown for almost two months, the revolutionary outcome has largely materialized on September 10, 2011, when Tripoli fell to the anti-Gaddafi forces, and the TNC leadership entered the capital as conquerors. Six days later, the TNC was granted global acknowledgment, when the UN General Assembly recognized it as the formal representative of the Libyan people. On October 20, Gaddafi was captured alive at his hometown of Surt; he was tortured and killed without trial.

Yemen

From Crisis to Revolutionary Action

It is indeed hard to contest the notion that Egypt was the real catalyst in the Arab Spring. Undoubtedly, the ignition did come from Tunisia, whose revolution inspired all the Arab popular mobilizations, including that of Egypt. Yet, one can only wonder whether the relatively small and remote Tunisia could instigate a transnational phenomenon in the magnitude of the Arab Spring without the example of Egypt. Certainly, even at the nadir of its cultural and political power, Egypt remains the beating heart of the Arab World.

To millions of revolutionaries across the Arab World, the Egyptian revolutionary movement was indeed a great source of inspiration; and perhaps, at times, of frustration. For that, while all eyes were on Cairo’s Tahrir Square, other Arab popular mobilizations struggled for international attention; especially in the Republic of Yemen. Indeed, the
Yemeni uprising was one of the earliest subsequences of the Tunisian revolution; it started a mere two days after Egypt’s “day of rage”.

On January 27, 2011, tens of thousands of Yemenis took to the streets of Sana’a, following a call for demonstration by a coalition of opposition groups known as the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP). That day also saw a young unemployed man in the southern city of Aden set himself on fire. However, like Egypt, Yemen was in no need for a tragic event to precipitate a crisis. In fact, it was hard at that point to recall a time when Yemen was not in crisis.

Under the veneer of social cohesion and relative stability, a humanitarian disaster had been brewing for a long time in Saleh’s Yemen. Ever since the eruption of a brief civil war in 1994, the regime of Ali Abdallah Saleh seemed unable to muster any achievement other than the preservation of negative peace. Basic human needs could hardly be afforded in a country where unemployment and illiteracy were endemic, and 42 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line (“Facing the Hard Facts in Yemen,” 2012).

In addition to the pervasive economic grievances, ordinary Yemenis, of which 75 per cent were under the age of 25, have always yearned for the sort of normalcy they only saw on television. That is, living a normal life in a normal state; one that aspires for economic development rather than the prevention of famine, promotes national identity rather than tribal and regional loyalties, and delivers lasting security rather than fragile settlements with rebels in the North, secessionists in the South, and terrorists in the East.

Those were the simple demands of Yemen’s youth – hardly as idealistic as the aspirations of their counterparts in Tunisia and Egypt. The young demonstrators did not
necessarily represent the views of everyone in Yemen. That much was clear on January 27, 2011, when their demonstration in Sana’a almost clashed with an equally sizable rally by regime loyalists. Indeed, at that point, the regime was still enjoying the support of a large section of the population, including Yemen’s most influential tribes.

Moreover, it is fair to say that a clean break with the regime, as demanded by the youth from day one, was hardly the goal of the opposition leaders who called for the demonstration. The so-called Yemeni opposition – whose resistance was often metaphorical than real – did not appear to be invested in the idea of regime change. Beyond the abstract calls for reform, they seemed rather focused on one thing - forcing the regime to make political concessions, not least of which concerned the future of the presidency.

Like Ben Ali and Mubarak, Saleh had plans to amend the constitution to clear his path for a lifetime presidency. At that point, he had been president of the Republic of Yemen since its inception in 1990. Moreover, like most Arab autocrats, Saleh was also grooming his son Ahmed to succeed him as president. The succession plan was perhaps more controversial than the issue of lifetime presidency. The opposition wanted to exploit the regional context to put those two issues to bed.

Clearly, Yemen’s traditional opposition, and the political elites who stood behind it, has had a different agenda to that of Yemen’s youth. Instead of seeking fundamental change, all the Yemeni political elites wanted was to renegotiate the ruling bargain. Thus, when Saleh did make those concession on February 2, 2011, a potential revolutionary action was on the verge of being reduced to a student movement. “I will not extend my mandate and I am against hereditary rule” Saleh emphatically promised, “no
extension, no inheritance, no resetting the clock” (“Yemen president not to extend term,” 2011).

Fortunately for Yemen’s youth, Saleh’s credibility, or lack thereof, seem to have saved the popular mobilization. Unanimously, the protesters refused Saleh’s concessions, citing previously revoked pledges, notably his promise to not stand for reelection in 2006. Additionally, they called for the next day to be an Egyptian-style “day of rage” in response to what they perceived as manipulative tactics by the Yemeni President. Though hardly generating a nationwide mobilization, Yemen’s day of rage produced a massive protest in Sana’a, in which six protesters were killed at the hands of regime forces and loyalists. A nationwide fury was ignited.

On the next day, massive protests erupted across the country, including the major cities of Aden and Taizz. Those protests would continue unabated throughout the month of February, fueled by regime oppressive practices, and emboldened by the success of revolutionary action in Egypt. Moreover, following the fall of the Egyptian President, opposition leaders in Yemen appeared to have willfully taken a back seat, allowing the youth to lead the anti-government movement. Instead of trying to suppress the occasional “people want to topple the regime”, they joined the chorus.

Everything became suddenly possible, including the departure of Saleh.

**From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation**

After the fall of Mubarak on February 11, 2011, the popular mobilization in Yemen started to finally get the attention of Arab and International media. The sheer numbers of Yemenis who participated in the anti-government protests, especially on Fridays, was rather astonishing. Even more astounding was the protesters’ commitment
to nonviolence in the face of regime repression. That was rather remarkable in a country where owning and carrying a weapon is an essential part of the Yemeni way of life.

While ordinary Yemenis were gaining universal praise for their commitment to nonviolence, the regime was receiving worldwide criticism for its violent approach to suppress the protests. The failure of the regime to turn the protests violent was compounded by the refusal of its traditional challengers to rekindle hostilities. By early March, The Houthi rebels, the Southern Movement, and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) had all neutralized themselves in the conflict. Certainly, they were quite satisfied in watching the regime being consumed by a popular mobilization.

On March 10, 2011, Saleh offered major political concessions at a time of growing criticism to his handling of the crisis. Among those concessions was a promise to draft a new constitution that would guarantee the separation of powers – a step that would transform the political system in Yemen. "I'm already sure that this initiative won't be accepted by the opposition", Saleh said, “but in order to do the right thing, I am offering this to the people and they will decide" (“Yemen president vows reform as protests continue,” 2011).

Certainly, Saleh’s “offer” was not meant to please the opposition, or the protesters for that matter. To be sure, authoritarians like him understood the dangers associated with projecting weakness in times of trouble. The Yemeni president knew that he had enough loyalty among the regime’s institutional elites to withstand the popular mobilization, even without the support of the political and tribal elites. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Saleh’s concessions were meant to secure the support of The United States – the
regime’s ultimate foreign patron - and, rather oddly, the chief promoter of liberal democracy.

However, with Ben Ali and Mubarak already deposed, the White House would not take the risk of backing an Arab autocrat facing yet another pro-democracy movement. Moreover, even before the Arab Spring, Saleh’s allies and patrons had been growing increasingly impatient with his indecisiveness towards AQAP and the Houthi rebellion. His inability to eliminate those grave threats to global security and international maritime was being rather perceived as a ploy to maximize U.S. and Saudi patronage.

Indeed, to Washington, Saleh was no longer the reliable client that once helped eradicate Soviet influence from the Arab World. And, to Riyadh, the Yemeni President had already failed to prove himself worthy of the billions of dollars in aid to curtail the Iranian influence on the Zaidi population in northern Yemen. With the Saudi-Iranian cold war expected to enter a new chapter during the Arab Spring, the Saudis perhaps reasoned that it was time for a new, more reliable ally in Yemen; one that is preferably Sunni.

Therefore, both Washington and Riyadh maintained silence during the early stages of the Yemeni uprising. With no signs of support for Saleh from Washington or Riyadh, more among the Yemeni elites started to join the anti-government coalition. Moreover, the protests seemed to grow exponentially by the day, and the beleaguered Saleh was desperate to regain the initiative. Accordingly, on March 18, 2011, regime forces opened fire on a peaceful protest, killing over 40 protesters. Citing disorder as the main cause for the massacre, the regime declared a state of emergency, and ordered the army to impose a curfew.
The measure immediately backfired. Because of the bloodshed in Sana’a, defections multiplied among Yemeni officials and members of the elites. Infuriated by the widespread defections, Saleh fired his cabinet on March 20, 2011. One of the dismissed members of the cabinet defiantly called for Saleh’s resignation, and this detractor was no ordinary person. Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar was the head of Hashid – a tribal confederation with enough clout to decide war and peace in Yemen. His defection was indeed a game changer.

On the next day, the regime lost the allegiance of the most authoritative man in the Yemeni Army. Major General Ali Mohsen Saleh al-Ahmar, another powerful member of the Ahmar family, decided to join the anti-government popular mobilization. With his defection, the uprising gained scores of top military commanders who followed in the footsteps of al-Ahmar. More importantly, the protesters were then protected by several military units which fell under the command of Major General al-Ahmar and his fellow defected generals.

Nevertheless, even after the defection of those military commanders, the most significant units in the armed forces remained loyal to Saleh and his son Ahmed, himself the head of the powerful Republican Guard. Saleh was far from finished, and his position was further secured when his Minster of Defense appeared on national television to declare that the armed forces will remain faithful to the president, and will defend him against any attempt at a coup (“Top army commanders defect in Yemen,” 2011).

And just like that, Yemen’s revolutionary situation had arrived.
From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome

On March 23, the scene of the capital city of Sana’a was rather terrifying to all of those who had a stake in the stability of Yemen. A violent face-off between the regime and the mutinous forces appeared to be imminent, with both sides deploying tanks and heavy artillery on the streets of Sana’a. Regional and international powers rushed to intervene in order to prevent a civil war. Saleh, a master of the dangerous game, did not appear willing to alleviate such fears when he declared:

Those who want to climb up to power through coups should know that this is out of the question. The homeland will not be stable, there will be a civil war, a bloody war. They should carefully consider this. The country will be divided into three instead of two [parts]: a southern part, northern part and a middle part.

(Johnston & Sudam, 2011)

Indeed, a civil war along the Red Sea and its strategic strait of Bab el-Mandeb was a terrifying prospect for regional and international powers. Therefore, in coordination with the United States, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) started a diplomatic effort to deescalate the situation between the regime and the mutiny led by Major General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar. Moreover, Saudi Arabia used its influence over Yemeni tribal leaders to the same effect. The intervention appeared to be effective, and rather welcomed by both sides.

However, when the GCC later proposed a comprehensive plan to resolve the conflict in Yemen, Saleh got infuriated. At the core of the GCC Initiative was a call for Saleh to abdicate the presidency in exchange for immunity from prosecution. The transitional plan was immediately rejected by Saleh, who accused the Gulf countries of
interfering in Yemen’s internal affairs. However, on April 23, 2011, Saleh grudgingly accepted the GCC initiative after it became clear to him that he had lost the support of his patrons in Washington and Riyadh.

On April 25, 2011, everything seemed to be in place for a smooth transition of power in Yemen when the anti-government coalition accepted the GCC plan. Moreover, arrangements were being made in Riyadh for a signing ceremony that was supposed to take place on the first week of May. However, on May 1st, 2011, the GCC efforts neared collapse when Saleh refused at the last minute to sign the transitional plan. Instead, he offered to “endorse” the document rather than sign it; which made no sense at all.

Clearly, Saleh was not ready to sign the GCC deal, for several reasons. First, unlike Egypt and Yemen, there was no domestic institution powerful and united enough to depose Saleh from power. Moreover, the Yemeni President knew that he had the loyalty of the most significant units in the armed forces. Therefore, if a civil war were to erupt in Yemen, Saleh was confident of his eventual triumph. Further, at that point, regime change proved to be elusive in Libya and Syria – a learning curve for all authoritarians in the region.

Thus, Saleh’s reluctance to sign the deal was largely comprehensible to the Western and GCC diplomats who were negotiating with him. Accordingly, they decided to resume negotiations despite Saleh’s abrupt withdrawal (“Yemeni peace plan thrown into fresh doubt,” 2011). What they did not know, however, is that this was but the beginning of a long procrastination saga. For several times during the month of May, Saleh would announce that he was ready to sign the transitional plan, before pulling out
at the last minute. Eventually, the GCC decided on May 22, 2011 to suspend its mediation in clear frustration ("GCC suspends bid to solve Yemen crisis," 2011).

It is safe to assume that Saleh was more than happy with that outcome. However, he also had to deal with the consequent reality on the ground, as heavy fighting erupted immediately after the collapse of the GCC mediation. Hundreds were killed in several days of bloody battles between the regime and its loyalists on one hand, and the mutinous forces and tribal militias on the other. In between those two belligerent sides stood the peaceful protesters, who refused to allow their uprising to transform into an insurrection.

Meanwhile, Islamist militants believed to be connected to AQAP exploited the intra-regime fighting to take over the town of Zinjibar – the capital of the southern governorate of Abyan. The fall of Zinjibar to Islamist militants, which took place on May 29, spurred fears among international powers of chaos in Yemen; and Saleh was ready to capitalize on those fears. However, just as he was preparing to regain leverage by playing the terrorism card, he was nearly killed in an explosion that rocked the presidential palace.

On June 3, 2011, Saleh was severely injured by a bomb that appeared to have been planted in his palace. On the next day, he was taken for treatment to Saudi Arabia, amid rumors that he might never live to see Yemen again (Jamjoom & Alasmari, 2011). The news about Saleh’s departure to Saudi Arabia sparked celebrations across the nation. However, those celebrations would soon prove to be premature, as Vice President Abd Rabuuh Mansour Hadi appeared reluctant to declare himself Interim President of Yemen.

Hadi’s reluctance to effectuate a transition of power revealed how much Saleh was feared in Yemen. From his hospital room in Saudi Arabia, Saleh was still calling the
shots in his home country; thanks to decades of cronyism and ethnic stacking in state institutions. For over three months, he would rule Yemen from Saudi Arabia, making televised speeches from time to time, and promising his loyalists that he would return soon to Sana’a.

Moreover, the extreme caution on the part of regime figures to move beyond Saleh was rather matched by the reluctance of opposition leaders to rise to the occasion. For all their talk about the imperative of political pluralism, leaders of the opposition failed to exhibit unity and/or organization as they were attempting to establish a Libyan-style transitional council (Kasinof, 2011). After several meetings with the regime, it became clear that neither side was ready to usher a post-Saleh era.

In that context of hesitation and uncertainty, the return of hostilities was inevitable. The early days of September saw sporadic, yet fierce, clashes between militiamen allied with the opposition and forces loyal to Saleh. By mid-September, those clashes were happening on a daily basis, and they became bloodier than ever. Citing fears of a full-fledged civil war, Saleh returned to Yemen to reassume the presidency. He was hardly challenged upon his return to the presidential palace in Sana’a.

With the return of Saleh, Yemen went back to square one. Massive protests returned to major cities, most notably in Sana’a, with the opposition once again united by their hatred of Saleh. Whenever the use of force was possible, the regime security forces did not hesitate to clash with the protesters, and with the mutineers. However, though fiercer and bloodier than ever, the clashes between the regime and mutiny forces never transformed into a full-fledged showdown.
With no party capable of winning a military confrontation, things appeared to be heading for a stalemate. And then came the news from Libya which would greatly influence the conflict in Yemen. On October 20, 2011, Gaddafi was captured, tortured, and killed in his hometown of Surt. Social media reports revealed a horrifying end to the Libyan leader who had defied a NATO-backed popular mobilization. Moreover, on October 21, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that called for Saleh to accept the GCC-brokered transition agreement.

Driven by fears of having to face a similar fate to Gaddafi’s, Saleh returned to the negotiation table. On November 23, 2011, The Yemeni President flew to Riyadh to sign the GCC transition plan. He agreed to transfer power to his Vice President in exchange for immunity from prosecution. This arrangement, which kept the regime intact, was accepted by the opposition, whose leaders went on to form a power-sharing interim government as per the GCC plan.

On February 25, 2012, the revolutionary situation in Yemen would come to an end, when Abd Rabuuh Mansour Hadi was sworn in as President. He had won an election six days before, in which he ran unopposed.
Chapter 6: Foreign-Blocked Popular Revolutions: Syria and Bahrain

Syria

From Crisis to Revolutionary Action

After six years of a brutal civil war, in which over 600 thousand people lost their lives (Hudson, 2016) and another 11 million were displaced ("Syria Emergency," 2017), it is rather easy to forget that the Syrian crisis, like most revolutionary crises during the Arab Spring, began with an act of self-immolation. On January 17, 2011, a young man named Hasan Ali Akleh set himself on fire in the northeastern city of al-Hasakah. This tragic incident sparked a series of demonstrations in the Kurdish-populated areas of the Syrian Northeast.

Though small and largely spontaneous, those demonstrations were extremely significant in that they broke the wall of silence in Assad’s Syria. In Syrian cyberspace, cautious calls for anti-government demonstrations started to proliferate. Behind those calls stood a segment of Syria’s urban youth and exiled political activists. However, throughout the month of February, several attempts to organize an Egyptian-style “day of dignity” failed to capture the imagination of ordinary Syrians. In the most successful cases, only dozens turned out to participate in those events.

It was not surprising to see most Syrians turn a blind eye to the unrest, like they had done during the 2004 al-Qamishli Riots, and the 1982 Hama Massacre. Under the 40-year-rule of the Assad dynasty, the Ba’athist regime managed to carve out a set of peculiar equations in the Syrian psyche: dissent equals treason, and the failure to report it is “a crime by association”; civil strife engenders an Iraqi-style civil war; freedom of speech generates a Lebanese-style dysfunction and polarization; and other equations.
Syrians were compelled to acquire the skill of disregarding dissent – when looking away is safe and possible. Unluckily for the administrators of an all-boys school in the southern city of Deraa, the luxury of looking away had not been afforded. On the first week of March 2011, the school administration found itself in the unenviable situation of having to report a group of students to the local authorities. Their “crime”? Spraying Arab Spring-inspired graffiti on the school’s walls.

When members of the regime security forces arrived at the school, one specific slogan caused their fury; it read, “ʾiğāk ed-dūr yā duktūr” (It is your turn, Doctor). Though may seem too vague at first glance, the ambiguity of the slogan starts to vanish when it appears alongside “the people want to topple the regime”. Unquestionably, the “Doctor” in the slogan was no other than President Dr. Bashar al-Assad. Consequently, the regime forces demanded that the boys turn themselves in for investigation.

After brief negotiations with the children’s families, the boys were eventually turned in to local authorities. From that point on, the Syrian security forces would commit a series of fatal mistakes, which arguably made those forces more responsible than any other party for the ensuing crisis. Instead of giving the boys “a slap on the wrist” (as promised to their families), the security forces made the boys the latest victims of the regime’s ill-famed policy of forced disappearance.

When the boys’ whereabouts and fate remained unknown for several days, their relatives took to the streets. Rapidly, the news from Deraa swept across the Syrian cyberspace, and many Syrians found it hard this time to turn a blind eye. Shockingly, the Syrian security forces did not appear to mind the attention; for that, according to the
regime’s peculiar *modus operandi*, notoriety is the best form of publicity. Little did they realize that the world after the Tunisian Revolution was no longer the same.

In mid-March, several small demonstrations were held in Damascus, following a Facebook-call for demonstration by a group called “Syrian Revolution 2011”. Though the demonstrators maintained that they were only honoring the people of Tunisia, it soon became clear that many among them shared a grievance with the Deraa families. They held pictures of their loved ones who had disappeared in Syrian prisons. Ordinary Syrians proved they were more able to relate to the Deraa families than they did to Akleh – the Syrian Bouazizi.

Dozens were arrested in those demonstrations, mainly at a silent gathering in Damascus’s Marjeh Square on March 16, 2011. Over the next two days, similar events took place across Syria, most notably in the central city of Homs and the Mediterranean city of Banias. In those demonstrations, more specific demands were made, mainly for the regime to end the 48-year-old state of emergency, as well as to terminate a controversial ban on the *niqāb* (*face veil*) in school settings. Deraa felt vindicated, and its people were emboldened.

On March 18, 2011, a massive protest took place in the southern city of Deraa. Thousands took to the streets to demand the immediate release of the graffiti boys. The protesters also demanded political and economic reforms to end corruption and bring relief to the farming city, which had been suffering from a severe drought since 2006. Despite the peaceful nature of their collective action, security forces did not hesitate to use force to break up the protest.
Three protesters were killed that day in Deraa and, from that point on, the city became the sight of daily protests and clashes. Subsequently, regime forces sealed off Deraa to prevent protests from spreading. Further, the government sent a delegation to the raging city in a crisis-management mission. After a meeting between the delegation and local notables, promises were made that the graffiti boys would soon be released, and de-escalation appeared to be imminent; if it was not for yet another senseless act by the regime forces.

On March 20, 2011, and soon after the government delegation had shaken hands with the city’s notables, security forces fired on a crowd of mourners near al-Omari Mosque in Deraa. More people were killed, and the city was further enraged. Following this development, President Bashar al-Assad dismissed the governor of Deraa in frustration with the latter’s failure to restore order. In the following days, dozens more protesters were killed as regime forces tried to bring a swift end to the anti-regime protests.

By the end of March, mass protests would spread to Syria’s largest cities, which prompted Assad to fire his cabinet on March 29, 2011. On March 30, Assad delivered a televised speech for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. Much like the first speeches of other challenged Arab leaders, Assad appeared defiant and in no mood to offer concessions. Instead, he vowed to restore order, and refused to announce any reforms while the unrest was ongoing. In addition, he blamed the crisis on foreign conspirators:

Syria today is being exposed to a big conspiracy. The threads of this conspiracy stretch from far away countries to reach nearby ones; it also has some threads
inside our country. This conspiracy depends, in its timing if not its form, on what is going on in some Arab countries. There is a new fad today called revolutions; that’s what they consider them to be. We do not call them so, because [revolution] is generally a popular state of affairs (President Bashar Al-Assad’s a speech at the People’s Assembly March 30, 2011, 2011).

Following the speech, and throughout the month of April, the Syrian regime employed a carrot and stick approach to root out the unrest. While using heavy military weaponry to bombard protesters in Duma, Homs, and Banias, the regime addressed a number of longstanding grievances, and took steps to undo them. First, Assad issued a presidential decree granting nationality to thousands of Kurds, whose “stateless” status had long-been ignored. Moreover, the government closed the only Casino in Damascus, and reversed its ban on the niqāb in Syrian schools.

The above steps were meant to appease two segments in the Syrian population that the regime deemed most susceptible to revolutionary recruitment: Kurds and ultra-conservative Sunnis. Syria’s decades-long state of emergency was finally lifted, as part of a package of reforms offered by Assad in his second televised speech. However, those concessions were deemed cosmetic by the protesters, who now started to organize themselves in “local coordination committees” which proliferated across Syrian towns and cities.

Those committees brought organization and sustainability to the Syrian popular mobilization. In addition, they reported on the protests, and communicated the demands of the protesters to the regime and the rest of the world. At the core of those demands was the transformation of social and political life in Syria – a transformation whose
realization is hard, if not impossible, under the Ba’athist regime. Accordingly, protesters across Syria started to chant “the people want to topple the regime”.

**From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation**

On March 28, 2011, a political development with no historical precedence took place in Syria – an exodus from the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party. Amidst reports on the death toll exceeding 500 protesters, dozens of members in the ruling party announced their resignation to protest the killing of civilians. The Ba’ath party had never seen such exodus since its seizing of power in 1963. Those defections were apparently perceived in Brussels and Washington as the beginning of the Syrian regime’s rapid collapse.

Accordingly, on May 9, 2011, The European Union imposed a wide range of sanctions on Syria in what appeared to be an attempt to accelerate the regime’s perceived breakdown. Among those measures was an arms embargo, travel restrictions and the freezing of assets for senior officials in the Syrian regime. The United States followed suit on May 19, only this time the sanctions were extended to Assad himself. Consequently, the Assad regime grew increasingly isolated amidst worldwide condemnations of its brutal crackdown on peaceful protests.

However, neither the defections nor the condemnations seemed to pose a serious threat to the survival of the regime, for several reasons. First, the defections that matter the most in any revolutionary crisis are those that happen among the *institutional* elites; of which the Assad regime lost almost none. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt – where the army practically executed a quasi-quo to remove power holders – state institutions in Syria are the de facto guardians of the Alawite dynasty, thanks to a decades-long policy of ethnic stacking (Bou Nassif, 2014).
Secondly, the political and economic elites who chose to withdraw their support to the regime found themselves defecting to the wilderness, so to speak. With no formal organization and/or political leadership to guide the revolutionary cause, the Syrian popular mobilization was hardly prepared to absorb those defectors. Unlike Tunisia, labor associations in Syria were more akin to Ottoman-era guilds than to modern-day unions. And, unlike Egypt, the Syrian political “opposition” had largely existed to validate the Ba’ath rule, not to ever challenge it.

With no civil society to draw from its experience, the Syrian popular mobilization was fated to disorganization. In that context, the Western enthusiasm for regime change in Syria started to gradually diminish. But Western powers had other reasons to not push for regime change in Syria as aggressively as they did regarding Libya. Chief among those reasons was the fear of a Russian/Chinese veto in the UN Security Council. In addition, the situation in Libya was also looming large on the Syrian horizon.

At that point, Western leaders started to see early signs of a backlash to their experimental intervention in Libya, amid a chaotic insurrection and fears of a civil war. In addition, Western powers were also concerned about the growing Islamist tendencies among the Libyan revolutionaries. That was exactly what Western leaders did not want to see in Syria. Unfortunately, such a prospect would seem more likely by the end of May 2011, when the images of a 13-year-old boy from Deraa surfaced on the internet.

Hamza al-Khatib was abducted by security forces during a protest in Deraa in late April. Like the graffiti boys, his whereabouts and fate remained unknown, until his corpse was returned to his family with horrifying signs of torture. This time, however, the regime’s brutality crossed all thresholds as the boy’s corpse arrived with multiple burn
marks, several gunshot wounds, and, most appallingly, severed genitalia. So great was the outcry caused by those images that the peaceful protesters no longer had the heart to shout “silmīyya” (peaceful).

That incident marked the beginning of widespread radicalization among protesters, and defections among the rank and file in the Syrian Army. In the first week of June, and as the Syrian military was preparing for a large military operation in Jisr al-Shughur near the Turkish borders, 120 soldiers had been found dead in what appeared to be a mass execution. While the Syrian regime accused “armed gangs” of ambushing and killing the soldiers, local coordination committees told a different story. They claimed the soldiers were executed by the Syrian army for refusing to fire at protesters.

It was during the operation in Jisr al-Shughur that the first wave of Syrian refugees crossed Turkish borders. Enraged by the killings and the forced displacement of their fellow citizens, Syrians took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, from Deraa to Aleppo, and from Deir el-Zur to Homs, Hama, and beyond. This is perhaps when it dawned on the regime that the majority of Syrians were now on the side of the uprising. Assad then called for a national dialogue, and permitted opposition leaders to hold a rare public meeting in Damascus.

Nevertheless, mass protests continued unabated, most notably in Hama, which saw on July 1, 2011 the biggest mass protest since the beginning of the uprising. Two days later, regime tanks entered Hama to wreak a bigger havoc than the one witnessed in Jisr al-Shughur. Tens were killed and hundreds were arrested, which prompted the ambassadors of the United States and France to visit Hama, in an effort to check regime
brutality and prevent a massacre. Two days later, the U.S. and French embassies in Damascus were attacked by Assad supporters.

Emboldened by the growing rift between the Assad regime and powerful members in the international community, a group of defectors from the Syrian military announced on July 29 the formation of an opposition militia; they called it the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The head of the FSA, Colonel Riyad al-Asad, called on all officers in the Syrian army to join his militia, “to bring this [Assad] regime down, [and] protect the revolution” (“Syrian Army Colonel Defects forms Free Syrian Army,” 2011). At this point, the uprising turned into an insurrection; and Syria’s revolutionary situation has finally arrived.

**From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome**

Following the emergence of the FSA as a competing force over the legitimacy to lead the Syrian people, Western capitals intensified their efforts in the UN Security Council to indict the Syrian regime. Up to that point, all attempts in that regard had hit a Russian/Chinese wall. However, on August 3, 2011, members of the security council appeared to have reached a compromise. They issued a statement that condemned the killings of civilians, yet reaffirms their commitment “to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria” (“Syria: Security Council condemns rights abuses and use of force against civilians,” 2011).

Unlike Libya, the internationalization of the Syrian conflict remained elusive for over four months, thanks to a Russian shield against military intervention under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter. To be sure, this had more to do with what was happening in Libya than in Moscow’s strategic interests on the Mediterranean, namely its
naval base in Tartus. For that Russia and, to a lesser extent, China, had grown extremely irritated by what they perceived as NATO’s abuse of the civilian-protection mandate in Libya.

To Moscow and Beijing, foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) in Libya was something they had never signed up for – a dangerous precedent from which they might one day suffer. Thus, they were prepared to draw a thick line under the issue of FIRC if and when it came to Syria. Considering the Security Council’s paralysis, Syria’s Arab neighbors took it upon themselves to impact the conflict. On August 17, 2011, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain recalled their ambassadors to Syria.

Moreover, Turkey and the Arab League attempted to initiate mediation in the Syrian conflict. However, those efforts quickly evaporated on August 18, 2011, when the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France simultaneously called on Assad to step down. This was the first explicit demand on the part of Western powers for the departure of Assad. It was a demand made with little conviction, however, considering the chaotic state of the Syrian opposition.

To remedy this problem of disorganization, the leaders of Syria’s fragmented opposition convened in Turkey on August 23. Their goal was to form a political body that can unite and organize the opposition. More importantly, they aimed to establish an entity which can be recognized, and supported, by the international community. To that end, 140 people were selected to form the Syrian National Council (SNC), which claimed to be, and sought recognition as, the sole representative of the Syrian people. Meanwhile, the FSA was engaging the regime forces in large-scale battles.
Despite the relative advances made by the opposition, both diplomatically and militarily, the Syrian regime was able to hold on to power, thanks to the boundless diplomatic and financial support it received from Russia. The first sign that any revolutionary outcome in Syria was not likely to favor the opposition came on October 4, 2011, when Russia and China vetoed a UN security Council resolution that condemned the Syrian regime. At that point, more than 3000 people had been killed in Syria (“Syria protest deaths ‘hit 3,000’ people, says UN,” 2011); yet, the international community failed to exercise its “right to protect” civilians.

The failure of the UN Security Council to act on the situation in Syria gave the nearly-obsolete Arab League a role to play. On November 1, and as a result of a Qatari mediation, the Syrian regime accepted a plan proposed by the Arab League to de-escalate, and eventually resolve, the conflict in Syria. Among other measures, the plan called for an immediate cessation of hostilities against protester, withdrawal of troops and artillery from residential areas, the release of political prisoners, and immediate access for journalist to enter Syria.

Less than two weeks later, the Arab League voted to suspend Syria, due to the regime’s failure to implement the peace agreement. Following the vote, Arab embassies in Damascus were sabotaged by pro-regime mobs who also attacked the embassies of France and Turkey. In response, on November 27, the Arab League imposed sanctions on Syria – a step that was also adopted by Turkey. In addition to asset freezing, the sanctions included a travel ban on senior Syrian officials, and a ban on commercial flights to and from Syria.
Despite the escalation and retaliation between Syria and its Arab neighbors, both parties kept the door open for a possible return to the Arab League plan. On December 19, 2011, renewed negotiations led to an agreement with the Syrian government which allowed Arab monitors to enter Syria and report on the implementation of the peace agreement. The presence of Arab monitors did not seem to deter neither the regime nor its opponents from adding to the death toll, which at that point exceeded 5000 people (“As Syrian death toll tops 5,000, UN human rights chief warns about key city,” 2011).

By mid-January 2012, and amid growing fears of a civil war in Syria, Arab states started to unilaterally withdraw their citizens from the monitoring delegation in Syria. Eventually, on January 28, 2012, the Arab League announced the suspension of its monitoring mission, over concerns for the safety of its members. Considering the grimness of the situation, Western members of the Security Council decided to once again advance a resolution that supports the Arab League peace plan, and wield the stick of sanctions against the Syrian regime.

That initiative marked the unfolding of the revolutionary outcome in Syria. On February 4, 2012, Russia and China once again vetoed the draft resolution. Explaining his country’s vote, the representative of Russia blamed “some influential members of the international community [who] had been undermining the possibility of a peaceful settlement by advocating regime change” (“Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution on Syria as Russian Federation, China Veto Text Supporting Arab League’s Proposed Peace Plan,” 2012). Emboldened by the Russian and Chinese veto, the Syrian regime began a large military campaign in Homs, lasting for weeks, and marking the beginning of a full-scale civil war in Syria.
Bahrain

From Crisis to Revolutionary Action

Bahrain was the only monarchy to face a revolutionary crisis during the Arab Spring. This “monarchical un-exceptionalism” seems to have been largely rooted in the nation’s limited resources, heterogeneous society, and the rule of a religious minority. Those conditions, in addition to a deep sense of social injustice among the Shi’a majority, had historically made the tiny kingdom susceptible to civil strife; and, most recently, to a revolutionary crisis. In that, Bahrain bore more resemblance to Syria during the Arab Spring than it did to the monarchies of the Arab World.

However, unlike Syria, Bahrain is not a one-party state; and, the two-century rule of the āl-Khalifa dynasty had hardly been as repressive as the rule of the Assads. Therefore, when young Bahrainis started to issue calls for demonstration in solidarity with the people of Tunisia and Egypt, there was little fear of retribution in the streets; and not much panic in the corridors of power. Consequently, most of the small demonstrations that took place in late January 2011 were allowed to proceed with little trouble, if any at all.

The regime’s relative tolerance started to diminish, rather abruptly, by February 4, 2011, when a statement by a group called The Youth of the February 14th Revolution surfaced on the internet. In that statement, the group called for a mass protest on February 14, to achieve “radical reforms in the system of government” (Bassiouni, Rodley, al-Awadhi, Kirch, & Arsanjani, 2011). In that spirit, the group made a number of political demands, among which were 1) disbanding the parliament, 2) new constitution, 3) release of political prisoners, and 4) end of political naturalization (Bassiouni et al. 2011).
There were enough reasons in that statement to cause regime anxiety. First, there was the unmistakable sophistication in outlining the demands, which perhaps betrayed the group’s claims of being politically unaffiliated. Secondly, February 14 is not without symbolic significance. It was chosen to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the referendum on the National Action Charter, whose adoption paved the way for Bahrain to become a constitutional monarchy. A protest on that day would be an indictment to a regime often accused of negating on the promises of that charter.

Of great significance was the reaction of the political opposition. In the days that led to February 14, 2011, opposition figures issued official statements and used Friday Prayer sermons to endorse the demands of the “Youth of February 14th”. Most notably, on February 11, 2011, leaders of al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (Wefaq) used the Friday minbar (pulpit) to endorse the demands of the youth movement. This development was extremely significant for reasons owing to the fact that Wefaq is Bahrain’s largest opposition party. A large demonstration appeared to be forthcoming.

The response came on the eve of February 14, 2011. King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa granted each Bahraini family $2650 “on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the National Action Charter as a sign of appreciation for the people of Bahrain who have approved it” (“Bahrain doles out money to families,” 2011). The royal bequest was in effect a preemptive blow to the planned demonstration – an expensive enterprise that could hardly be afforded by Ben Ali or Mubarak. Nevertheless, Bahrainis would prove shortly thereafter that they were no less determined than their counterparts in Tunisia and Egypt.
On February 14, 2011, over 6000 people took to the streets of Manama, Jidhafs, and Hamad Town to demand political and socioeconomic reforms. Though largely spontaneous and dominated by unaffiliated youth, security forces did not hesitate to use tear gas and rubber bullets to quell those demonstrations (Richter, 2011). In some cases, live fire was used to suppress various pockets of riots, which led to the death of one protester, and the injury of several others (Bassiouni et al. 2011). On the next day, there news swept across Bahrain’s small society.

In the early hours of February 15, 2011, thousands turned out at the Salmaniya Medial Complex (SMC) in Manama to express solidarity with the injured, and participate in the funeral procession of Ali al-Meshaima – the first victim in the Bahraini uprising (“Bahrain: Stop Attacks on Peaceful Protesters,” 2011). Mourners then marched towards the nearby Pearl Roundabout, with the intention of occupying this famous public space in central Manama. On its way, however, the march was interrupted by security forces, which led to the eruption of fierce clashes, resulting in the death of yet another demonstrator.

The second death among demonstrators drew thousands more to the Pearl Roundabout, where, by nightfall, it showed all the signs of resembling Cairo’s Tahrir Square. Meanwhile, King Hamad gave a televised speech to address the turbulent situation. Unlike other challenged Arab leaders, however, the Bahraini King did not attempt to exhibit firmness and/or defiance. Instead, he expressed his condolences for the deaths, and announced the establishment of a special commission to investigate the killings, all while reaffirming the right of all Bahrainis to exercise freedom of expression (Slackman, 2011).
The King’s conciliatory tone is believed to have incensed some powerful members of the regime, especially Sheikh Khalifa bin Isa āl-Kahlifa, Bahrain’s only Prime Minister since its independence in 1971 (Henderson, 2014). The Prime minister reportedly favored a firm approach to deal with the demonstrations; and later admitted as much in a press conference. In anticipation of a potential crackdown, the Wefaq members of the Council of Representative suspended their participation in the council’s sessions. Additionally, the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions called for a general strike on February 17, 2011.

The third day of unrest followed a similar pattern as the day before; thousands started their day at the Salmaniya Medical Complex, and from there headed to the Pearl Roundabout. More than 12,000 protesters gathered that night in central Manama, some of whom spent the night at a tented camp. In the early hours of February 17, police battalions entered the Pearl Roundabout to clear it from protesters, which led to bloody clashes (Slackman, 2011). Four protesters were killed that day (Chulov, 2011).

Later that same day, protests erupted in numerous towns and cities across Bahrain, including areas that had remained relatively calm on previous days. In those events, angry protesters attacked police patrols and security checkpoints, blocking several major thoroughfares in the process. On the political level, a coalition of opposition groups issued a joint statement, in which they condemned “the heinous massacre” at the Pearl Roundabout (Bassiouni et al., 2011). In addition, the opposition coalition called for the immediate resignation of the government, and its replacement with a national salvation cabinet.
Though dominated by Wefaq, the coalition included groups and societies from across the political spectrum, including nationalists, leftists, and communists. They all expressed their unwavering support for the “February 14th Youth Coalition”, which at that time had already gained the support of various unions and professional syndicates. Shortly thereafter, “the people want to topple the regime” and “Death to āl-Khalifa” would be heard for the first time ever in the history of post-colonial Bahrain (Slackman, 2011); the tiny kingdom was now facing a revolutionary crisis.

**From Revolutionary Action to Revolutionary Situation**

On February 18, 2011, following from the events of the previous day, the level of violence in the streets increased significantly. Protesters – now deprived an access to the Pearl Roundabout – did not hesitate to attack the police, who in response used sound bombs and tear gas to fend off the attacks. There were no reports on that day of any killings or gunshots fired at protesters. This exercise of self-restraint was part of a new strategy by the regime to contain the crisis.

An essential component in that strategy was a royal call for a national dialogue. To that end, the King instructed his son, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, to initiate a dialogue with the political opposition. As a result of the initial contacts, the Bahraini government agreed to a demand by the opposition to reopen the Pearl Roundabout as a precondition to participate in the dialogue. In exchange, the opposition coalition, which was dominated by al-Wefaq and Wa’ad, agreed to use their influence to control the street.

On the next day, the protesters returned to the Pearl Roundabout by the thousands; this time openly chanting “the people want to topple the regime” (Bassiouni et al., 2011).
It was unclear at that point, perhaps to the protesters themselves, whether “regime” meant the monarchy or the government. To be sure, no one in Bahrain, including the opposition and the regime, sought clarification in that regard. For that without this ambiguity, there simply would be no national dialogue, let alone a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

In the context of that ambiguity, preparations were being made for the proposed national dialogue, while both parties were striving to establish leverage before heading to the negotiation table. To that end, the opposition leaders worked hand in hand with unionists to organize general strikes in both the public and private sectors. On February 20, 2011, it was estimated that more than 80% of all employees in Bahrain went on strike (Bassiouni et al., 2011). Students also contributed to the swelling of protests, after a strike by school teachers had paralyzed the educational system.

Meanwhile, the regime was working tirelessly to muster a counter-mobilization. On February 21, that effort came to fruition with the organization of a massive pro-government rally at the al-Fateh Grand Mosque in Manama. Moreover, it was at that event when a group of religious leaders and public figures announced the establishments of “The Gathering of National Unity” – a Sunni-dominated mobilization in support of the royal family. Despite calling for national unity and denouncing sectarianism, it is safe to say that the establishment of this coalition marked the beginning of sectarian polarization.

On the following day, the opposition held a mass rally dubbed the “Martyrs March” in response to the pro-government rally. In contrast to the rally of the previous day, the opposition coalition started to gain the appearance of a Shi’i movement. Subsequently, the increased competition between the two coalitions gave rise to sectarian tensions, which started to increase significantly by the end of February. With every
incident of sectarian violence, the legitimacy of the anti-government mobilization suffered a considerable blow.

The regime made another shrewd move to further entrap the opposition. A royal pardon was granted to a number of political prisoners and exiled opposition leaders, some of whom were known to be hardliners with substantiated links to Iran. Upon their return to join the opposition, the antigovernment mobilization started to look more like a Shi’i rebellion than it did a national uprising. In that context, it was not hard for the regime to make implications about an Iranian role in the uprising.

Those implications became explicit accusations on March 7, when an opposition block announced the establishment of a “Coalition for a Republic” (Noueihed, 2011). Not surprisingly, the coalition was led by one of the hardliners who had benefited from the recent royal pardons. Although the coalition was composed of unlicensed groups, the fact that the announcement was made at the Pearl Roundabout was enough for the regime to indict the entire opposition. The monarchy was now facing an existential crisis.

From Revolutionary Situation to Revolutionary Outcome

While the “coalition for a republic” was being announced in Manama, one of the most consequential developments in the Bahraini uprising was taking place in Abu Dhabi. With an eye on the events at the Pearl Roundabout, the Ministerial Council of the GCC took the first step towards what would become a decisive intervention in the Bahraini crisis. Undoubtedly, the two events of that day influenced each other, and it is safe to suggest that the revolutionary outcome in Bahrain began to unfold on that very day.
The GCC issued a statement of unequivocal support for the King and Government of Bahrain. Not only had the GCC pledged billions of dollars in financial aid to Bahrain, but it also vowed to “defend the kingdom against any danger… in accordance with pertinent agreements concerning collective security and joint defense” ("The Ministerial Council’s 118th session: Press release," 2011). By far, this statement was the closest thing to using the threat of force ever issued by the GCC. It was hardly regarded as such by the Bahraini opposition.

Similar to the Arab League, the GCC had largely been perceived as a futile institution on the verge of obsolescence. The GCC’s military arm – the Dir’ al-Jazeera Forces (DJF) – was hardly a “Gulf NATO”. At that point, the DJF had no history whatsoever of initiating any military operation as a distinct unit. The principle of “indivisible security” in GCC agreements is primarily concerned with matters of foreign intervention; to which Bahrain was clearly not being exposed.

For those reasons, the anti-government coalition in Bahrain did not seem intimidated by the GCC statement, nor did they consider it a threat. On the contrary, it responded with an escalation in its revolutionary action. To that end, two massive protest took place in Manama on March 9, one at the university of Bahrain, and the other in front of the General Directorate of Nationality, Passports, and Residency. In addition, a group of political activists marched towards the Royal Palace, before turning back at the last minute to avoid a clash with the Sunni residents of the exclusive Riffa district (Bassiouni et al., 2011).

On March 10, a massive protest was organized in front of a United Nations’ building in Manama to denounce the international community’s disregard to the events in
Bahrain. Indeed, unlike other Arab Spring events, the revolutionary crisis in Bahrain attracted little attention from the international media, let alone the UN Security Council. With the United States and the European Union turning a blind eye, the internationalization of the conflict in Bahrain remained elusive, giving the GCC all the more reason to act unilaterally.

On March 11, 2011, the GCC foreign ministers held another session in Saudi Arabia in which they declared the council’s “rejection to any attempts of foreign intervention in the [internal] affairs of its member states” (“Statement by the 118th session of the Ministerial Council,” 2011). Moreover, the GCC vowed to respond “promptly and firmly” to any threat to the security of its members. Though the statement was too abstract to name the supposed aggressor, there was hardly any doubt that the subject of those accusations was any state other than the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On the following day, and emboldened by the GCC’s boundless support, the Bahraini Crown Prince proposed the opposition with a set of “general principles” to guide the national dialogue (Bassiouni et al., 2011). Those principles were outlined in a memorandum of understanding, which was presented to the opposition in the form of an ultimatum. The opposition leaders refused to sign the document, and instead demanded the election of a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. Perhaps the opposition leaders assumed that the ultimatum was an empty threat. In reality, it was anything but.

On March 14, exactly one month after the beginning of the uprising, units from the Saudi Arabian Royal Guard crossed into Bahrain from the King Fahd Causeway. The announced mission for those units was to defend Bahrain against any foreign intervention (Bassiouni et al., 2011). On the following day, Saudi units were joined by security forces
from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, and by naval formations from Kuwait. Additionally, the King declared a state of emergency, and recalled his ambassador in Tehran to protest Iran’s “blatant interference” in the affairs of Bahrain (“Bahrain king declares state of emergency after protests,” 2011).

Though the activities of the GCC forces remained limited to the protection of critical national assets, their presence had freed up the Bahraini forces to crush the opposition, and suppress the uprising. By the end of March 2011, the revolutionary situation in Bahrain was largely concluded, with regime maintenance being the revolutionary outcome. Although Bahrain is yet to restore the normalcy of the pre-Arab Spring era, at no point, until the time of this writing, has the intermittent protests managed to engender a new revolutionary action.
Chapter 7: Theorizing Popular Revolution

In the previous three chapters, I presented six analytic narratives of the Arab Spring cases. The insights gained from those within-case analyses allowed for the uncovering of a number of themes. Specifically, I found that the Arab Spring events diverged into three different pathways, and culminated in the following distinct manners: 1) quasi-coups by autonomous elites in Tunisia and Egypt, 2) foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) by international intervention in Libya and Yemen, and 3) foreign-imposed regime maintenance (FIRM) by foreign patrons in Syria and Bahrain.

This chapter discusses those themes, before concluding this study with the advancement of a theory on popular revolution.

The Arab Spring’s Divergent Pathways

Quasi-Coup by Autonomous Elites

Tunisia and Egypt are two cases of elite-imposed popular revolution (EIPR). That is, the deposition of power holders in both countries was effectuated by influential figures commanding powerful institutions, specifically in the armed forces. By doing so, those army elites have executed what amounts to a quasi-coup. I describe this action as “quasi” because it had most of the characteristics of a coup d’état; yet it was preceded by, and came in response to, a mass popular mobilization. In that, Tunisia and Egypt represent two unique cases in the Arab Spring.

What is of interest to us here is to explain why only in Tunisia and Egypt, and not in the other cases, did the army elites have the capacity for autonomous action. In that, this analysis is not interested in theorizing the determinants of army behavior, for such work is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the aim here is to explore the factors that
facilitated, or constrained, the autonomy of institutional elites in each case, while assuming that survival was the primary motive in all cases.

The question, then, becomes why survival was perceived differently across the Arab Spring cases? In addition, how is it possible for the army elites to pursue survival at the expense of a ruling class from which they were hardly distinguishable? A good place to start answering those questions is with Theda Skocpol’s hypothesis about the potential autonomy of the state (Skocpol, 1979). Her unique lens allows us to bring two issues into focus: 1) the potential autonomy of state institutions, and 2) external factors that might have influenced the behavior of the elites commanding those institutions.

After adapting this framework to analyze the Arab Spring, it becomes clear that the distinctive behavior of the army elites in Tunisia and Egypt is rooted in factors that were lacking in the other cases. Unlike Libya and Yemen, the armed forces in Tunisia and Egypt had maintained a considerable degree of professionalism, and enjoyed a substantial autonomy from the presidency. And, unlike Syria and Bahrain, the most significant units in the Egyptian and Tunisian armies had neither been ethnically stacked, nor dominated by members of the ruling family (Bou Nassif, 2014).

It is reasonable to suggest that the army institutions in Tunisia and Egypt possess unique structures that set them apart from the rest of the Arab armies. More important, those structures have allowed the army elites to develop a relative capacity for autonomous action. This was due in part to several modernization campaigns, some of which have arguably predated the independence of Egypt and Tunisia, respectively. To a large extent, though, the professionalism and autonomy of those institutions are a function of post-independence processes.
In Tunisia, President Ben Ali maintained a coup-proofing strategy that had been instigated by his predecessor Habib Bourgiba. Bourgiba – the architect of Tunisia’s independence from France in 1956 – was a civilian president with deep suspicions toward the military. That, in part, was influenced by the timing of his rise to power, during which the Arab World was plagued with military coups. Those suspicions were also an expression of Bourgiba’s vision for a Tunisia governed by one political party, his own Neo-Destour, and ruled by one president for life – himself.

Ironically, Bourgiba was eventually removed by his prime minister Zin El Abedin Ben Ali – a fellow party member who was also a military man. However, instead of elevating his old institution, Ben Ali followed on the footsteps of his predecessor in keeping the army small, underfunded, and apolitical. At the time of the revolution, the entire army was made up of 36,000 personnel, receiving only 1.56 of the country’s modest GDP of $44 billion (“country profile: Tunisia,” n.d.). By Middle Eastern standards, an army this small is rather insulting to its generals.

Ben Ali took it a step further than his predecessor and created a vast security apparatus to parallel the army. Though functioning mainly as the regime’s repressive tool, it was not lost on the army elites that the establishment of those forces was meant to prevent a coup d’état. Considering the long history of mistrust and accumulated grievances, the behavior of the army elites during the revolution seems rather rational. After all, they had little reason, if at all, to defend the status quo.

Conversely, the Egyptian army had every reason to maintain the status quo; and it did not lack in means what allowed it to do just that. In a paradox, though, the professionalism and autonomy of the Egyptian army were the product of a completely
different experience than that of the Tunisian army’s. Though also often attributed to a history of state-building (in this case dating back to the Muhammed Ali Dynasty), it is far more reasonable to ascribe the professionalism and autonomy of the Egyptian army to post-independence turning points.

In those critical events, the Egyptian army learned from defeats as much as it did from triumphs. Two humiliating defeats in 1948 and 1967 at the hands of the newly formed Israeli Army led to a fundamental reorganization of the Egyptian Armed Forces. Having embraced professionalism as a necessity for survival, the Egyptian Army eventually bounced back in 1973 to win its final military confrontation with Israel. Though hardly decisive, this victory elevated the position of the army in the Egyptian society, and gained it much power and legitimacy.

At that point, the army had been the de facto leader of Egypt since the 1952 coup that abolished the monarchy. This is one of the most important moments in the history of the army institution. For the five decades following the coup, the army’s self-proclaimed role as the protector of the republic translated into a monopoly over the presidency. In addition, Egypt’s military leaders have initiated a massive program for social and economic reforms, in which the army played an unarguable central role.

That position allowed the army to accumulate, over several decades, vast economic power and interests. Consequently, at the time of the 2011 revolution, the Egyptian army had given Egypt all its presidents since the abolition of the monarchy. Moreover, in addition to being the primary recipient of foreign aid (of which $ 1.5 billion came annually from the United States alone), the army was in control of one-third of the
national economy. In a way, the Egyptian army was a dynasty, of which Mubarak was far from being the custodian.

This was a far cry from the situations in Libya and Yemen, let alone Syria and Bahrain.

In Libya, as in Yemen, the most significant units in the armed forces were dominated by the sons of the presidents. In fact, the most elite unit in the Libyan army was nicknamed the “Khamis Brigade”, after its commander Khamis al-Gaddafi. Similarly, Yemen’s Republican Guard – widely considered as the most well-equipped and well-trained unit in the nation’s armed forces – was commanded by Ahmed Ali Saleh – the President’s eldest son and heir apparent.

Likewise, the chain of command in both Syria and Bahrain was, and still is, dominated by members of the respective ruling families. In addition, the rank and file in the armed and security forces are ethnically stacked by members of the Alawite and Sunni minorities in Syria and Bahrain respectively. Under those conditions, not only was the survival of state institutions linked to that of the ruling family, the very fate of a whole religious sect was also perceived to be at stake.

In Bahrain, as in Syria, Yemen, and Libya, the institutional elites made their choices based on what they had considered to be rational calculations. Their choices were not necessarily less rational than their counterparts in Tunisia and Egypt. Often, the behavior of human agents is governed by the structures and conditions within which they tend to operate. It is therefore safe to suggest that a Rachid Ammar in Libya, or a Hussain Tantawi in Syria, would not have mattered much in terms of altering the outcomes of those conflicts.
FIRC by International Intervention

Libya and Yemen are two cases of foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR). That is, the deposition of power holders in those two countries was due in large part to an intervention by external actors. By doing so, those actors implemented what amounts to a FIRC – foreign-imposed regime change\(^{x^{iv}}\). We shall not describe this type of action as “quasi-FIRC”, because the concept, as it exists, is broad enough to include scenarios that involve alliances with domestic actors\(^{x^{v}}\). In that regard, Libya and Yemen are distinct in the context of the Arab Spring.

Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, the scope of elite defections in Libya and Yemen was too limited to allow for a quasi-coup. And, unlike Syria and Bahrain, the regimes of Gaddafi and Saleh failed to secure the support of powerful patrons to shield themselves against unfavorable international intervention. Having already explained the limits on elite defections in Libya and Yemen, I aim in this part of the analysis to explain why power holders in those countries were susceptible to being deposed by international intervention.

Though grouped together as cases that culminated in FIRC, the methods by which this outcome was achieved differed in each country. While coercive diplomacy was employed by regional powers to force the abdication of Saleh in Yemen, the displacement of the Gaddafi regime in Libya came as a result of a NATO-led intervention sanctioned by the international community. This latter outcome was particularly extraordinary, not only in the context of the Arab Spring, but also in terms of how international relations had been conducted under the current world order.
Why, then, one might ask, did the international community make this exception vis-à-vis Libya? There is no answer to this question in its current form; because, in fact, the international community did not make that exception. Indeed, the UN Security Council did authorize member states to take “all necessary measures … to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya” (“Security Council approves ‘no-fly zone’ over Libya, authorizing ‘all necessary measures’ to protect civilians,” 2011). However, this limited mandate was far from being an authorization to impose regime change; which NATO did eventually pursue, and no one seemed to complain.

The correct question ought to be, “why did the international community condone a FIRC in Libya?” Considering Gaddafi’s bizarre character, one might be tempted to surmise that no one had cared about the eccentric Libyan leader. In addition, Gaddafi’s infamous history, which includes involvement in state-sponsored terrorism and transnational conspiracies, had certainly made his position untenable when coupled with accusations of a potential crime against humanity. But, Saddam Hussein had arguably checked all the above boxes in 1991; yet, the international community never authorized, or condoned, his removal.

To be sure, there is no such thing as apathy when it comes to the establishment of dangerous precedents; not at the level of the Security Council, anyway. The fact of the matter was that Gaddafi’s record of irrational behavior had been a source of anxiety to all permanent members of the Security Council, including Russia and China. Specifically, his forays into the nuclear black market, which were confirmed with the 2003
dismantlement of Libya’s clandestine nuclear program, had ever since rendered the international community restless about the Gaddafi regime.

In a nutshell, the world’s most bizarre dictators have all proved, at one point or another, that they were rational and, thus, deterrable actors; Gaddafi had proved to be neither. Thus, when NATO appeared to exceed the civilian-protection mandate and went after the Libyan leader, everyone seemed to turn a blind eye. Indeed, no member of the Security Council wanted to deal with another North Korea. In addition, and perhaps most significantly, Gaddafi was a client of none; nor was his regime nested in any meaningful alliance.

Certainly, the Libyan case provide a crucial lesson – especially to the dependent regimes of the third world – on the imperative of having a powerful foreign patron. Nevertheless, it must be said that having powerful patrons is one thing, and securing their support during a revolutionary crisis is a whole different story. The former Yemeni president had to learn this the hard way. Despite being a loyal pawn for nearly two decades, Saleh was eventually sacrificed by his very patrons in the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The former President of Yemen was subjected to all sorts of coercive diplomacy to sign a GCC-sponsored power-transfer plan that was devised and presented in coordination with the United States. The plan was meant to elevate the then Vice President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi to the presidency, thereby ensuring that the regime in Yemen was kept intact. The question remains as to the logic behind the behavior of Saleh’s patrons, and why he was not offered the same lifeline as the King of Bahrain?
The above question has been partially answered in chapter 5, where we covered some of the reasons that led both the United States and Saudi Arabia to view Saleh as less than effective in the fight against AQAP and the Houthi movement. But if we are to make an educated guess that the replacement of Saleh was essentially a Saudi plan, then we have to understand the logic that informed Saudi’s behavior. To be sure, Saudi Arabia had many reasons to dislodge Saleh.

First, Saudi Arabia had grown extremely frustrated with Iran’s growing influence in the region. This influence had been growing steadily in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, in places like Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, and, of course, Iraq. The Islamic Republic of Iran had managed to gain unprecedented prominence in those countries, mainly through its role in reviving political Shi’ism. Although its proxy struggle with Saudi Arabia demanded vast resources, Iran somehow managed to provide, despite years of Isolation and economic sanctions.

Yemen was largely perceived by Saudi Arabia as the next puzzle peace in Iran’s grand plan to become a regional hegemon. And now that the Iran Nuclear Deal was expected to end the country’s isolation, the Saudi feared that some of Tehran’s new income would find its way to the Houthi movement in north Yemen, which was largely perceived as the new Hezbollah. This was a major threat to Saudi Arabia that Saleh had failed to eliminate, despite billions of dollars in Saudi patronage.

Another reason that might explain the Saudi logic lies in the fact that Saleh was not a monarch. This was perhaps the main reason why a Yemeni membership in the GCC remains to this day elusive. At no time has this been more evident than during the Arab Spring, when the GCC appeared more willing to absorb the geographically distant
monarchies of Morocco and Jordan than it ever was towards Yemen. To Saudi Arabia, the fall of a president is not quite the same thing as the dethroning of a king.

Additionally, most FIRCs are known to be driven by a desire to make the successor regime more pliable to the causes of the intervener. And, in Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, the Saudis had identified the perfect man for the job. Unlike Saleh, Hadi was a characterless figure; he had arguably reached the vice presidency because of his lack of charisma, which made him no threat to Saleh. Furthermore, in addition to his invertebrate character, Hadi is also Sunni, which would make him an essential pawn in the Saudi-Iranian cold war.

Those were largely the factors that influenced the Saudi behavior towards the revolutionary crisis in Yemen. The United States, on the other hand, did not necessarily agree entirely with this Saudi logic. Moreover, the White House was also well aware of the potential damage to its credibility had it chosen to pursue different policies towards Yemen and Bahrain. Yet, the Obama administration could not help but throw its weight behind the GCC plan. For that, as we shall see next, Washington had many reasons to accommodate Riyadh.

**FIRM by Foreign Patrons**

Syria and Bahrain are two cases of foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR). That is, regime maintenance in those two countries was due in large part to an intervention by external actors. The outcome that results from such interventions can be described as foreign-imposed regime maintenance (FIRM). In that, Syria and Bahrain are two unique cases in the Arab Spring, where the regime in both countries was able to abort the revolution by securing the support of a powerful foreign patron.
Like Libya, a potential crime against humanity was looming in Syria, as the Assad regime resorted to military force to quell the anti-regime mobilization. Yet, unlike Gaddafi, Assad and his regime were shielded against any international intervention by a Russian (and Chinese) veto in the UN security council. Moreover, like Yemen, Bahrain was the sight of a brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters. Yet, unlike the Saleh regime, the King and Government of Bahrain received political cover from the United States as well as extensive support from the GCC to ensure regime survival.

The obvious question here is this: What explains the discrepancy in the behavior of two powerful members of the international community – in Russia and the United States – whose positions on the world stage demand consistency, or at least the appearance thereof? In their defense, the Russians often cite NATO’s unauthorized deposing of Gaddafi as the primary motive for their intransigence regarding Syria. Similarly, the United States dismisses as false equivalency any comparison between the relatively less repressive regime in Bahrain and the rest of the regimes in the Arab Spring countries.

To be sure, both arguments have some truth to them, but there is more to the truth than just the above-mentioned facts. In blocking all Security Council resolutions against Syria, fear – not principle – was the primary motive for the Russian behavior. Moscow, and Beijing for that matter, would not sow the seeds of normalizing international intervention in domestic conflicts. Indeed, such normalization would come back to haunt them; and Moscow was already feeling the heat, as Arab Spring-inspired demonstrations had already started to appear in Russia.
Moreover, we now know that Vladimir Putin has been determined to recover Russia’s lost glory, and the restoration of Soviet-era influence does not begin with relinquishing Soviet-era assets. To Putin, Baathist Syria was one of those assets. Indeed, not only had Moscow found in Baathist Syria a regime that was able to embrace a socialist ideology, but also a strategic client that granted the Soviet Union its only naval base on the Mediterranean. Russia has inherited that base; and Putin was, and is, planning to keep it.

It is, then, safe to say that the Arab Spring was a turning point in Putin’s strategy to restore Russia’s status as a superpower. This aggressive strategy had arguably started with an invasion of Georgia in 2008, but its substantial scope became clear only after two military interventions in Ukraine and Syria respectively. Interestingly, all those countries had gone through a popular revolution prior to the Russian interventions. Like Russia, and despite the liberal discourse of the Obama Administration, the behavior of the United States towards the Arab Spring was also rooted in realist calculations.

Bahrain is home to the Fifth Fleet of the United States Navy, and any change of leadership in the tiny kingdom would cost Washington a strategic footprint in the heart of the Middle East. The importance of this naval facility lies not only in containing Iran, but also in its vast domain of operations, which stretches from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Surely a relocation to a neighboring country was possible, but such a prospect is viewed unfavorably in Washington for logistical and financial reasons.

Additionally, logistical hardships and financial cost are in fact secondary to the political problems that might arise from such a move. For instance, a relocation of the Fifth Fleet from Bahrain to neighboring Qatar would infuriate Saudi Arabia. Riyadh
already believes that the Udeid Air Base had given Qatar too much power, and enabled the tiny emirate to play an outsized role in the Arab World. In addition, a move to another GCC country might create another Qatar, which would be a new source of headache for the Saudis.

Besides, Saudi Arabia was against any change in Bahrain to begin with, and that in itself was enough to sway the United States. Indeed, to suggest that the United States is extremely interested in maintaining a good relationship with Saudi Arabia is not, in any way, an overstatement. Not only has Saudi Arabia been an essential intelligence partner in the war against terrorism, but it also has a massive political clout in the Arab-Islamic World – a function of its oil wealth and self-proclaimed leadership of the Sunni World.

In addition, Saudi Arabia controls the world’s oil supply. Besides its massive oil production and reserves, Riyadh is also the de facto leader of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Moreover, for several decades, Saudi Arabia has used its vast oil wealth to create a massive patronage network whose beneficiaries stretch from Egypt to Lebanon, Yemen, Pakistan, and beyond. In that, Saudi Arabia has the kind of influence that makes it capable of disrupting, or preserving, global peace and security.

In the eyes of the White House, the choice was clear.

In the end, decisions were made, in Moscow as in Washington, based on rational calculations. By putting national interests before his aspirational worldview, President Obama came to the same conclusions that had cooled the enthusiasm of Woodrow Wilson about promoting republicanism and liberal democracy. Similarly, Putin understood the perils associated with projecting weakness, not only on his imperial project, but also on his political future and personal safety. He was driven by the same
motives that governed the behavior of Brezhnev towards the 1968 Prague Spring, and Khrushchev before him towards the 1956 Hungarian revolution.

**Conclusion: A Typological Theory on Popular Revolution**

This study began by addressing two fundamental questions about the so-called Arab Spring. The first question was essentially conceptual in that it asked whether the events surrounding the Arab Spring constituted instances of revolution. The second question, however, was rather theoretical in its focus on the causes of variation across the Arab Spring outcomes. Both questions are equally important and somehow interlocked. Without an answer to the first, a systematic investigation into the Arab Spring would not be possible. And, without a scientific inquiry, these momentous events would ultimately remain under-theorized.

After surveying several bodies of literature to assess the existing explanations vis-à-vis the Arab Spring (Chapter 2), Chapter 3 offered a solution for the designation dilemma, and advanced a typological theory on the Arab Spring. Specifically, I proposed further classification of the phenomenon as a solution to lift the research embargo on recent revolutionary events. To that end, I created a new type of revolution, namely popular revolution, and suggested that the Arab Spring events be investigated as such.

Following a careful work on conceptual clarifications (Chapter 3), in which terms and variables had been defined and a concept for revolutionary action (RA) advanced, I was able to construct a typological framework, and populate a map of the property space (see Table 1). The typological framework has included three independent variables (elite defections, internationalization of conflict, support of foreign patron), and one dependent
variable (outcome of RA). All variables were dichotomous with possibilities of (yes/no) for the independent variables, and (successful/failed) for the dependent variable.

Table 3

*Copy of table 1: A map of the property space*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arab Spring Case</th>
<th>Elite Defections</th>
<th>Internationalization of Conflict</th>
<th>Support of Foreign Patron</th>
<th>Outcome of RA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Failed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Libya did not have a foreign patron, and its regime was not nested in any meaningful political alliance/structure.

As a result, I found the Arab Spring to have included four cases of successful RA (i.e. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen), and two cases where RA has ultimately failed to displace power holders (i.e. Syria and Bahrain). In addition, the success and failure of revolutionary action seemed to have resulted from variant configurations of the independent variables. Upon inspecting those configurations and based on their
characteristics, I was able to identify, and develop, multiple types of success and failure of revolutionary action (See Table 2).

Table 4

*Copy of table 2: A Typological Theory on the Arab Spring*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arab Spring Case</th>
<th>Elite Defections</th>
<th>Internationalization of Conflict</th>
<th>Support of Foreign Patron</th>
<th>Revolutionary Outcome</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Popular Revolution (Successful RA)</td>
<td>Elite-Imposed Popular Revolution (EIPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Popular Revolution (Successful RA)</td>
<td>Elite-Imposed Popular Revolution (EIPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Popular Revolution (Successful RA)</td>
<td>Foreign-Imposed Popular Revolution (FIPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Popular Revolution (Successful RA)</td>
<td>Foreign-Imposed Popular Revolution (FIPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Abortive Revolution (Failed RA)</td>
<td>Foreign-Blocked Abortive Revolution (FBAR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Abortive Revolution (Failed RA)</td>
<td>Foreign-Blocked Abortive Revolution (FBAR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Abortive Revolution (Failed RA)</td>
<td>Elite-Blocked Abortive Revolution (EBAR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specifically, I created four theoretical types of success and failure: 1) elite-imposed popular revolution (EIPR), 2) foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR), 3) foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR), and 4) elite-blocked abortive revolution (EBAR). In addition, I found EIPR to have been the case in Tunisia and Egypt; FIPR in
Libya and Yemen; and FBAR in Syria and Bahrain. In summary, different configurations produce different outcomes, which can then be classified into different types; and that is the premise of my typological theory on the Arab Spring. Figure 6 provides an illustration of the theory.

**Figure 7.** Copy of figure 6: A causal model for short-term outcomes of revolutionary action

As demonstrated in Table 2, EBAR is a type that corresponds to an empty cell. The reason for developing this theoretical type goes beyond the desire to create a sound theory on the Arab Spring; for that the ultimate objective of this study is to use any
theory on the Arab Spring as a steppingstone for the development of a typological theory on popular revolution. And, now that the analytical portion of this study is complete (Chapters 4-7), I believe it is possible to advance this theory (see Table 3).

Table 5

A Typological Theory on Popular Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Type</th>
<th>Elite Defections</th>
<th>Internationalization of Conflict</th>
<th>Support of Foreign Patron</th>
<th>Revolutionary Outcome</th>
<th>Culmination Point</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-Imposed Popular Revolution (FIPR)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Popular Revolution</td>
<td>Foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) by international intervention</td>
<td>Libya, 2011, Yemen, 2011-12, Nicaragua, 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite-Blocked Abortive Revolution (EBAR)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Abortive Revolution</td>
<td>Elite-imposed regime maintenance (EIRM) by subservient elites</td>
<td>Burma, 1988, China, 1989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table 3, I used the insights gained from the analyses to further develop the theoretical types. Therefore, it can be proposed that elite imposed popular revolutions (EIPR) are likely to culminate in a quasi-coup by autonomous elites. Moreover, foreign-imposed popular revolutions (FIPR) tend to climax with a foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) by international intervention. Conversely, foreign-blocked abortive revolutions (FBAR) are often decided by foreign patrons and tend to result in a foreign-imposed regime maintenance (FIRM). Lastly, Elite-blocked abortive revolutions (EBAR) are likely to end in an elite-imposed regime maintenance (EIRM) by subservient elites.
Accordingly, as I proceed to conclude this study, I would like to make the following propositions:

**Proposition 1.** RA will succeed and lead to an elite-imposed popular revolution (EIPR) where elite defections are widespread, conflict is not internationalized, and regime fails to secure the support of a foreign patron.

**Proposition 2.** RA will succeed and result in a foreign-imposed popular revolution (FIPR) where conflict is internationalized, and regime fails to secure the support of a foreign patron, regardless of elite defections.

**Proposition 3.** RA will fail and result in a foreign-blocked abortive revolution (FBAR) where regime manages to secure the support of a foreign patron, regardless of elite defections and internationalization of conflict.

**Proposition 4.** RA will fail and lead to an elite-blocked abortive revolution (EBAR) where there are neither elite defections, nor internationalization of conflict.

**Proposition 5.** Elite-imposed popular revolutions (EIPR) are likely to culminate in a quasi-quo by autonomous elites.

**Proposition 6.** Foreign-imposed popular revolutions (FIPR) are likely to culminate in a foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) by international intervention.

**Proposition 7.** Foreign-blocked abortive revolutions (FBAR) are likely to culminate in a foreign-imposed regime maintenance (FIRM) by foreign patrons.

**Proposition 8.** Elite-blocked abortive revolutions (EBAR) are likely to culminate in an elite-imposed regime maintenance (EIRM) by subservient elites.
Limitations and Questions for Future Inquiry

The conclusion section in this chapter is meant to provide a summary on the findings and logic of this study. However, to facilitate a better understanding of the theory, it is advisable to refer to the conceptual clarifications offered in chapter 3, to avoid any confusion that may arise from the examples cited in Table 3. Among other clarifications offered in that chapter, I make a distinction between various types of revolution. Those distinctions were made possible by the introduction of a new type of revolution, namely popular revolution.

Maintaining an awareness of those distinctions allows for a better understanding as to why the examples in Table 3 included various types of revolution. For that all revolutions begin from below as popular revolutions; while some fail to go beyond the mere displacement of power holders (e.g. the Philippines, 1986), others go on to earn new designations as they manage to transform the state (e.g. East European revolutions, 1989) and/or society (e.g. Iran and Guatemala, 1979). For the same reason, pseudo-popular revolutions were also omitted from the examples.

Pseudo-popular revolutions are events where radical guerrilla movements rise to power – by means of insurgency – to impose revolutionary change from above (e.g. The 26th of July movement in Cuba, 1956; the Taliban in Afghanistan, 1996; the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, 2014). Like many coups that are mistakenly labeled as revolutions (e.g. Egypt in 1952; Portugal in 1974; Libya in 1969), those events did not originate from a mass popular mobilization. Similarly, the same omission applied to pseudo-abortive revolutions, as in the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979.
Nevertheless, though omitted as examples, it is my belief that the theory can still provide plausible explanations to the outcomes in the “pseudo” cases – the ones that require an explanation, anyway. For instance, with regard to Cuba, many scholars draw a link between the overthrow of the Batista regime and the U.S. measures against it, not least the 1958 embargo on Cuba. Not only has Washington refused to support its client regime in Havana, but it has actually played a significant role in undermining the legitimacy, and unity, of the Batista regime.

On the other hand, it is widely known that the rise of the Taliban was the result of an intra-elite power struggle between the Mujahedin in war-torn, patron-less Afghanistan. In addition, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan resembles in many ways the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq (and then Syria). Like Russia did to Afghanistan, the United States left Iraq with weak institutions and divided elites, and refused to step back into the war-torn nation to clear a mess it had created in the first place.

At this point, I hope that the above discussion did not give the impression that the examples cited in Table 3 are, in anyway, exhaustive; because they are not. But that discussion was a necessary tangent, if only to underscore a potential limitation of our typological theory. Certainly, scholars of social movements may find some aspects in the theory wanting, especially in its seeming disregard of any significant role for revolutionary movements. To be sure, there is no doubt in my mind about the importance of that role, as well as the roles of coalitions and ideologies for that matter.

Nevertheless, it is also my belief that any state-centered theory must consider those variables only to the extent of their ability to influence the behavior of state institutions, and the international context within which they tend to operate. Admittedly,
this study did not go so far as to theorize the determinants of those behaviors. Alas, there is only so much that can be done in one dissertation. Then, this remains an area of significant potential for future inquiry.

Future researchers might also consider theorizing the likelihood of revolutionary action. Here, it is worth mentioning to Middle East scholars that, though eliminated in this study, I still believe that oil wealth and regime type are two variables with the greatest potential to explain the likelihood of revolutionary action during the Arab Spring. In addition, future researchers who are interested in exploring the determinants of the form of RA (i.e. uprising and insurrection) might find it useful to focus on military defections (especially among the rank and file), and the availability of arms.

Moreover, more work needs to be done in two areas: 1) civil-military relations, and 2) client-patron relations. With regard to the former, more data need to be gathered about army structures around the world, to assess the capacity of institutional elites for autonomous action. Additionally, though client-patron relations vary in importance based on countless factors, there must be a way to develop a systematic method to classify those relations in terms of importance and resiliency, and to identify their weak, and strong, links.

Finally, it is needless to say that those issues cannot be appropriately addressed without a heightened state of collaboration, not only among the social sciences, but also between them and policy making. This study has been an effort in that regard. It employed a multidisciplinary approach as a guiding principle, and aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice. After all, this has been the promise of the field of conflict resolution – one of a handful of fields whose names reflect a practical mission.
Conflict resolution scholars need no reminding of the complexity of that mission, nor of the imperative of crossing traditional boundaries across academic fields in order to solve the ever-convoluted problems of today’s world. Yet, it is worth mentioning that this study has benefited a lot from taking interdisciplinarity to another level. In addition to drawing on various theoretical insights from multiple fields in the social sciences, this study has also relied on established typologies, methods, and analytical frameworks from several academic disciplines to arrive at its conclusions.

It is my belief that those fields can also benefit from the unique perspective of the study of conflict resolution, which views conflict as a normal aspect of human life. According to this view, when conflict is channeled correctly and intervened on successfully, not only does it drive human progress, but also contribute to the transformation to a more just world. It is truly amazing how a small change in perspective can create a great epistemological impact; one that has the potential to revolutionize the study revolution.
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Endnotes

\*i\* Construed from the author’s use of the word “Arabellion” as a pun.

\*ii\* Laswell and Kaplan (1950) proposed a classification that divided the phenomenon into three sub-classes: political, social, and palace revolution(s). A similar attempt to advance a typology for revolution was also made by Tanter and Midlarsky (1967).

\*iii\* By adopting such a flexible view of revolution, Jack Goldstone and a team of scholars have managed to publish an encyclopedia of political revolutions (See Goldstone, 1998).

\*iv\* According to Kuran (1995, p. 1528), preference falsification is “The act of misrepresenting one's preferences under perceived social pressures”. In autocratic states, people tend to conceal their true preferences vis-à-vis fundamental change, for reasons that vary along a vast continuum of fear. It must also be noted that preference falsification does not seem to be a peculiarity of autocratic societies. For instance, the spectacular failure of the polling industry during the Brexit referendum and the 2016 US elections could also be attributed to the presence of fear of shaming, which might have led many voters to falsify their preferences.

\*v\* See (Foran, 2005)

\*vi\* French acronym for Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

\*vii\* Terbil was involved in a rare legal action against the Libyan state. In his capacity as a lawyer, he agreed to represent a group of families who had lost loved ones during the 1996 Abu Salim Prison riots.
Also known as Cyrenaica

The Republic of Yemen emerged from the unification of the Yemen Arab Republic (aka North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (aka South Yemen).

The translation is mine.

Not related to, and not to be confused with, the house of Assad.

Also known as the GCC Roundabout

For the year 2010, according to the United Nations Statistics Division (“country profile: Tunisia,” 2017)

Although the existing concept of FIRC does not distinguish between regime change and the mere displacement of power holders in the government, I use it to maintain consistency across the fields of the social sciences. I trust the reader to be able to make the distinction duly as clarified in chapter 3.

See for example Reisman (2004), and (de Mesquita & Downs, 2006)

The first four propositions are extended from our typological theory on the Arab Spring (see Chapter 3). To avoid redundancy, I can safely suggest that any future inquiry into the findings of this study be limited to the propositions made in this chapter.